

WILD NEWS

PRINCE WILLIAM WILDFLOWER SOCIETY, A Chapter of the Virginia Native Plant Society

Number 99-03

May-June, 1999

MEETING MONDAY, MAY 17

Claudia Thompson-Deahl, former PWWS president and longtime member, will speak at this month's meeting on the importance, plight, and ecology of meadows. Claudia is environmental resources director for the Reston Association. Her program is intended to raise public awareness as to the importance of meadow habitats (for example, their function) and the need to protect and restore existing meadows.

As usual, the meeting will be held at 7:30 p.m. on the third Monday of the month at Bethel Lutheran Church at the intersection of Plantation Lane and Sudley Road in Manassas. For further information about the meeting, call President Gina Yurkonis at 540-347-1027 or Vice-President Nancy Arrington at 703-368-8431.

SAVE \$\$ - RENEW NOW

Beat the VNPS dues increase by renewing NOW. There's not much time to act before the increase goes into effective June 1. Current and new rates are as follows:

	Old	New
Student	\$10	\$15
Individual	15	20
Family	25	30
Life	400	500

Patron (\$50), Sustaining (\$100), and Associate/groups (\$40) remain the same.

Renewal forms for members are inside this issue.

THE PLANT SALE IS NOW

Be sure to come to the Annual Plant Sale on Saturday, May 8, 1999, from 9 a.m. -12 noon. Plenty of perennial wildflowers and ferns grown by members will be available for sale. Arrive early! The choicest selections go quickly.

Volunteers are still needed! Help with the Chapter's only fundraiser by assisting on sale day. Set-up begins by 7:30 a.m. and extras hands are much welcomed and appreciated. Call Nancy Arrington at 368-8431 for additional information.

GARDEN TOUR REPORT

"A masterpiece. I was so impressed with the diversity of plants and was struck by how delicate they were. The repetition and woven pattern of the plants brought a unity to the area," visitor Sally Underwood said about the Whitmore garden, one of three on this year's tour.

The weather was cool but sunny, a picture-perfect weekend. The cool April gave many visitors a chance to see plants that usually bloom much earlier in the month; this was the first year that bluebells remained in full bloom for the tour.

Many thanks to Fran and Ken Bass, Marie and Paul Davis, and Roberta Whitmore for sharing their fabulous gardens with the public for an entire weekend. Thanks also to the garden tour hostesses, Nancy Arrington, Tiana Camford, Jeanne Endrikat, Kim Hosen, Joann Krumviede Janet Melton, Valerie Neitzey, Gail Reynolds, Margaret Silaghi, Martha Slover, Nicky Staunton, Carol Thompson, Nancy Vehrs, Helen Walter, Karen Waltman, and Helen Winn. Thank you's to Marie, Joann, June Najjum, and Nancy Vehrs for providing baked goods.



From the President - Gina Yurkonis

Last Thursday, I dropped the dog at the kennel and hopped on a plane to Texas. I hate leaving him, but Willard Scott's dogs are there too - how bad could it be? San Antonio awaits!

The city was lovely and not all sand and cactus as my yankee image of Texas had me believe. Huge live oak trees were everywhere and there were many trees I could not I.D. Unfortunately, the "tame" landscapes were all too familiar: crape myrtle, photinia, privet, cleyera, and most of the other standard landscaper shrubs you see from sea to shining sea. I wanted to see Texas!

We headed for Austin and the Ladybird Johnson Center (formerly National Wildflower Research Center) - a mecca of native plant info. The trip alone was stunning enough. The roadsides were a mass of yellow coreopsis, pink oenothera, flames of Indian paintbrush, and something purple I never figured out. The famous Texas bluebonnets were about done for the year, but there were still a few blooming an hour and a half north at the center. It was so crowded we had to park along the road outside with many other people. I started oohing and aahing and taking pictures (for our member slide show next January - don't forget!). Like the Disneyland commercial, Tom took my hand and suggested we actually go inside. Wow. The center has made much use of the local limestone in its architecture. The grey and white stones make a lovely backdrop to the many bright colors and pastels of the wildflowers. The entrance features a tower that houses the main cistern. A fascinating series of gutters and pipes collect all the rainwater from the roofs to be used in a drip irrigation system for the plantings. Rainwater also fills three water features. Nothing could look better on a hot day (it was 95 degrees) than the deep, clear blue-green pool in the courtyard. We had a terrific lunch in the cafe and headed back out into the heat.

There are several short trails that pass through

the open, but we headed for some welcome shade in the forest. Again, the natural limestone was beautiful - like clouds, you could look at them and see things. The juniper smelled wonderful - until I found out it's one of their invasive aliens! The forest trail ends at a small cave. Barely a two-foot wide hole, it leads to an opening about the size of an average room and was used by previous owners as a dump. One of hundreds in the area, the limestone cave is a natural collection area for rain run-off and recharges the valuable aquifer. As our weather report gives us the pollen count, theirs gives the aquifer level.

The visitors' center was very informative, giving names to all we had seen on the way and more (except that purple thing; maybe it was a mirage). Most of the volunteers seemed very knowledgeable and willing to share. We did see
(continued on next page)

WILD NEWS is published six times a year by the Prince William Wildflower Society, a Chapter of the Virginia Native Plant Society, P.O. Box 83, Manassas, VA 20108-0083. Permission is given to use material with credit to source. VNPS home page: <http://www.vnps.org>.

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Deadline for the July-August issue is July 1, 1999. Mail information to Nancy Vehrs at 8318 Highland St., Manassas, VA 20110-3671 or e-mail to nvehrs@ibm.net.

(continuation of President's column from previous page)

some cactus and the blooms on them were stunning. In fact, they were Tom's favorite thing - very high praise from a total computer geek.

We left the center and headed out to see the famous million-and-a-half free-tail bats emerge from the Commerce Street Bridge at dusk. They didn't. Oh well, a reason to go back. And, until VDOT catches on and covers our roadsides with native wildflowers, I guess it's up to us.

See you at the plant sale!

-Gina

TWO WALKS MAY 16

Great Falls Park: 10 a.m.-12:30 p.m. Call leader Marion Lobstein at 703-536-7150 for reservations.

Conway Robinson Memorial State Forest: 2 p.m. Nicky Staunton will lead a walk to view orchids. Large stands of both pink and yellow ladyslippers should be in full bloom. Call Nicky at 703-368-9803 to make a reservation and please leave a message if she is not there.

CATS INDOORS CAMPAIGN

Those who enjoy planting native plants to attract wildlife may wish to participate in the American Bird Conservancy's *National Keep Your Cat Indoors Day* May 8, which also coincides with *International Migratory Bird Day* (IMBD). Domestic cats kill wildlife; keeping cats indoors keeps both the cats and the wildlife safer. For more information on the "Cats Indoors" campaign, call 202-778-9666, website www/abcbirds.org. For information on IMBD, call the hotline at 703-328-2318.

Upcoming Plant Sales

If the PWWS plant sale just whets your appetite, try these sales:

Tenth Annual Garden Fair at Blandy, Mother's Day weekend, May 8-9, 10 a.m. to 4:30 p.m. both days. Garden Fair is one of the largest plant and garden-supply sales on the East Coast, with two full days of plant sales, exhibits, guided tours, educational events, games for kids, music, and much more. At least 50 vendors will offer an incredible selection of plants, including herbs, perennials, woody shrubs, berry plants, small trees, water garden plants, and a few surprises!

If you've never been to the Arboretum, you may wish to take advantage of one of the free guided tours led by Arboretum Curator Dave Carr (twice each day during Garden Fair), or enjoy the history tour with Director Michael Bowers Sunday at 11 a.m. There's also a bluebird lecture and tour of the Blandy Bluebird Trail, maintained by the Northern Shenandoah Valley Audubon Society (1 p.m. Sunday).

There's something for everyone including plenty of free children's activities to keep the youngest gardeners entertained - and free seedlings to take home!

Garden Fair is the largest annual fund-raising event sponsored by the Foundation of the State Arboretum of Virginia. A \$3 per car parking donation is requested.

The State Arboretum is open 365 days a year, dawn to dusk. The Arboretum is on Route 50 in Clarke County, about 10 miles east of Winchester. For more information call 540-837-1758, Ext. 21.

Spring Plant Sale at Green Spring Garden Park: This big garden event takes place in the Alexandria area of Fairfax County from 10 a.m.-3 p.m. on May 22. The booth for the Potowmack Chapter of VNPS will offer a large selection of native plants for sale. Call 703-642-5173 for information.

Nearby Nature

This spring's Nearby Nature series of workshops continues through May. Call 703-490-0455 to register.

Tree and Shrub Communities: May 8 at Northern Virginia Community College, Woodbridge Campus. The Piedmont Plateau oak-hickory forest is far from uniform. Join biologist Tom Borokowski and travel an old Confederate Road, exploring climatic and environmental factors for their differences. Pass through more than six plant communities on this easy 2-mile walk. Practice your identification skills or take a first step into the fascinating world of plants in Prince William County. Naturalists and novices alike will discover more about the dynamics of these fascinating communities.

Northern Virginia Orchids: May 9, Conway Robinson Memorial State Forest. A foray to this special site is a lovely way to begin a memorable Mothers' Day! Join Nicky Staunton and others for a climb to the rock outcropping overlooking Little Bull Run to see the lovely yellow lady's slipper. Then proceed to a low pine wood to visit a colony of pink lady's slippers, stopping to see other spring blooms along the way. Wildlife and clues to their interactions with the plant communities of this wonderful forest add a special interest to the trek.

Wetland Ecology: May 29, Leesylvania State Park. Bill Stipple, wetland ecologist, introduces participants to selected physical, chemical, and biological aspects of tidal and non-tidal wetlands in the Northern Virginia area. Discussions and field observations will help students to understand the dynamic role wetlands play from an ecological or /landscape context. Information on the flora and fauna characteristics of marshes, swamps, bogs, and fens is included, along with wetland succession and values. Be prepared for a comprehensive exploration of Prince William wetland areas and dress accordingly.

MEMBERS FEATURED IN CITY PAPER

Diane Flahery spotted an article that featured PWWS member Elaine Haug and Potowmack Chapter member Kathleen Kust in the April 23 edition of *Washington City Paper*, a free, "hip" newspaper that is distributed only in D.C. The article's subtitle proclaimed that Elaine and Kathleen have the "most unusual botany lab in town," the prison property in Lorton. The reporter joined a plant survey on a recent misty Sunday in April when Elaine and a couple of PWWS members found trailing arbutus in bloom. The elusive and endangered small whorled pogonia is the ultimate prize they are seeking on the property. None was found that day, but the search continues

REMAINING SPRING SCHEDULE FOR LORTON SURVEYS

Sunday May 16	12:30 p.m.-4:00 p.m.
Saturday May 29	10:00 a.m.-2:00 p.m.

To be part of the exploration of the Lorton Reformatory tract this spring, call Kathleen Kust at 703-836-5868.

Websites

The VNPS website is now www.vnps.org. Various chapter newsletters, including this one, are posted on the site.

The National Arboretum's website has a long address, but it's worth the extra characters. Arboretum events are posted and fact sheets on newly developed trees and plants are available, including information on disease-tolerant American elms. www.ars-grin.gov/na/index.html

VIOLETS

Marion Lobstein
Associate Professor of Biology
Northern Virginia Community
College-Manassas Campus

One of the loveliest groups of spring wildflowers is the simple but elegant violet family. From late March into late May or early June, twenty-one species of violets bring beauty and color to our deciduous woods, fields, roadsides, and even lawns. Although we usually think of violets as being shades of purple, there are white/cream and yellow violets as well as combinations of shades of purple and white. The genus name *Viola* is a classical name for violet. In *Gray's Manual of Botany* there are fifty-one species of violets. These species are primarily spring-blooming as far as their chasmogamous ("showy") flowers, but plants may bloom again in the fall. The cleistogamous ("secret") flowers may bloom throughout the summer. The typical chasmogamous flower of violets has five green sepals, five colored petals (often with prominent nectar lines), five stamens, and a tricarpellate pistil. The symmetry of the flower is bilateral with two upper petals, two lateral petals (often with "beards" or pollen combs), and a lower petals. A spur is formed by the lower petals. The stamens often closely surround the pistil with a short style and a broad stigma which may be orange. Some species are fragrant, others are not or only minimally so. Bees are the primary pollinators of both species. Fruit set in both species begins soon after flowering. The fruit of both species is a 7-11 mm-long, three-chambered capsule that matures in early to mid-May in northern Virginia. As the fruit matures it begins to dehisce to release an average of 12-15 seeds 2-2.5 mm long. These seeds have elaiosomes and are ant-dispersed. The "secret" flowers are small green flowers formed at the base of the plant. These self-pollinate and are very prolific seed producers.

The presence or absence of a stem associated with leaves is variable in different species of violets. Those with stems that form leaves along the stem length are referred to as "stemmed" violets. Those that have their leaves forming directly above the ground level, actually above a horizontal underground stem called a rhizome are referred to as "stemless." The leaf shapes are variable from one species to another, the most common shape being cordate or heart-shaped. Leaves are usually toothed. Leaves of individual plants usually begin to senesce after the fruits mature or may remain photosynthetic into summer. The underground storage structure for all species is the rhizome. Numerous fibrous roots come off the rhizome.

Violets as a group have had many edible and medicinal uses. Violets may be added to salads as well as dipped in sugar solution to be candied. The medicinal uses vary and include treating the digestive, respiratory, urinary, and circulatory systems. It has purported laxative, purgative, emetic, expectorant, diuretic, emollient, and anticoughing properties. It does have salicylic acid (the active ingredient of aspirin) and vitamins C (up to 260 milligrams per 100 grams of leaves compared to 50 milligrams in an orange) and A (up to 20,000 mg per 100 grams of leaves compared to 8100 in spinach). It also has antiseptic and fungicide properties and poultices of the leaves have been used to treat wounds as well as warts (caused by a virus) and corns.

The following are the species of violets found in the Northern Virginia area according to the *Atlas of the Virginia Flora*:

Viola affinis - LeConte's violet
Viola blanda - sweet white violet
Viola canadensis - Canada violet
Viola conspersa - American dog violet
Viola cucullata - marsh blue violet
Viola fimbriatula - ovate-leaved violet
Viola hirsutula - southern wood violet
Viola lanceolata - lance-leaved violet
Viola macloskeyi var. *pallens* - Northern white violet

- Viola palmata* - palmate violet
- Viola papilionacea* - common blue violet
- Viola pedata* - birdfoot violet
- Viola pennsylvanica* - smooth yellow violet
- Viola primulifolia* - primrose-leaved violet
- Viola pubescens* - downy yellow violet
- Viola rafinesquii* - field pansy
- Viola sagittata* - arrow-leaf violet
- Viola sororia* - downy blue violet
- Viola striata* - cream violet
- Viola triloba* - three-lobed violet

This spring try to work on learning to identify at least the more common of these species as well as just enjoy the sweet beauty of these "simple" wildflowers.



Both the Peterson's and Newcomb's wildflower guides do a nice job helping you to identify the variety of violets you may observe this spring.

June 21 Board Meeting

The June 21 Board meeting will be held at the home of Nancy Vehrs, 8318 Highland Street in Manassas. Preliminary plans for the chapter's annual meeting will be on the agenda.

July Membership Meeting

Mark your calendar for Monday, July 19 at 7:30 p.m. for a program on ferns presented by Joan Feely, curator of the native plant collections at the National Arboretum.

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exp. 10/99



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 **May Meeting: 7:30 p.m., Monday, May 17, Bethel Lutheran Church, Manassas**
"The Importance, Plight, and Ecology of Meadows"

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