

WILD NEWS

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

Number 99-05

September-October, 1999

PWWS ANNUAL MEETING SUNDAY, OCTOBER 10

Come to the PWWS annual meeting to be held at the Turkey Run Ridge Education Center at Prince William Forest Park on Sunday, October 10. Bring a dish to share at the potluck picnic at 1 p.m., cast your vote for members of the nominating committee at the short business meeting, then enjoy the wildflowers along the nearby trails on a guided walk.

Prince William Forest Park is located just off Route 95; take the exit for Route 619, Joplin Road. PWWS will pay the park entrance fee; just tell the gate attendant you're with PWWS. For further information about the meeting, call President Gina Yurkonis at 540-347-1027 or Vice-President Nancy Arrington at 703-368-8431.

VNPS ANNUAL MEETING RESCHEDULED

Because of the effect of two storms, Dennis and Floyd, the VNPS annual meeting in Norfolk has been rescheduled for October 8-10. The weekend promises great lectures, field trips, and camaraderie with members from around the state. For further information, call Holly Crusier at 757-481-2285.

Inside this issue:

Fall Nearby Nature Schedule	p. 3
Diane's Trip to Belize	p. 4
Wendy's Report on Healing the Landscape	p. 4
Marion's Insight on Ironweed	p. 7

PLANTING SEASON TIPS FOR A BETTER GARDEN

(Note: The following article first appeared in the Sep/Oct issue of the Potowmack News, the newsletter of the Potowmack Chapter of the Virginia Native Plant Society, and is being reprinted with permission from the author.)

The fall planting season is upon us again, so I thought I'd share some successes and failures from my own gardens that may help you in planning yours. We've had three consecutive years of drought now and if that hasn't been a great test of a plant's drought tolerance, I don't know what is. Being a landscape designer by trade also helps me see some of the new plants coming out before they are available. When I see a plant performing well, I try to spread the word.

Most gardeners are passionate about their plants and take better care of them than others who just pay to have their landscaping installed. Gardeners have great ideas about what plants they want to have in their gardens, but arranging them in a complementary way sometimes gets missed. Here are some tips that will help you avoid some common errors that gardeners make.

Tip One. Always learn the "cultural requirements" of each plant. What is a cultural requirement? It is the combination of environmental and technical factors, which permit a plant to develop and grow to its fullness. In other words, it's not a good idea to put a plant that likes wet shade in full, dry sun. Where do I find the cultural requirements for plants? Besides some exceptions, generally I would follow the recommendations in a gardening book, or on the nametags the plants come with from the nursery.

Tip Two. Think about the mature height and
(continued on page six)



From the President - Gina Yurkonis

Such excitement! Our Annual Membership Meeting is October 10 at Prince William Forest Park. I hope to see you all there and please, bring a friend. We'll have **door prizes**, good food (we're all bringing that), walks, and who knows what else?!

A glitch which just turned up is the postponement of the State Annual Meeting in Norfolk. Due to hurricanes Dennis and Floyd, the state meeting has been changed to the second weekend in October - the same as our PWWS meeting. We'll miss those who can't be at both.

By the way, I was at one of my favorite shops, Ten Thousand Villages. It is run by a non-profit group that sends all proceeds from sales directly back to the people who make the items - most in developing countries. Well, I found these nifty gift-bags and boxes made of - Water Hyacinth! What a great way to use an invasive alien! Although Water Hyacinth is not a problem in Virginia because it dies at the slightest frost, it is a big problem in Florida where it has escaped and clogs the canals. I think using it to make paper is terrific. Any uses for Japanese Honeysuckle?

-Gina

P.S. Ok, the canals aren't native either, but we're waiting to see if the hurricanes turn Florida back into a swamp. I hope and pray we all weather the storms and get nothing but deep, soaking rains. See you in October.

Saturday Leaves Program

Enjoy a free guided tour of the grounds of the State Arboretum at Blandy Experimental Farm on Saturday, October 2. Meet at the information pavilion at 10 a.m.; no reservations needed. Blandy is located on Rt. 50 in Clarke County, about 10 miles east of Winchester.

Get Your Feet Wet!

HOW? While receiving an introduction to stream monitoring.

WHEN & WHERE? Saturday, September 25, Noon - 4:30 p.m., Manassas National Battlefield Park, VA and nearby stream sites.

WHO? Teachers, students, public officials or anyone interested in local water quality.

WHY? To learn about stream ecology and the health of our area watersheds...and how you can get involved with efforts to preserve, protect, and improve these precious resources.

For more info: Call Cliff at the Webb Sanctuary in Clifton, 703-803-8400, to register. Advance registration is required. (Directions to the workshop, what to wear, etc. will be sent to registrants.)

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>.

President: Gina Yurkonis, 540-347-1027

e-mail: perennium@erols.com

Vice President: Nancy Arrington, 703-368-8431

e-mail: narringt@erols.com

Secretary: Diane Flaherty

Treasurer: Marie Davis

Botany Chair: Marion Lobstein

Conservation Chair: Helen Walter

Education Chair: Kim Hosen

Hospitality Chair: Joann Krumviede

Membership Chair: Nancy Vehrs

Program Chair: Charles Smith

Propagation Chair: Nancy Arrington

Registry Site Chair: Elaine Haug

Editor: Nancy Vehrs, 703-368-2898

Original Artwork by Nicky Staunton

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

NEARBY NATURE WORKSHOPS ANNOUNCED

Grasses, Sedges & Rushes with Bill Sipple, Sunday, October 3 from 10 a.m. to 3 p.m. at the Occoquan Bay National Wildlife Refuge. Registration required; fee \$30.

Join Bill Sipple, wetland ecologist and author of *Days Afield: Exploring Wetlands in the Chesapeake Bay Region*, for a closer look at these confusing plants. Begin by learning the morphological terminology necessary to identify grasses, sedges, and rushes using handouts and live plant specimens indoors. Both wetland and upland plants will be considered. Participants will obtain a good feel for differentiating the three families and gain understanding of their various subdivisions, including their genera. A number of grass, sedge, and rush species will also be identified by the instructor and through limited keying. Part of the day will be spent in the field with the instructor pointing out select species of grasses, sedges, and rushes.

Hands on History-Native American Traditions with Alonso Abugattas, Saturday, November 6 from 9 a.m. to 2 p.m. at Leesylvania State Park. Registration required; fee \$30.

Alonso Abugattas, naturalist and talented storyteller, shares some of the lore and history surrounding our area's earlier residents, the Algonquian speaking people. This workshop will cover various customs, edible/medicinal plants, history, tools, and mannerisms. A collection of reproduced tools will also be on hand to try. Celebrate Native American Indian Month by discovering how local cultures of times gone by managed to live off the land and the ways they interacted with their neighbors. Some other aboriginal cultures will also be mentioned.

A Fall of Butterflies with Jim Waggener & Kim Hosen, was held Saturday, September 18 from 9 a.m. to noon at the Occoquan Bay National Wildlife Refuge (OBNWR).

This workshop served as an introduction to

local butterflies and their ecology. Participants discovered the butterflies of autumn in Prince William County with the Butterfly Survey Team for the OBNWR, where 65 species have been recorded.

To register for the upcoming workshops or to add your name to the mailing list, send your name, address, phone number, e-mail address, & workshop fee to Nature's Wonder World, 2560 Paxton Street, Woodbridge, VA 22192. Call 703-490-0455 for more information.

Welcome New Members

A warm welcome is extended to the following members who joined in the past year:

Thomas Attanaro, Manassas
 Carrie Blair, Middleburg
 Janet Bowman, Centreville
 Denna Brown, Manassas
 Tina Brummett, Woodbridge
 Caroline Calder, Manassas
 Frances R. Chamberlin, Oakton
 Jane Cox, Warrenton
 Chris French, Charlottesville
 William Garrett, Manassas
 Luanne Glenn Hailes, Lake Ridge
 Karin Halusa, Woodbridge
 Jeanne Jabara, Manassas
 Noelle Jordan, Woodbridge
 Wilkie Leith, Manassas
 Muriel McCabe, Warrenton
 Gary and Polly Moody, Manassas
 Carol Ina Ramsak, Warrenton
 Gail Reynolds, Woodbridge
 Donielle Rininger, Warrenton
 Lori Rusteikas, Manassas
 Rose Schwitzer, Manassas
 Margaret Silaghi, Stafford
 Paul Simmons, Burke
 Margaret Walther, Centreville

Beautiful Sights On Land and Under the Sea

"You're going to Belize? Where's that?!" This was the common reaction from most of the people I told of my impending trip. In July I led a group of Nature Conservancy members to Belize and none of us were too sure what we would find. Tropical rainforests, jaguars, and excellent snorkeling we knew, but what else?

At Belize City airport our 27 travelers broke into two groups and began the long bus ride to Rio Bravo Conservation and Management Area in the northwestern part of the country. Between the airport and Rio Bravo, I added 15 birds to my life list, including Jabiru storks and wood storks--huge birds. This was just a taste of what was to come.

The Nature Conservancy is actively involved in conservation efforts at Rio Bravo, a 260,000-acre preserve. Over the following three days we saw just a bit of what is being saved. We sighted many birds including toucans, a chachalaca, and flocks of parrots; caught (and released, of course) tiny red-eyed tree frogs during a night walk; explored Mayan ruins still hidden by hundreds of years of vegetation, and hiked through dense rainforests. Our guides pointed out so many interesting plants, for instance, the chicle tree (its sap was once used to make Chiclets gum); majestic mahogany trees; and a give-and-take tree (the painful wound inflicted by its 3-inch spines could be healed by rubbing it with the tree's leaves).

Then it was back to the bus for a hot, dusty, all-day ride to a lodge on the Caribbean Sea. On the way we stopped at Crooked Tree Wildlife Sanctuary. Here was where I sighted the bird that had been my goal for the trip--a boat-billed heron.

During our four-day stay at Jaguar Reef Lodge, we took short trips, including a visit to Coxcomb Jaguar Preserve. In previous weeks tour groups had made jaguar sightings, but we weren't so lucky. We did see a crested guan (bird about the size of a chicken), male and female

green honeycreepers, a basilisk (a lizard that runs over the top of the water) and a coatimundi.

We also spent a day and a half snorkeling. Belize has the second largest coral reef in the world and it is gorgeous. Our guides were excellent at knowing where to find sites with varying kinds of coral and fish. We saw angelfish, damselfish, parrotfish, and stingrays to name only a few. The funniest were five small squid in a row, watching us. We swam closer; they scooted backwards. We swam a few more feet; they scooted backwards. They were just as interested in us as we were in them.

Our week was over all too soon and we headed home a bit tanned, tired, and with 77 bird sightings to add to my life list.

I hope to show slides from my trip at the January PWWS meeting.

- Diane Flaherty

Healing the Landscape at Irvine Natural Science Center

Healing the Landscape was one of the primary themes of Irvine Natural Science Center's Native Plant Seminar and plant sale held on August 28. The three speakers included Susan E. Salmons, vegetation management specialist at Rock Creek Park, Edgar David, Landscape Architect and Professor at Temple University, and Richard E. Bir, professional horticulturist and author of *Growing and Propagating Showy Woody Plants*.

Susan Salmons spoke about her work eliminating invasive exotics in Rock Creek Park. Of over 230 nonnative species she has identified there, one-fourth are invasive. These exotics can effect changes in species diversity, soil type, and hydrology.

Especially invasive are the smothering, nonnative vines including oriental bittersweet (*Celastrus orbiculatus*), porcelain berry (*Amelopsis brevipedunculata*), Japanese

(continued on next page)

(continued from previous page)

honeysuckle (*Lonicera japonica*), wintercreeper (*Euonymus fortunei*), English ivy (*Hedera helix*), kudzu (*Pueraria lobata*), and mile-a-minute weed (*Polygonum perfoliatum*).

Her control measures include manual elimination, biological methods, fire, and herbicides. The initial methods are hand pulling and digging out root systems, and cutting off spent flowers to prevent seed formation. Glyphosate herbicides, such as Roundup, combined with persistent pulling and cutting back are effective on vines such as honeysuckle, kudzu, and mile-a-minute, shrubs including burning bush (*Euonymus alatus*) and privet, wetland plants including lesser celandine buttercup (*Ranunculus ficaria*), and purple loosestrife (*Lythrum salicaria*), and invasive weeds including garlic mustard (*Alliaria petiolata*), Japanese stilt grass (*Microstegium viminum*), and spotted knapweed (*Centaurea maculosa*).

Salmons observed that fire and cutting back make porcelain berry grow faster. English ivy and honeysuckle also grow faster as a result of disturbance. English Ivy and porcelain berry can be controlled through pulling, clipping seeds and flowers, and the use of the herbicide triclopyr (Garlon 3a).

With persistent treatment selected areas of the park have recovering populations of native saplings and herbaceous plants including bloodroot, Virginia bluebell, mayapple, green dragon, dutchman's breeches, trillium, and redbud.

Edgar David, a professor and landscape architect in the Philadelphia area, presented his work integrating gardens into the natural landscape, identifying the forest type of the community and recreating those growth patterns. He described 'healing the landscape' with restoration of canopy, understory shrubs, and herbaceous groundcover.

David's work at Temple University includes a permanent exhibit of 'The Green Machine,' a stormwater filtering wetland garden.

One of his most innovative designs includes a

system which drains stormwater from a house roof to a trellis built off the house, to a backyard cistern, to an overflow filtration system beneath the back pathway, and then to a recirculation pump. A 75-gallon rain barrel in front of the same house drains stormwater gradually through soaker hoses.

Dick Bir, in outlining basics of plant propagation, spoke of his Rule # 1 of plant propagation: everything depends on everything else. With propagation, this included ripeness of the seed, moisture, requirements for scarification, stratification, and dormancy, rooting hormone proportion, and many other factors.

Bir suggests using observation of a plant in nature to determine the correct timing for collecting, stratifying, or sowing seed. For example, the *Calycanthus florida* holds onto its seeds until February. The seed collector knows that these seeds require a period in cool, moist storage before germination.

A sampling of Bir's many propagation tips includes this: to remove the fleshy fruit from seeds, put them with water in a blender and strain. The fleshy fruit, such as the ripe red dogwood berry, contains chemicals inhibiting germination. Store in low moisture in glass jars in the refrigerator or garage. Root flame azalea from softwood cuttings, *R. carolinum* and most evergreen azaleas from semi-hardwood cuttings.

The Irvine program comes at a great time of the year for refreshing and informing the gardener, offering inspiration for the planning and planting seasons ahead. The plant sale alone is worth the visit, with 14 nurseries and a wide selection of herbaceous and woody goods, from amsonia to yellowwood.

- Wendy Pierce

(Note: For further information about the Irvine Natural Science Center, visit its website at www.explorenature.org.)

("Better Garden" continued from page one)

width of the plant. This is where I see the most mistakes made and sometimes, I get caught on this one myself. How to avoid this mistake? Think of your garden in layers. Start in the back with the tallest plants (i.e., trees and shrubs) and work your way to the front, going down as you plan. Use plants in the foreground that may help to hide some of the "legginess" of the plants behind them. When working with trees and shrubs use the following tips: 1) give them enough room to grow, 2) don't put them underneath the eave of your house, where they won't receive rain, 3) keep tall trees away from power lines and 4) don't hide utility boxes with coarse-leaved plants (such as some of the hollies).

If you follow these basic tips, you should be able to put together a nice and healthy garden. One more tip: don't forget that if you make a mistake, plants can always be moved. Joel Lerner once told me, "a garden should have nine, five-year plans." My own garden goes on more of a three year schedule and sometimes, even one year.

Since most people in Northern Virginia have had most of their trees in their yards removed by the builder, I thought it would be best to concentrate more on my favorite, native, sun-loving plants.

Shrubs and small trees. One of my favorite choices has to be the sourwood (*Oxydendron arboreum*). A member of the Heath family (*Ericaceae*), it is one of the most beautiful, summer-flowering trees I know. It also has the most spectacular fall color and holds its seed heads into the winter. 'Forest Pansy' redbud (*Cercis canadense* 'Forest Pansy') is a nice selection of our native redbud tree, that has beautiful mahogany foliage. Of course, you can never have too many dogwoods (*Cornus florida*) in your yard. I know they are suffering from an introduced Anthracnose disease, but plant them in full sun and they should do all right, as long as you

help them get established.

What to plant along the shrub lines? My personal favorite has to be Virginia sweetspire (*Itea virginicus*). If you've seen my work, you've seen this plant. I'm sure I've planted thousands and I've only had to replace a few. It's one of the most versatile plants I've ever used. It flowers in early summer, gets to be about four feet high and, along with the sourwood, has outstanding fall color and will hold its leaves, well into winter. Oak leaf hydrangea (*Hydrangea quercifolia*) and summersweet (*Clethra alnifolia*) are other great shrubs for the border. There are getting to be quite a few selections of summersweet available in the trade, but my own favorite is still the straight species. It has the most wonderful fragrance when it blooms in late summer and its yellow fall color looks great behind some Virginia sweetspire.

Some special ones. We are really blessed here on the East Coast, with a "boatload" of outstanding native perennials. What I believe to be the most under-used native perennial for sun, is prairie baby's breath (*Euphorbia corollata*). I like the plant so much; it's my e-mail address (euphorbia@aol.com). Its white airy flowers appear in mid-summer and last for nearly two months. It's also one of those plants that just gets nicer and nicer every year. Sally Kurtz from Waterways Nursery gave me my first plant and I've been in love with it ever since.

Another great plant Sally gave me to try, which has performed extremely well in my own garden under these conditions, is hoary vervain (*Verbena stricta*). The only problem is that it seems to be one of those plants that needs to be perfectly sited or it just won't perform well. Nevertheless, it is, without a doubt, the most drought tolerant plant I've seen. I haven't watered mine since I put them in two years ago and they just keep on growing. Its tall (4-5') baby blue flower spikes that appear in mid summer look fantastic behind my prairie baby's breath. It's not

an easy plant to grow in the nursery, so I'm not sure if it will ever become popular in the trade, but if you come across it sometime, it's worth a try.

Some old favorites. Joe-Pye weed (*Eupatorium fistulosum*) and 'Moonbeam' Coreopsis (*Coreopsis verticillata* 'Moonbeam') have different cultural requirements, Joe-Pye being a wetland plant and coreopsis being more of an upland plant. Both can sometimes be planted out of their normal range and still perform well. Joe-Pye is a tall, summer-flowering plant, while 'Moonbeam' is much shorter. If you plant them in the same bed, you'll need something to go in between to cover the "legs" of the Joe-Pye. This is where plants like purple coneflower (*Echinacea purpurea*) and blazing stars (*Liatris spp.*), or even some of the goldenrods (*Solidago spp.*) come in handy. Don't just stick with the purple coneflowers either; there are many other *Echinaceas* becoming available as native plants are growing in popularity. There are also many species of *Liatris* becoming available my favorite of which has to be the rough blazing star (*Liatris squarosa*). This plant might not even be known in the trade without the conservation efforts of Mary Painter. She saw some growing at the intersection of Braddock Rd. and Lee Highway, just as they were about to start a construction project. She received State permission to save the plants and finally has enough nursery stock built up to offer them for sale. Thank you, Mary.

My last tips. 1) Keep your options open, 2) don't be afraid of failing . . . you will, once or twice. 3) Remember why it didn't work: maybe the colors clashed, or they didn't bloom at the same time, like you were expecting. Maybe you needed more color in that spot in July. Plants can be moved, passed on, or thrown away (as I've done with my lythrum), whatever the case, the garden can be re-done. What's one more blister on your hand at this point anyway?

-John C. Magee

NEW YORK IRONWEED

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

During late summer and early fall, one of the loveliest wildflowers in our area is the magnificent ironweed. The striking purple flower heads of this graceful member of the composite family add color and interest to damp roadsides, pond and marsh banks, or damp fields. New York ironweed (*Vernonia noveboracensis*) is the most common species of this genus in our area. The genus name is in honor of William Vernon, an English botanist of the late 1600's and early 1700's who traveled widely in North America. The species name refers to New York where the plant may have first been collected. The range of this species is from Ohio and New York State south to Georgia. In the *Atlas of the Virginia Flora* this species is found in virtually every county of the state.



Ironweed is a member of the Asteraceae or composite family with only disk or tubular flowers. (Many of the composites such as the daisy have
(continued on next page)

(Ironweed continued from previous page)
 both ray and disk flowers with the "petals" being the ray flowers and the disk flowers making up the center.) The purple tubular disk flowers are found in groups of 20-40 or more a head. Each individual flower has a 5-lobed tubular corolla, 5 stamens, a pistil with an inferior ovary and a slender and thread-like style, and like other composites, the calyx (sepals) is the pappus, which in this species is a purple double structure with outer short, narrow scales and inner long bristles. The fruits are achenes, which are elongate, cylindrical, ribbed, and hairy. Like other composites, individual heads of flowers are subtended by leafy bracts that are called an involucre. The involucre of ironweed is bell-shaped or oblong with individual purplish-green bracts each with a long bristle-like tip and that are arranged in a woven pattern. The individual heads are on short stems (peduncles) and are arranged in a flat-topped inflorescence pattern described as a corymbose cyme.

The rather coarse 3-6 foot tall stems of New York ironweed may range from rough hairiness to smooth. The alternate leaves are 3-10 inch long lanceolate with serrated edges and vary in their surface texture as do the stems. This perennial species has a well-developed root system.

Medicinal uses of ironweed by American Indians included making teas from leaves to treat

female problems including relief from after childbirth pain. Root teas were used to treat loose teeth, stomach ulcers, and hemorrhaging.

Worldwide there are more than 500 species of this genus with some tropical species being shrubby. In the Northern Virginia area, there are two less common species other than the more common New York ironweed. *V. glauca* (meaning blue-green) is called broad-leaved ironweed and has leaves that are broader than New York. The pappus is yellowish and the inflorescence is more loosely branched than in New York. The habitat is more upland woods in the piedmont zones from Pennsylvania to Georgia. *V. altissima* (*gigantea* in *Atlas*) is tall ironweed and may be taller than the other two species of our area. Its inflorescence is looser than New York but the pappus is purplish. The habitat of this species is moist areas of more mountainous areas from New York state to Georgia and is only in Loudoun and Fauquier counties in Northern Virginia according to the *Atlas*.

This fall enjoy the beauty of this handsome and colorful genus in our area. Ironweed is often associated with other colorful fall composites such as Joe-Pye weed, goldenrods, or various bright yellow sunflower species. The complementary and contrasting colors of these composites help bring color and beauty at the end of summer into early fall.

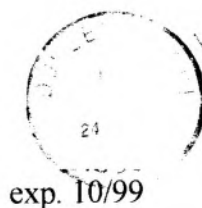
PRINCE WILLIAM WILDFLOWER SOCIETY


A Chapter of the Virginia Native Plant Society
 PO Box 83, Manassas, VA 20108-0083



Giant Sunflower (*Helianthus giganteus*)

Nancy Arrington
 P. O. Box 462
 Manassas, VA 20108-0462



 **Next Meeting: 1 p.m., Sunday, Oct. 10, Prince William Forest Park**

Printed on recycled content paper

