

WILD NEWS

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

Number 00-04

July-August 2000

NATIVE AZALEAS PROGRAM AT JULY 17 MEETING

Don Hyatt, current president of the Potomac Valley Chapter of the American Rhododendron Society, past president of the Azalea Society of America, and a member of the Potowmack Chapter of the Virginia Native Plant Society, will be speaking on azaleas of the eastern United States at the PWWS membership meeting at 7:30 p.m. on Monday, July 17.

Hyatt, a 30-year teacher in Fairfax County Public Schools, has a love of everything rhododendron. His website, East Coast Native Azaleas (www.tjhsst.edu/~dhyatt/azaleas), is a tribute to the 15 species of azaleas found in the eastern US. The website also features wonderful photos of his garden, where he displays and propagates azaleas.

We will meet at the Bull Run Unitarian Universalist Church at 9400 Main Street in Old Town Manassas. (*Note different location.*) The church sits on the corner of Main and Church Streets. Parking can be found along Church Street, Battle Street, and in several nearby municipal parking lots.

For further information about the meeting, call President Gina Yurkonis at 540-347-1027 or Vice-President Nancy Arrington at 703-368-8431.

Annual Meeting Sept 17

PWWS's annual picnic meeting and election of officers will be held Sunday, September 17 this year. Watch your mailbox for the special 30-day notice.

PLANT SALE BREAKS RECORD

Sales as well as the mercury soared at the annual plant sale in May. Revenues posted a PWWS record when the sale grossed over \$3500. Plants alone accounted for over \$3100. It could not have happened without the help of all the wonderful volunteers, including sale chairman Nancy Arrington.

Those who assisted with the sale or donated plants include the following: Tiana Camfiord, Marie Davis, Paul Davis, Kathy Ehrenberger, Don Ehrenberger, Jeanne Endrikat, Kim Hosen, Joann Krumviede, Mary LeKander, Francis Louer, Hannah Largen, Kim Largen, June Najjum, Wendy Pierce, Gail Reynolds, Warren Ryder, Charles Smith, Martha Slover, Leo Stoltz, Carol Thompson, Robin Thoreson, Nancy Vehrs, Cathy Waterhouse, and Gina Yurkonis. Thanks to all! And thank you to all the loyal customers who make this event successful each year!

As we plan next year's sale, please submit photographs of any of the summer/fall blooming plants listed below for Martha Slover to provide appropriate signs for all of our available plants:

- Herb-Robert
- Specific goldenrods (identified)
- Specific sunflowers (identified)
- Stokes Aster
- Sundrops
- Tickseed sunflower

Photos should show a mature plant. The usable part of the photo will be approx. 2.5-3 inches high by 3-5 inches wide. Close-up photos work, but should keep the image within the sizes noted. To submit photos, call Martha Slover at 703-331-0302 or bring them to the July meeting.



From the President - Gina Yurkonis

I was fortunate to attend the Millersville Native Plant Conference outside Lancaster, this June. "Millersville" is always a wonderful and enriching experience. I highly recommend it to anyone who wants to know more about ecology and nature. The committee strives to make the conference more of an inspiration that a how-to and to have participants come away with a renewed commitment to helping the environment.

This year's main topic was Aldo Leopold. Aldo's son was the keynote speaker and shared many experiences growing up with such a notable father. If any of our members have not read *A Sand County Almanac* by Aldo Leopold, I highly recommend it. He was among the first Americans to voice a need for a land ethic and did it eloquently in this small book.

Speakers' topics varied widely from linking areas of good habitat with conservation easements to an overview of our connectedness with the Earth and universe.

Accommodations are not luxurious; most participants bunk in the college dorms. But, the luxury of spending three days with 300 other people sharing what they do and don't do with native plants more than makes up for it. Landscape architects, designers, growers, teachers, and homeowners are all companions at meals and walks.

Millersville is an off-shoot of the Cullowhee Conference at Western Carolina University held each July. "Cullowhee" is as stimulating as they come and fills up quickly. Get on their mailing list if you want to attend next year. Either conference is worth the time and travel to anyone with an interest in native plants and their place in the landscape.

I made a special trip on the way back from Millersville to pick up a load of native azaleas so I'm especially excited to hear this month's speaker. His garden was on the Potowmack

Chapter's Tour this spring and it was a sight to behold! - Clouds of color and fragrance. I hope everyone can join us at the meeting at the Unitarian Church in Manassas.

I also hope everyone marks their calendar for the Annual Meeting September 17. Should be fun; see you soon!

- Gina

Native Plant Seminar and Sale

The ninth annual Irvine Natural Science Center's native plant seminar and plant sale will be held on Saturday, August 26 in Stevenson, Maryland, phone 410-484-2413, website: explorenature.org. Cost is \$50. Seminar registration and an early bird plant sale for registrants begins at 8 a.m. The plant sale, with over a dozen native plant vendors, is open to the general public from 1-3 p.m.

Copies of the registration form will be available from Nancy Vehrs at the July meeting.

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Deadline for the Sept-Oct issue is Sept 1, 2000. Mail information to Nancy Vehrs at 8318 Highland St., Manassas, VA 20110-3671 or e-mail to nvehrs@attglobal.net.

Regrets

"Should we bring the camera?" my husband asked. "No, I can't think of anything I want pictures of," I answered. Been there, done that. Boy, did I regret that decision.

We were on our way to San Francisco for a long weekend. We had planned our time and some of our time was planned for us, but even with the required dinners and Rick's all-day work session, we still had Sunday and Monday on our own. One day was set aside for visiting parks and hiking, the other day we would taste our way through the wineries of Napa Valley.

After checking into our hotel (the gorgeous Fairmont on Nob Hill), we hopped a cable car for some sightseeing. The views from the tops of the city's hills were as breathtaking as we remembered, enhanced by gloriously clear skies. My first regret came at the stop for Lombard Street, most crooked, steepest street you would ever want to drive on. Beautifully landscaped, the curves of the street were filled with flowers. No camera. Fisherman's Wharf is touristy, but fun and the nearby park was nicely landscaped. No camera. Grace Cathedral, a block from our hotel, was surrounded by gorgeous flower beds. No camera.

Ahh, but that was just the beginning of my regrets. On Sunday we drove across the Golden Gate Bridge and north to Muir Woods National Monument. We planned on hiking for an hour or two through the redwoods. It wasn't long before we saw our first wildflowers, great oxalis and redwood sorrel. The plants blanketed the ground through the redwood forest. Next came trillium (identified by their leaves since the flowers had come and gone). Things got worse (or better!) as we hiked up out of the redwood forest. Rolling out to the ocean were sunny meadows spotted with color like an Impressionist's canvas - more wildflowers and no camera.

Our next stop was Point Reyes National Seashore. Jutting out ten miles into the Pacific

Ocean, it sports a different variety of vegetation. I was again regretting my lack of a camera, but at this point I decided to go with the Zen outlook - be in the moment, take in the beauty, enjoy.

The next day driving through Napa Valley and up into the surrounding mountains, we saw even more flowers dotting the roadsides and open fields. I had not thought about the spring wildflowers that would be blooming. At this point we found a bookstore and I bought two books picturing the wildflowers of the area. Those, along with our memory, served to identify some of what we had seen over the last two days: California poppies (*Eschscholzia californica*), Western morning-glory (*Calystegia occidentalis*), miner's lettuce (*Claytonia perfoliata*), and California buttercup (*Ranunculus californicus*) to name a few.

So, I learned a lesson - never go on ANY kind of trip without my camera!

- Diane Flaherty

Wildflower Walks & Classes

Marion Lobstein will conduct walks in Great Falls Park in August and through the fall (third Sunday of the month). She will lead a summer tour of the National Arboretum for the Smithsonian Associates on August 20. Call 202-357-3030 for more information and for registration. She will also teach a botany class for the Fairfax Audubon Society beginning in early September. It will meet every other Wednesday evening beginning after Labor Day and will include some Saturday field trips. For details of this class, those interested should contact Marion at 703-536-7150. Marion will be unavailable mid-late July.

August Board Meeting

The PWWS Board will next meet on August 21 at 7:30 p.m. at Bethel Lutheran Church. All members are welcome to attend. For more info, call Gina Yurkonis at 540-347-1027.

Gardening in Northern Va: an Ecological Framework

(Note: The following article, part two in a series, was originally printed in the Summer 2000 edition of Gardenline, the newsletter of Green Spring Gardens Park in Fairfax County and is reprinted with permission.)

I recently took my 21-month-old son Parker to Ball's Bluff for a nature hike. Parker is a good companion for a plant lover; he spends most of his time picking up sticks and rocks and muttering "wow," while I spend most of my time looking at trees and wildflowers and muttering bigger words, but the gist is the same. Ball's Bluff is both a great place to look for spring wildflowers and a thought-provoking demonstration of a local phenomenon - the slow degradation of our native woodlands. In this article I will briefly discuss our native woods and one of the reasons they are changing as the areas surrounding them become developed.

The approach to the nature trail at Ball's Bluff is through a housing development of the sort that is springing up throughout the area. Large homes are surrounded by fresh looking lawns and scattered trees and shrubs. When you leave the pavement at the end of the development, you head into the woods on a gravel road. At first the woods around you are open, with thickets of exotic honeysuckle and multiflora rose clothing the area between the trees. As you wind your way through the woods, the canopy is denser, the trees older, and the rose and honeysuckle less plentiful. When you reach the parking area, you are on the verge of entering a beautiful mid-Atlantic woodland. The sound of traffic has disappeared, the housing development has been left behind, and the rose and honeysuckle have been replaced by carpets of spring ephemeral wildflowers.

A hike around the nature trail is magical. There are trillium, twinleaf, phlox, wild ginger, bluebells, and other wildflowers. As beautiful as it is, Ball's Bluff presents a nagging question. Most of the woodlands in our suburban parks and

nature areas have only small pockets of these wildflowers. My own home backs up to a neighborhood nature preserve, but I doesn't look anything like Ball's Bluff. Where are the phlox, trillium, and hepatica? Instead, our suburban woods look more like the thickets of rose and honeysuckle I saw near the development.

To begin our discussion, we should acknowledge that woodlands are complex ecosystems. The reasons they change or fail to regenerate are myriad and convoluted. I'm going to discuss just one of these factors in this article, but it tops my list as the likely agent of change in our local woods and helps explain why the woods behind my house, and perhaps the woods in your neighborhood, don't look like Ball's Bluff. The factor is fragmentation. Local woodland are divided and subdivided by roads, housing developments, utility easements, and parking lots. Local zoning and federal regulation do their best to protect unique natural resources, but fragmentation seems to be an inevitable consequence of growth.

By definition, whenever a woodland is fragmented you end up with more woodland edge. This is a distinction that we don't often make, but woodland edge is fundamentally a different habitat than woodland. Woodland edges are interesting and diverse environments that provide useful homes for birds and other wildlife and niches for unique plants such as sassafras, poison ivy, and sumac. Woodland edges, however, do not support typical woodland plants like our spring ephemeral wildflowers.

To illustrate how fragmentation increases woodland edge and decreases woodland, I have created a "thought experiment" involving a sample plot of one hectare or 1,000 square meters. In this example I compare an intact, one hectare plot, with two plots that have been subdivided much as a road or utility cut would divide a local woodland. In all the plots the area remains the same; what changes is the amount of woodland edge. To make the math easier, I have defined "woodland edge" as the area within three

meters of the edge of each plot. In nature, of course, the edge will be deeper in some areas and shallower in others.

Notice that each time I subdivide our plot of one hectare into smaller plots, the ratio of woodland edge to woodland increases. Apportioning one hectare into quarters (Plot 3) nearly doubles the area of woodland edge. In our region, woodlands are being broken into smaller and smaller parcels, creating more edge habitat relative to woodland habitat.

	PLOT 1	PLOT 2	PLOT 3
Total Area	1 hectare	1 hectare	1 hectare
# of Plots	1	2	4
Woodland Area	8,836m ²	8,272m ²	7,744m ²
Woodland Edge	1,164m ² (12%)	1,178m ² (17%)	2,256m ² (23%)

Ants provide a good example of why fragmentation of the sort I just described can lead to loss of plant diversity. I'll begin the discussion of ants with a real tongue twister of a word: "myrmecochory." Myrmecochory is the distribution of seeds by ants. It turns out that many of our woodland wildflowers rely on ants to distribute their seeds including bloodroot, anemone, wild ginger, hepatica, trillium, Dutchman's breeches, and trout lily. Ants are attracted to small appendages on the seeds of these plants called "elaiosomes." These elaiosomes are nutrient rich and a great food source for ants. The ants carry the seeds back to their nests, consume the elaiosomes, and discard the seeds in their own ant-version of a landfill. This refuse turns out to be the perfect environment for germinating seeds. Research in England on ant-dispersed plants revealed that seeds manually planted were far worse off than seeds unwittingly planted by ants. In fact, three years into the research, all of the manually planted seedlings were dead. A typical trip for an ant-distributed seed is three to six feet, but trips of

200 feet have been recorded.

With ants in mind, you can understand why even a two-lane road presents a substantial barrier to dispersal of some of our native wildflowers. Small, isolated stands of wildflowers are easily destroyed and slow to recover. The lesson here is that when we subdivide our woodlands, creating small islands of habitat, we interfere with the resident plant community's regular process of regeneration and ability to respond to natural disasters such as drought, destruction by deer, and disease. Fragmentation and ant dispersal are just a small part of the picture, but I hope they give you a window into how complex and fragile our woodlands are and why they are changing.

- Chris Strand, Director
Green Spring Gardens Park

Martha Slover's Open Garden

Visit Martha's garden from 1-5 p.m. on Saturday, July 15 or Sunday, July 16 at 11800 Hilltop Drive in the Lake Jackson community of Manassas. Tour the garden, talk to folks, take some plants.

Directions from the Manassas end of the Prince William Parkway (# of miles in parentheses): Turn onto LIBERIA RD. towards Rt. 234 S (1.4). Turn LEFT onto DUMFRIES RD./VA 234 (0.3). Turn slight RIGHT onto COLES DR./694 (0.2). Turn RIGHT onto McGRATH RD. (1.1). Turn LEFT onto HILLTOP DR. (0.1). Turn RIGHT onto CHRISTINE DR. (0.01). House is on LEFT.

"We are the unorthodox gardeners who feel no compulsion to pull out campion among the delphiniums; we can vacantly idle away small chunks of time without fretting about an outcrop of buttercups groping at the pulsatillas. Freedom to loll goes with random gardening, it goes with the modicum of chaos that I long to see here and there in more gardens."

- Mirabel Osler in *A Gentle Plea for Chaos: The Enchantment of Gardening*

- Martha Slover (mslover@gmu.edu), 331-0302

Flora of Virginia Project

Exciting progress is being made towards producing a modern *Flora of Virginia*. The last *Flora of Virginia (Flora Virginica)* was published in the mid-1700s, the work of John Clayton of the Gloucester area of colonial Virginia. Marion Lobstein, working with the Virginia Flora Committee of the Virginia Academy of Science (VAS), began work towards this project over a year ago. At the VNPS annual meeting in early June, she presented background on this project to the VNPS Board of Directors and to the general membership in attendance. The Board voted unanimously to support this project. Support for this project has been expressed by the State Arboretum of Virginia Board of Directors, the Director of Blandy Experimental Farm, Wintergreen Nature Foundation, Lewis Ginter Botanical Gardens, and Green Spring Gardens Park. Many individuals (including a number of PWWS members) have stepped forward to help begin this project. Plans for fundraising, questionnaire development, strategic plan development, and negotiations for a project manager are underway. In late May Marion met with Alan Weakley, who is completing a *Flora of the Carolinas and Virginia* and who will be the primary author of the *Flora of Virginia*. This meeting was a very positive one.

PWWS members are encouraged to contact members of the subcommittee to share ideas and comments regarding this project. Members of this subcommittee are Marion Lobstein (mblobst@mnsinc.com), Dr. Rex Baird (jrb@wise.virginia.edu), Dr. Jay Stipes (treedr@mail.vt.edu), and Dr. Michael Renfroe (renfromh@jmu.edu). This subcommittee is working with the Virginia Flora Committee of VAS to move this project forward. Marion, Botany Chair of the Prince William chapter of VNPS and Treasurer of VAS, has agreed to serve as the primary contact person. She may be reached by phone at 703-536-7150 (as well as at the e-mail address given above) if you have ideas

and/or suggestions regarding this project.

At the July meeting of PWWS, a newly developed questionnaire will be available for those in attendance to complete. If you cannot attend the meeting and would like a copy, please email or call Marion. This questionnaire will focus on what you would look for in a flora, how you would use it, and how would you like to be involved in its development.

-Marion Lobstein

May 15 Meeting Minutes

President Gina Yurkonis introduced the speaker for the evening, Nicky Staunton. Nicky showed beautiful slides of a variety of wildflowers. She had photographed all the flowers at nearby sites--Prince William County, the Occoquan Refuge and the G. Richard Thompson Management Area.

After the refreshment break, Gina held a short business meeting. The garden tours in April went well with lots of visitors.

The plant sale on May 13 was record-breaking. PWWS grossed \$3,547.80, with \$3,125 coming from the sale of plants. The selection of plants included 80-85 different varieties and species.

Treasurer Marie Davis reported that the current checkbook balance is \$4,394.93.

Discussion followed concerning the VNPS annual meetings in June 2001 and 2002. PWWS could share hosting of the 2001 meeting with the Piedmont Chapter, or host the 2002 meeting alone. A question was asked concerning possible objection to two successive meetings being held in Northern Virginia. This matter will be discussed further at a future board meeting.

Marion Lobstein reported that small signs for individual plants will go in place at NOVA in the wildflower garden and signs will go up for the nature trail. Marion hopes to have a virtual tour (on the computer) of the garden available later this year. She also noted that progress is being

(Continued on next page)

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made on the book of Virginia flora.

Marion said that summer classes will begin soon at Blandy. Those who are interested should call the Blandy office.

Nicky Staunton reported that development near the G. Richard Thompson Management Area will include a golf course. This will cause a drastic change in the drainage pattern and there has been a welling of opposition against the development.

The meeting adjourned at 9:35 p.m.

-Diane Flaherty, Secretary

Ben Lomond Old Rose Garden Needs Your Help

The perennials are in full bloom at the Old Rose Garden at Ben Lomond Manor House on Sudley Manor Drive in Manassas. Native purple coneflower (*Echinacea purpurea*) and phlox (*P. paniculata*) add much color in the summer. However, like all gardens, it needs some human hands to maintain its form. PWWS has adopted a large bed in the garden and, with just a few volunteers, maintenance can easily be managed. With an irrigation system in place, the weeds flourish along with the desirable plants. Consider volunteering for weeding when the sign-up sheet is circulated at this month's meeting. If you can't commit to a time, just take the opportunity to visit the garden some time and pull a few weeds while you're there! For more information, call Nancy Vehrs at 703-368-2898 or e-mail her at nvehrs@attglobal.net.



BUGBANE
Cimicifuga racemosa

BUGBANE

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

Cimicifuga racemosa, commonly called bugbane or black cohosh, is a perennial member of the Ranunculaceae or buttercup family. This handsome plant that has a less than pleasant fragrance is more common in the mountains of Virginia, but certainly can be found in rich woods in the Northern Virginia area. The stems and leaves of this plant appear in the spring and may easily be confused with blue cohosh (*Caulophyllum thalictroides*), a member of the Berberidaceae or barberry family. The long (up to 12 inches), slender wand-like inflorescences of small white flowers appear by June and plants may bloom into August. This species is found in rich open woods as well as shaded woodland borders and roadsides. The range of this species is from Massachusetts south into Georgia and west into Ohio and Tennessee. The genus name of *Cimicifuga* is from the Latin "cimex" for bug and "fugare" meaning to drive away referring the pungent odor that may drive some insects away, thus the name bugbane. The species name of *racemosa* refers to the raceme type of inflorescence typical of this species. Other common names are black cohosh (cohosh refers to the dark, rough rhizome of the plant), black snakeroot, and squawroot (the last two alluding to the Indian use of this species to treat snakebites and female problems, respectively).

The flowers of bugbane are small (only around 1/4 inch or less long) with 4-5 sepals that are shed soon after the flower opens, no petals but 1-8 white petaloid stamens, numerous showy white stamens, and one to two carpels with short styles and broad stigmas. The flowers lack nectar but present a good pollen reward to its insect pollinators which are usually flies but may also be bees and bumblebees. The pungent fragrance is

thought to attract flies but repel many other types of insects. The fruit that develops from each fertilized flower is a follicle that is $\frac{1}{4}$ - $\frac{1}{3}$ inch long that contains two rows of small reddish-brown seeds. The dried fruits may remain on the plant unopened until early winter and the seeds may rattle within the fruit with shaken by wind or passing animals. Other less common names for this plant due to this characteristic are rattletop, rattleweed, or rattle snakeroot.

Each plant has a slender stem that may be up to six or more feet tall with alternate thrice-compounded leaves with 2-5 coarsely toothed leaflets that are up to 6 inches long and with up to 7 subdivisions. Each mature plant has a well developed dark-colored and rough-textured rhizome with short fibrous roots. The rough and gnarled appearance of the rhizome is due to scars of leaf stems from previous years of growth. By the end of the growing season, pinkish buds for next season's growth may be seen on the rhizome.

The medicinal uses of this plant by American Indian tribes as well as in folk or herbal medicine are numerous. These medicinal uses (mainly of the rhizome) ranged from treating sore

throats, bronchitis, coughs, colds, whooping cough, malaria, yellow fever, smallpox, measles, cholera, headaches, fatigue, hysteria, hives, itching, kidney problems, arthritis, rheumatism, snakebite (as a poultice), high blood pressure, and female problems such as menstrual cramps and the pain of childbirth. Extracts from this plant are thought to have anti-inflammatory (salicylates, the active ingredient of aspirin, is found in the plant), antispasmodic, sedative (even slightly narcotic), diuretic, and expectorant properties. It was not only important in Native American medicine, but also was listed in the U.S. Pharmacopeia from 1820-1936 and in the National Formulary from 1936-1950. Bugbane was also introduced in Europe in the 1860s where it was grown for its medicinal and ornamental properties.

Despite the less than pleasant odor of this attractive summer wildflower species, enjoy its beauty in rich woods of various parks in our area or on Skyline Drive. The delicate wand-like inflorescences of bugbane add interest and beauty to local woods for you to enjoy during the summer months.

PRINCE WILLIAM WILDFLOWER SOCIETY

A Chapter of the Virginia Native Plant Society
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exp. 10/00



 **July Meeting: 7:30 p.m., Monday, July 17, Bull Run Unitarian Universalist Church
Old Town Manassas
"Native Azaleas of the Eastern United States"**