

WILD NEWS

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

Number 00-06

November-December 2000

MEETING NOVEMBER 20

Our own Nancy Arrington, who currently serves as Plant Sale Chair, will present this month's program on *Gardening with Native Shrubs*. Nancy was the PWWS founder and first president and served as VNPS horticulture chair for many years. She has already presented this slide show to various area garden clubs.

Prior to the program, members will be asked to participate in a short small-group brainstorming session to produce ideas on the direction PWWS will follow in the coming years. Share your ideas for programs, activities, and priorities that will enhance your membership in the society. Think about what you'd like PWWS to become in both the near and distant future. Your only constraint is your imagination.

The business meeting will follow the program and door prizes, including a hand-crafted garden box and at least one native shrub, will be awarded. Door prizes will become a regular feature of all membership meetings.

Some VNPS T-shirts and mugs are still available and will be sold at this meeting. Long-sleeve black T-shirts are \$15, yellow short-sleeve ones are \$10, and mugs are \$12. Remember, holiday gift-giving is just around the corner.

The November 20 meeting will be held at 7:30 p.m. at Bethel Lutheran Church, located at the intersection of Plantation Lane and Sudley Road (Rt. 234) in Manassas.

For further information about the meeting, call President Nancy Vehrs at 703-368-2898 or Vice-President Leo Stoltz at 703-791-6175.

CLAUDIA THOMPSON-DEAHL NAMED AWARD WINNER

On September 22 the Reston Citizens Association (RCA) awarded its 2000 Community Service Award to Claudia Thompson-Deahl, the Environmental Resource Manager at the Reston Association, for her work in protecting and enhancing the environment, protecting the natural ecology, and preserving open space. Claudia, a charter member of PWWS, served as president, vice-president, and program chair. Last year she presented a program on meadows to the chapter.

At the Reston Association, Claudia is responsible for the health and well-being of natural areas. Her responsibilities include tree care and removal, reforestation efforts, removal of invasive species, responding to calls on injured and nuisance wildlife, and working with Scouts and scouting projects.

In addition to being recognized by the RCA, the Fairfax County Board of Supervisors will honor Claudia for this award at its meeting at the Fairfax County Government Center on November 20 at 9:30 a.m. Everyone is invited to attend.

NEXT MEETING

The next general meeting, the annual member slide show, will be held Monday, January 15, 2001, at 7:30 p.m. Call Charles Smith, Program Chair, at 703-361-5125 if you have slides you can share.



From the President - Nancy Vehrs

"It's déjà vu all over again" to quote some infamous baseball player. That's how I began an email to Nicky Staunton back in August when I agreed to accept the nomination for PWWS president for a second time and she was VNPS president-elect for a non-successive third term. I didn't feel I was ready for my first presidency in 1992, but with a very supportive Board, we all survived and our chapter even hosted our one and only VNPS annual meeting.

I'd like to think I'm more prepared for the presidency this time, but I still need help. For PWWS (and VNPS, for that matter) to grow and prosper, the Board of Directors and I need to know what you like and dislike about the society. What would you like it to do that it isn't already doing? Is there something that it could offer that would energize you to become more involved? Or do you prefer to simply voice your support for *conserving wild flowers and wild places* through your annual membership fee? All members are welcome - no one *has* to actively participate to be a valued member. But if you'd like to contribute, how can you share your ideas? Come to the November meeting and participate in a short brainstorming activity at the beginning of the meeting or feel free to call or email me with your thoughts (703-368-2898, nvehrs@attglobal.net). While this session is chapter oriented, we may generate many ideas that can be incorporated into the state's stakeholder session this winter. That VNPS retreat is scheduled for February 24 at Pocahontas State Park in Richmond and more details on that event will arrive in your mailboxes within the next week.

Many thanks go to Frances and Phil Louer for graciously hosting the chapter's annual meeting - and ensuring the fabulous fall weather! It's such a treat to visit their five-acre garden any time of the year. The fall, with all its colorful asters, offers such a contrast to their spring garden with

its thousands of azaleas. The pond near the house was ringed with colorful flowers. Phil's tales of thwarting a hungry great blue heron from dining on his fish explained the pipes he had laid across the pond. Phil's computer-generated garden map served the members well in touring the far reaches of the garden. Those who ventured near the back of the property witnessed an abundance of tired jacks-in-the-pulpit lying on their sides, their bright red berries revealing their identities. The naturally wet area back there had dried up for the season, but the vegetation provided the clues to verify that it was a swale. In that same area some members sighted spicebushes with red berries, quite a delight since not all bushes produce berries.

If you've never attended an annual meeting, try to join us at next year's meeting; you'll be glad you did!

- Nancy

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VNPS home page: <http://www.vnps.org>.

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Hospitality Chair: Warren Ryder, 703-368-2898

Membership Chair: OPEN

Program Chair: Charles Smith, 703-361-5125

Plant Rescue Chair: OPEN

Plant Sale Chair: Nancy Arrington, 703-368-8431

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Deadline for the Nov-Dec issue is January 1, 2001. Mail information to Nancy Vehrs at 8318 Highland St., Manassas, VA 20110-3671 or email to nvehrs@attglobal.net.

Minutes of Annual Meeting

The annual meeting was held at the Haymarket area home of Frances and Phil Louer on September 17, 2000.

After a potluck lunch, President Gina Yurkonis opened the meeting. She reminded those who had sent in an absentee ballot that they need not vote since their votes would be counted in the absentee ballot batch. Gina then introduced each member of the slate of officers for November 1, 2000 - October 31, 2002. The candidates were:

Nancy Vehrs - President

Leo Stoltz - Vice President

June Najjum - Secretary

Marie Davis - Treasurer

Gina then asked for any nominations from the floor. There being none, the members voted unanimously to approve the slate for the next term.

The next order of business was approval of next year's budget, which had appeared in the newsletter. No amendments or changes were made. Leo Stoltz moved to approve the budget, Robyn Thoreson seconded and the vote was unanimous.

Gina said that the annual report for 2000 will be printed in the next newsletter rather than being read at the meeting.

A drawing was then held for door prizes, which were contributed by Gina, Wendy Pierce, Warren Ryder, Nicky Staunton, and Nancy Vehrs. Winners were Robyn Thoreson, Bill Hendrickson, Jim Price, Frances Louer, and Leo Stoltz.

Nancy Vehrs requested volunteers to maintain the PWWS flower bed at the Ben Lomond Rose Garden.

On behalf of the membership, Nancy

Arrington presented Gina with a pewter plate, commemorating the time she contributed as president of PWWS.

After the meeting adjourned, members toured the Louer gardens.

-Diane Flaherty, Secretary

VNPS Expresses Thanks

Right up until the first of 2001, gifts of support to VNPS will be gratefully received for this year's fundraiser. The gifts so far have been generous and have reduced recent deficits.

Mulch Month at Ben Lomond Old Rose Garden

November is mulch-spreading month at the Ben Lomond Old Rose Garden in Manassas. Even the goldenrod in the PWWS bed has faded and is ready for a winter nap. Come join local garden clubs and other volunteers in spreading the mulch on the beds on Saturday mornings this month. This public garden is located on Sudley Manor Drive just two blocks past the K-Mart shopping center. For further information contact Nancy Vehrs at 703-368-2898 or email her at nvehrs@attglobal.net.

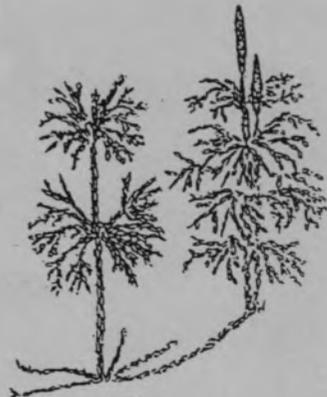
Welcome New Members

PWWS thanks all members who have renewed faithfully and welcomes the following new members:

Judith L. Handres, Fredericksburg
Mary Williams, Woodbridge

Holiday Reminder

Once again PWWS asks members to refrain from using clubmoss (*Lycopodium* spp.) such as ground pine or running cedar in Christmas decorations. These slow-growing plants are in danger of over-collection because of their use in Christmas roping and wreaths. In addition, *Lycopodium* contains spores that are very high in oils and thus is highly flammable.



Ground Pine
Lycopodium flabelliforme



Shining Clubmoss
Lycopodium lucidulum

Plant Rescues

When I joined PWWS in 1987, development was rampant in the area and the Society attempted to preserve wildflowers by rescuing plants from building sites. Rescued plants were transplanted to suitable habitats in either area parks or members' gardens. While this accomplished little in the way of true conservation, it afforded members who feel powerless in the face of massive development activity a sense of accomplishment and empowerment. It also allowed for true camaraderie with persons of like mind.

As the Society sought to truly conserve wildflowers in their natural habitats, rescue fever lessened. PWWS has not organized a local rescue in many years, yet each day more forests and open spaces become tract homes and shopping centers.

Many members continue to check "plant rescues" as an interest on their membership forms. To facilitate these rescues, PWWS needs to form a committee to revive this activity. PWWS members can share information on proposed developments and the members of the committee can follow up with the appropriate parties to organize plant rescues. With the power of email all of the necessary information can be disseminated with ease.

Interested? If you could serve on the plant rescue committee or, better yet, volunteer to chair such a committee, please give me a call. I plan to raise this idea at the November meeting and hope to spark some interest.

- Nancy Vehrs
President

No December Board Meeting

The PWWS Board will not hold a formal meeting in December. The next Board meeting is scheduled for February 19, 2001.

ALUMROOT

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

When you walk in the woods in the late fall or winter months, you do not see much ground cover of living leaves. Some of the few evergreen leaves you may find are the handsome basal leaves of alumroot *Heuchera americana*, which help add color and interest to the forest floor or a rock ledge at this time of year. Alumroot, a perennial member of the saxifrage family (*saxifragaceae*), blooms from May until mid summer. Its habit is dry, rocky ground to dry woods with a range from Connecticut south to Georgia and west to Michigan.

The genus name of *Heuchera* in honor of the eighteen century German botanist H.H. Heucher and the species name *americana* meaning of America were both assigned by Linnaeus. (Another, much rarer, species of alumroot, *H. pubescens* is found in Prince William and Fauquier Counties in our area. In this article the common name alumroot refers to *H. americana*.) Other common names for alumroot include American sanicle, cliff weed, ground maple, rock geranium, and split rock. Most of these other common names refer to the shape of the leaf or the common growth site on rocks.

The flowers of alumroot are rather small and inconspicuous individually, but they are attractive in mass. The flowering stem may be up to two feet or taller with numerous bell-shaped flowers that are less than ¼ inch long. The flower has five green to red-tinged sepals fused together to form a bowl-shaped disk of hypanthium, five pale to darker purple petals, five stamens, and a pistil with two styles. The petals and stamens are inserted on the hypanthium. The flowers are scentless, but probably are pollinated by small insects. The fruits are small greenish-red

capsules (approximately ⅛ inch in size) which in mass add color to the plant until the fruits are fully ripe and turn brown. The very tiny seeds have dark red barbs that can be seen only under magnification. Seed dispersal is mechanical when the capsules open and the seeds drop out onto the forest floor.

The single flowering stem is usually leafless but may have one or two leaves. The evergreen basal leaves have four to six inch long petioles. The smooth to slightly hairy leaves are usually broadly heart-shaped with five to nine shallow lobes and blunt teeth. The primary underground structure is a well-developed rhizome with numerous fibrous roots.



The leaves of alumroot were eaten in the spring by some Indian tribes as well as used to make poultices for wounds or teas for various ailments. It is the rhizome or so-called root that has had the most medicinal uses. The rhizomes have stringent and styptic properties due to the presence of high levels of tannins. Extracts of the rhizome have been used by American Indians and in folk medicine to treat heart disease, sore throat, diarrhea, thrush, bowel complaints, female problems, hemorrhages, skin ailments, and even malignant tumors. This species is the source of the drug heuchera which has purported antiseptic and astringent properties. At high dosages, extract of alumroot can act as a gastric irritant and even cause kidney and liver failure.

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In the fall and winter when you are enjoying a brisk walk through the woods, keep your eye out for the basal leaves of this evergreen plant. Then, next spring and summer, go back to observe the blooming and fruit set. Alumroot may not be one of our showiest native plants, but it certainly adds interest to the deciduous woods all year round.

Communication Opportunity

Send your email address to Nancy Vehrs at *nvehrs@attglobal* to add your name to a distribution list she is establishing to enhance communication between the Board of Directors and members. This list will be used to notify members of any "last minute" events - those events that for some reason did not meet the bi-monthly newsletter deadline - or other quick communications.

MISSING

The PWWS display board has been missing for some time. Anyone with information as to its whereabouts should call Nancy Vehrs at 703-368-2898. *Reward!*

New Membership Chair Sought

PWWS is seeking a new membership chair. Duties include maintaining a database of members as well as developing ways to keep and recruit members. Contact Nancy Vehrs if you're willing to volunteer for this position.



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



Nancy Arrington
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exp. 10/01

 **Next Meeting: 7:30 p.m., Monday, Nov. 20, Bethel Lutheran Church, Manassas "Gardening with Native Shrubs"**