

WILD NEWS

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

Number 01-03

May-June 2001

MAY 21 MEETING ON NECTAR GARDENING

Alonso Abugattus, representing the Washington Area Butterfly Club, will speak on nectar gardening at the May 21 membership meeting. Alonso is a long-time VNPS member, past President of the Potowmack Chapter and past state board member. He is a naturalist for Arlington County and works at Long Branch Nature Center. He speaks and teaches throughout the Washington, DC region on topics ranging from Butterflies and Wildflowers to Native Americans and flying squirrels. Alonso is also an active member of the National Association of Interpreters.

The meeting will begin at 7:30 p.m. on Monday, May 21 at Bethel Lutheran Church, corner of Sudley Road (Rt. 234) and Plantation Lane in Manassas. For further information about the meeting, call President Nancy Vehrs at 703-368-2898.

SHOP PLANT SALE MAY 12

Join the crowd for the annual plant sale on Saturday, May 12, 9 a.m. to noon, on the grounds of Bethel Lutheran Church located at the corner of Plantation Lane and Sudley Road (Rt. 234) in Manassas. Come early for the best selection!

Volunteers are still needed. Call Nancy Arrington at 703-368-8431 to volunteer or just show up at 7:30 a.m. and we'll find a job for you. Anyone providing plants should advise Nancy prior to the sale so she will know what will be offered. Please plan to bring your plants to the church by 7:30 a.m. the day of the sale or make prior transportation arrangements with Nancy.

COMBAT INVASIVE ALIENS AT OCCOQUAN BAY REFUGE MAY 27

At the northeastern edge of Prince William County along the Potomac River exist many havens for residents and tourists both. The river edge along the Potomac where the Occoquan River ends is also a haven for species such as bald eagles, covered by Federal law under the Endangered Species Act, herons, and ospreys. There are parks in abundance along the Potomac - Mason Neck State Park and Federal Wildlife Refuge, Occoquan Bay Wildlife Refuge, Leesylvania State Park, and Veterans Park. As a newcomer to Prince William County, I am very much aware and in appreciation of the river and the beauty that is so close by.

Unfortunately, we are losing the nativeness of the species within the county. What does this mean and why does it matter? Species such as Japanese stilt grass, (*Microstegium vimineum*), Norway maple (*Acer platanoides*), Tree of Heaven (*Ailanthus altissima*), and Mile a minute weed (*Polygonum perfoliatum*) are displacing native species and are disrupting ecosystems. Often, these plant invaders, as they are called, form monocultures and out compete the native species. Animals such as frogs, birds, and deer have co-evolved and their diets are dependent on the native species in Virginia.

In some areas, such as Veterans, Mason Neck Wildlife Refuge, and Occoquan Bay, these invaders have changed the landscape. Imagine walking into a forest. How would you picture it in your mind? If you now walked into many forested areas in Prince William County,

(continued on page four)



From the President - Nancy Vehrs

Whew! It's been an exhausting, but exhilarating spring! So many events, so little time!!

Warren and I were pleased that many members were able to join us in our garden on April 7 to welcome the Virginia bluebells and other early spring ephemerals. While the area's long, cold winter delayed some of the expected blooms, our guests had the opportunity to see bloodroot, the white flowers of which are usually past in early April. Some guests enjoyed the chance to see plants like Jack-in-the-pulpit in their early stage when they begin pushing through the leaf litter in search of the sun. Those mild winters the last few years raised blooming expectations in my mind. Maybe it's better to return to a more "normal" beginning of spring.

Our participation at the Spring Fling garden expo at the fairgrounds proved to be a great success. Thank you, Nicky Staunton and Leo Stoltz, for erecting the huge VNPS display board in the very early hours and staffing the booth. Many attendees visited the PWWS table for advice on native plants and many also registered for the drawing for the gift certificate for our plant sale. Congratulations to Robin Mack of Manassas, the lucky winner of our drawing.

The spring garden tours were as popular as always. Many thanks go to Marie, Jeanne, and Tiana, and all the volunteers who ensured their success. We plan to offer summer garden tours and have set a tentative date of July 22. More info will be provided as details are completed.

While I knew I needed to complete the newsletter, I couldn't resist making time for a spring hike in the mountains instead. Warren and I headed out to George Washington National Forest at Massanutten Mountain near New Market to go on a lovely hike. The views from the rocky outcroppings were hazy on that humid day (Saturday, May 5), but wildflowers like tiny

spring iris, wild geraniums, spring beauty, and pink ladies slippers cheered us as we climbed the long hill. Wild azaleas delighted me, especially the bright pink *rhododendron roseum* that carries such a sweet fragrance. The rufous-sided towhees seemed to be the most active birds that day, but we also saw the brilliant colors of both the scarlet tanager and indigo bunting. Lovely butterflies including the tiger swallowtail flirted with us as we walked. Lunch next to a crystal clear pond made it a truly enchanting outing.

Don't forget that the annual plant sale is Saturday, May 12. We hope to see a lot of our members there and can use some volunteers before and during the sale.

Our meeting on May 21, with a program on nectar gardening, caps our spring events. This topic is a good one to follow the backyard habitat program in March and should encourage all of us to be better butterfly gardeners. If anyone missed the March meeting and would like to receive any of the extra handouts, just let me know.

- Nancy

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Deadline for the July-August issue is **June 30, 2001**. Mail information to Nancy Vehrs at 8318 Highland St., Manassas, VA 20110-3671 or email to nvehrs@attglobal.net.

Other Upcoming Plant Sales

Garden Fair at State Arboretum

On Mother's Day weekend, May 12 and 13, the State Arboretum at Blandy will host Garden Fair from 10 a.m. to 4:30 p.m. This festival is one of the largest plant and garden-supply sales on the East Coast. It's two full days of plant sales, exhibits, guided tours, educational events, games for kids, music, and much more.

Garden Fair is the largest annual fund-raising event sponsored by the Foundation of the State Arboretum. A \$5 per car parking donation is requested.

The State Arboretum is open 365 days a year, dawn to dusk, and is located on Route 50 in Clarke County, about 10 miles east of Winchester and 20 miles west of Middleburg, in the Northern Shenandoah Valley. For more information, call 540-837-1758, ext. 21.

Spring Plant Sale at Green Spring Gardens

Green Spring Gardens Park, located at 4601 Green Spring Road in Annandale, will hold its annual Spring Plant Sale from 10 a.m.-3 p.m. on Saturday, May 19.

As part of this huge sale, the Potowmack Chapter will sell native plants grown by its members or propagated by the Chapter in beds provided for use at Green Spring. Plant sale coordinators expect to have a good supply of cinnamon, ostrich, and royal ferns this year.

Green Spring Gardens is easy to reach. Take Beltway Exit 6-E (Little River Turnpike, Rt. 236) east three miles to a left on Green Spring Road. The Horticultural Center is down the road on the right. For further information, call the park at 703-642-5173.

June Board Meeting

The PWS Board will next meet on June 18 at 7:30 p.m. For more information, call Nancy at 703-368-2898.

Gardens Tours Another Success

Sunday, April 29 presented a picture-perfect day for the annual spring garden tours. More than 100 persons visited each garden.

Many thanks are extended to the gracious hosts who shared their gardens: Tiana and Bob Camfiord, Jeanne and Stan Fowler, and Marie and Paul Davis. Thank you's go to all of the volunteers who assisted during the tours: Nancy Arrington, Kathy Ehrenberger, Jeanne Endrikat, Bonnie Fulford-Nahas, Joann Krumviede, June Najjum, Valerie Neitzey, Wendy Pierce, Warren Ryder, Charles Smith, Robyn Thoreson, Nancy Vehrs, Helen Walter, Helen Winn, and Gina Yurkonis.

Plug for Natural Lawns

Last month Mama, daughter Susan, and I visited the grand estates on the Charlottesville garden tour and what struck me about how the rich people do things down there were the lawns. None of them looked like they had been touched by herbicides, and probably not fertilizer either. They were a lovely mix of grass, clover, chickweed, moss, and who knows what else, instead of a golf course monoculture. It looks like chemlawns are mainly a middle class suburban affliction.

There were busloads of garden clubs from all over the place on these tours, so I hope at least a few of them noticed enough to spread the word when they get home. Something else I liked about the gardens were the lovely, old fashioned plants like lilacs, peonies, boxwoods, and roses that hadn't had all their fragrance hybridized out of them. Those gardens smelled as good as they looked. Except for John Kluge's place, which had no sign of life other than a small army of security guards, most of the gardens looked like they were really lived in and enjoyed.

- Helen Walter

(Invasive Aliens - continued from page one)

the picture would be vastly changed. Now, *microstegium* has covered the forest floor - instead of seeing decaying leaves - brown forest floor - you would see a light green grass, about a foot in height, covering the floor. This plant has transformed much of the landscape in Mason Neck Wildlife Refuge, and is spreading in Veterans and Occoquan Bay. Fortunately it has not appeared to have made a debut in Leesylvania as of yet.

Volunteers are asked to assist in restoring the nativeness along the Potomac River. In the past 20-30 years, the health of the Potomac has improved, and we would like to further improve the ecosystem. For a first-hand view of *microstegium*, take a drive through Occoquan from Old Bridge Road; it lines the edge of the road, slowly making its way into the forest.

A *Microstegium vimineum* pull is planned for Sunday, May 27 beginning at 9 a.m. Other parks or natural areas will be covered on a regular basis, the fourth Sunday of the month at 9 a.m. If you would like to join in battling the invasion of these foreign plants, please contact me at 703-583-7509 or via email, acaicedo@gmu.edu. The state of Maryland is working hard at removing invasives and has made significant progress in restoring its native plants. Maybe we can do the same in Virginia.

For more information about Maryland's progress, you may visit its website at <http://www.mdflora.org/>.

-Amy Caicedo

(Editor's note: Amy will discuss this effort at the May 19 meeting and hopes for your support.)

**New Conservation Tool**

ConserveOnline is a public library of conservation tools, techniques, and experience, and a community of conservation practitioners. This website is intended to provide information and support to anyone making conservation related decisions, from the staff of conservation organizations to land managers at government agencies to local land trusts to private landowners.

You will find full text journal articles from 29 conservation, ecology, and botany journals through the Journal Storage Project (JSTOR). This is an effort of libraries and foundations to save library shelf space by archiving journals on the web. In order not to compete with journal subscriptions, JSTOR uses what they call a "moving wall": depending on the journal, the most recent year or two will not be available through JSTOR. ConserveOnline is an open forum for sharing successes and failures, and for connecting scientific research with field-based conservation practice.

Try it out: <http://www.conserveonline.org>.

-Diane Flaherty

On a Wing and a Prayer

On Thursday, April 26 at the Smithsonian National Zoological Park, the "On a Wing and a Prayer - Migratory Birds of the Americas" exhibition opened to the public. The collection of 64 bird photographs by world-famous Canon "Explorer of Light" nature photographer Arthur Morris draws attention to the plight of migratory birds and the importance of habitat conservation through his stunning photography.

The pieces will be displayed for one year in the Visitor's Center, BirdHouse, and Amazonia Science Gallery of the zoo.

-Diane Flaherty

March 19 Meeting Minutes

Nancy Vehrs called the meeting to order at 7:43 p.m. The meeting began with Charles Smith's introduction of our speaker, Laurie Liddick from the National Wildlife Federation. Laurie presented colorful slides of wildlife that could be attracted to our own backyards, by providing for their basic needs. The basic needs are: food (not just feeders but native plants), water (often overlooked by homeowners), cover (protection from cold), and places to rear their young (manmade and natural). We were invited to join the 28,000 citizens that have certified their yards as National Backyard Habitats. "Habitat Stewards" are volunteers who help others adapt their yards into sanctuaries for wildlife.

After announcements of T-shirt sales, volunteer sign-ups, and free publications available, we took a break to enjoy refreshments provided by Charles, Gina, June, and Warren. We reconvened for business at 8:50 p.m. Nicky Staunton moved that the minutes be accepted from the January meeting. It was seconded by Helen Walter and carried by unanimous vote. Marie Davis followed with our treasurer's report. The current balance of \$1,664.31 will be used to handle PWWS expenses.

Many volunteer opportunities were announced including:

-Prince William Extension's Spring Fling at the fairgrounds (staffing the booth on Apr. 28th)

-Spring Garden Tours, Sunday Apr. 29th (helping the three hostesses -Tiana, Marie, and Jeanne)

-Plant Sale, May 12th-contact Nancy Arrington to volunteer during the sale.

Marion Lobstein gave out information about the *Flora* project. By fall 2001, there will be a need for volunteers. Laying the groundwork to raise the \$2.3 million for the project has kept her busy. You may contact her web site with any questions or concerns:

www.mnsinc.com/mblobst/

President Nancy Vehrs and Warren Ryder

invited everyone to visit their garden on Saturday, April 7th between the hours of 2 to 4 p.m. to frolic among the Virginia Bluebells and other early woodland wildflowers.

Wildflower walks coming this spring:

Charles will lead one on April 8th from 1-2:30 p.m. in Centreville, and another at the Web Refuge in Clifton on April 14th from 10-12 noon.

Marie Davis will lead one on April 15th (Easter) at 10 a.m. in Great Falls, and another at 2:30 p.m. at Balls Bluff.

Nicky Staunton will lead one on April 15th at the Bull Run Regional Park. She will also do three Wildflower Walks for the *Flora* of Virginia Project including a walk through the Occoquan Wildlife Refuge. Anyone interested may contact her for planning the date and time. A \$10 donation to the *Flora* is requested for each wildflower walk.

Reminder from Nicky: Virginia Native Plant Society Annual Meeting will be in Winchester on June 1, 2, and 3. There will be lots of interesting activities. Read your VNPS newsletter for the details.

Robyn Thoreson, Jeanne Fowler, and Amy Hamilton were each awarded a door prize. Afterwards the meeting adjourned at 9:14 p.m.

June Najjum, Secretary

Attendance:

Amy J. Hamilton	Charlotte Cochard
Tiana Camfiord	Helen Walter
Karen Waltman	Helen Winn
Marie Davis	Kim Angeli
Nancy Arrington	Margaret Lewis
Blythe Merritt	Mida Page Sheehan
Micky Sullivan	Helen Rawls
Jeanne Endrikat	June Najjum
Nancy Vehrs	Maggie Hart
Mary Seikel	Warren Ryder
Diane Flaherty	Jeanne Fowler
Valerie Neitzey	Gina Yurkonis
William Hendrickson	Robyn Thoreson
Kathy Ehrenberger	Marion Lobstein

VNPS Annual Meeting is for the Birds

Visit the "Top of Virginia" to explore interesting ridge and valley habitats, hear stimulating speakers, and visit with other excited and committed VNPS members. The Piedmont Chapter will host the VNPS annual meeting on Friday-Sunday, June 1 -3, 2001, based at the Holiday Inn in Winchester. Field trips and workshops will begin at the State Arboretum at Blandly.

Friday night's speaker will be Jim Gilbert, Executive Director of the Linnaeus Arboretum and naturalist at Gustavus Adolphus College in St. Peter, Minnesota, who whose subject will be "Phenology - A Tool for Better Nature Observations."

Saturday and Sunday's field trip choices include hikes to view rare plants, a canoe trip on the Shenandoah, workshops on butterfly gardening, and creating bird-friendly habitats, respectively, and a trip to a native plant nursery.

Saturday evening, George Fenwick, Founder and President of the American Bird Conservancy, will be the keynote speaker at the banquet with the topic "Overlapping of Conservation Efforts for Plants and Birds."

Full information and registration is available at the VNPS website, www.vnps.org, or call the VNPS office at 440-837-1600, email: vnpsofc@shentel.net.

Native Plant Conference

The 11th Annual Native Plants in the Landscape Conference, focusing on the best plants and practices for natural garden designs utilizing native plants, will be held June 7-9, 2001, at Millersville University in Lancaster County, PA. Contact the Office of Extended Programs, Millersville University, 717-872-3030, email: roma.sayre@millersville.edu, <http://muweb.millersville.edu/~npil/index.html>.

Humor from Imschweiler

We're Waiting for Confirmation of the Following:

On Groundhog Day, 11 a.m., Prof. Reklöv Reliewshmy, emeritus from the University of Jungla Doom, will lead a search for virtual botanic reality at Washington Overlook Memorial Regional Park. You will see plenty of things, including *Dulla boringissima* L. et al., a federally aggressive species. Prof. Reliewshmy, a lifelong principal of the famous "Bradford deploy," owns lots of PhDs and presently investigates planned parenthood for a new generation of zero-day-flies in the Internet. His book *MacWebbs* has amazed national botany.

Participation is limited to Pi. There is more than enough space, but registration is required. Call the answering machine at 10-10-10-222, then transfer big bucks, pack a lunch, and watch your screen @ WWW.DOUBLEYOU.WWW . . .

- Volker Imschweiler

Wildflower Walks & Classes

Marion Lobstein will continue to conduct her third Sunday of the month walks at Great Falls Park in Virginia from 10 a.m. to 12:30 p.m. on May 20. Call her at 703-536-7150 for a reservation.

Marion will teach a 3 credit hour (through the University of Virginia) Field Botany 9 a.m. to 4 p.m., June 25-28, July 2-5, and July 9-12 at the State Arboretum at Blandly. This course will cover basic principles of botany with emphasis on the classification, identification, and evolution of flowering plants. For additional information call Blandly Experimental Farm at (540)837-1758, ext. 21, website www.virginia.edu/~blandly/.

CRESTED DWARF IRIS

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

One of the loveliest spring wildflowers of rich woodlands or along streams is the delicate dwarf crested iris - *Iris cristata*. This diminutive member of the iris family Iridaceae is our most common species of native iris in northern Virginia. This perennial species ranges from Maryland west to Ohio and Indiana and south to Tennessee, Georgia, and Missouri. It is primarily found in piedmont and mountain areas in these states.

The scientific name *Iris* is from the Greek word for rainbow, referring to the range of colors of the variety of species of irises and *cristata* means "crested," referring to the raised projections on the upper surface of the petaloid sepals. Other names for *Iris cristata* are either crested iris or dwarf iris.

The relatively small flowers for an iris species are two and one-half to three inches in size and are borne one to three flowers per each one-to-three-inch tall flowering stem. The three blue to violet sepals are one and one-half to three inches long and resemble petals and project downward with three prominent white to orange ridges that form a crest in the center of each petal. The three petals are approximately the same length, but narrower than the sepals, stand upward, and are the same color as the sepals. The three stamens arch over the three petaloid styles that project over the stamens. The ovary of the pistil is inferior (other flower parts attach above the ovary rather than under the ovary). The flowers have a slight scent and are pollinated primarily by bees and bumblebees. The fruits that develop are capsules that are three-sided and contain a number of yellowish brown seeds that are 1/16-1/8 inch long with a projection called an

aril.

The lance-shaped leaves are two-ranked as in other irises and are shorter than the stem up to eight inches long. There is no stem above ground below the leaves. The one to three-inch tall flowering stem is terete or round. The underground storage structure is a slender, branched rhizome with fibrous roots.

The rhizomes of all irises are poisonous with the presence of the compound irisin. The rhizome and all flower parts may cause dermatitis or skin irritation in some persons. The rhizomes cause diarrhea and vomiting when ingested in too high a concentration. Like many "poisons," extracts or other preparations of the rhizomes of irises have been used to treat various ailments such as liver problems, ulcers, earache, toothache, colds, and cholera, and as a laxative. Native Americans used iris rhizome in many of the ways just mentioned and also pulverized the rhizome to make a poultice to treat burns, wounds, and rheumatic joints.

Even though *I. cristata* is the most common iris in our area, there are five other species of irises found in our area that include four native species and one introduced species. The native species are *I. virginica* (Virginia blue flag), *I. versicolor* (larger blue flag), *I. prismatica* (narrow blue flag) and *I. verna* (spring iris). All of the native species are blue to lavender while the introduced species *I. pseudoacorus* (yellow flag) is yellow in color. All of these iris species (except the spring iris that blooms in early spring) bloom from late April into May. This spring look for these attractive irises that rival the beauty of the cultivated species.



July Membership Meeting

Mark your calendar now for the July 16 meeting, program and location to be announced in the next edition of *Wild News*.

Reception Honoring Jim Waggener

Members are invited to a reception honoring Jim Waggener on Sunday, May 20 from 2-5 p.m. in Woodbridge. Jim and his wife Joan have moved from Lake Ridge to Alexandria. Jim was the one citizen who rallied others to demand that the Army's Harry Diamond Lab be transferred to US Fish and Wildlife Service, basing the importance of the site on the bird inventory, plant inventory of 20 communities, the function as a restover place for migrating birds, plus nesting site for many birds. That site is now the Occoquan Bay National Wildlife Refuge. RSVP to Nicky Staunton for directions, nstaunton@earthlink.net or 703-368-9803.

Items Needed for Auction

As a fundraising event at the VNPS annual meeting June 2, each chapter has been asked to

contribute a "Treasure Chest" to be auctioned off. Each treasure chest would consist of several items related to a central theme that would be of interest to VNPS members. Items should be presented in a container that itself would be desirable or useful.

Treasure chest values should range in price from \$10 to \$100, with items for the chests being new or hand-crafted. Some suggested themes are: Birds and Bird feeding, Vegetable Gardening, Outdoor Hiking, Bookworm, Native Plants, A Day in DC, Water Works, or an Herb Basket. Anyone with ideas or items to contribute are encouraged to contact Nancy Vehrs at 703-368-2898.

Walk for Flora

Nicky Staunton will lead a wildflower hike for PWWS on Sunday, May 13, at 2 p.m. at Conway-Robinson Memorial State Forest outside Gainesville to benefit the *Flora of Virginia* Project (FVP) (<http://vnps.org/vaflora.htm>). This three hour Mother's Day loop walk will feature spring forest flowers including pink and yellow orchids depending on their blooming cycle. Reservations and a \$10 minimum donation to the FVP are required. PWWS will forward all proceeds to the FVP. Contact Nicky at 703-368-9803, email nstaunton@earthlink.net, to register.

PRINCE WILLIAM WILDFLOWER SOCIETY

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



exp. 2/02

Catherine S. Arrington
8388 Briarmont Lane
Manassas, VA 20112

 **May Meeting: 7:30 p.m., Monday, May 21, Bethel Lutheran Church, Manassas**
"Nectar Gardening"