



WILD NEWS

Prince William Wildflower Society, A Chapter of the Virginia Native Plant Society

Number 2002-03

May-June 2002

MAY 20 MEETING

Mark Richman of the Washington Mycological Society will present *Mushrooms of the Washington Area* in a slide show discussion focusing on common types of mushrooms, identification, poisonous versus edible mushrooms, mushroom ecology, and uses. Mark holds a Ph.D. in Conservation Biology from the University of Nevada, is trained as an ornithologist, and worked for the US Endangered Species Recovery Program. Mark and his wife also ran a non-profit conservation business.

Following the presentation, a short business meeting will conclude with door prize drawings.

The meeting, which is open to the general public, will be held on the usual third Monday of the month, May 20, at 7:30 p.m. at Bethel Lutheran Church, corner of Sudley Road/Rt. 234 and Plantation Lane in Manassas. For further information about the meeting, call Nancy Vehrs at 703-368-2898.

GARDENERS' DREAM COMES TRUE

"Be careful what you wish for . . ." may have been the story for this year's garden tours. Area gardeners have lamented the recent prolonged drought, but the Saturday before the garden tour brought rain and the forecast was ominous for the garden tours on Sunday afternoon, April 28. Rain fell hard and steady Sunday morning and the skies were endlessly gray. Yet by noon the rain had subsided to a drizzle and intrepid gardeners didn't let it interfere with their enjoyment of the garden tours.

Shortly after 1 p.m. the sun began to shine!

The Milhous' pond sparkled, the Louers' azaleas glistened, and the frogs greeted visitors to the Thompson-Deahl garden. Many thanks to Ed and Roberta, Phil and Frances, and Claudia for their hospitality in sharing their glorious gardens.

Thanks also go to the volunteers who served as hosts or provided refreshments to the 100 visitors: Joyce Andrew, Nancy Arrington, Tiana Camfiord, Marie Davis, Kathy Ehrenberger, Jeanne Endrikat, Joann Krumviede, June Najjum, Valerie Neitzey, Wendy Pierce, Charles Smith, Linda and Leo Stoltz, Nancy Vehrs, Helen Walter, and Gina Yurkonis.

SHOP PLANT SALE May 11

Join the crowd at the annual plant sale on Saturday, May 11, 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 much needed and appreciated. Just show up around 7:30 a.m. and we'll find a job for you. Anyone providing plants should advise Plant Sale Chairman Nancy Arrington prior to the sale so she will know what will be offered. Please plan to bring your plants to the church no later than 7:30 a.m. the day of the sale or make prior transportation arrangements with Nancy, 703-368-8431.

JULY 15 MEETING

Mark your calendar now for the next meeting at 7:30 p.m. on July 15 at a location to be determined. (Bethel is unavailable that week.) Program and location information will appear in the next newsletter.



From the President - Nancy Vehrs

On seemingly the coldest morning in April, Nicky Staunton, Charlotte Cochard, and I joined Ray Smith and members of the River Bend Homeowners Association to walk their nature trail along the Occoquan River. It truly is a lovely path, quite a gem for this community. Individual homeowners own the large lot shore front properties, but they each provided an easement for this trail so that all members of the community could benefit. The bluebells, trout lilies, and other spring ephemerals were outstanding on that day. Homeowners were excited to learn what grew on their property. One couple vowed to name their path down to the river the Wild Ginger Trail for the native ground cover that was beginning to poke through the earth where they had cleared their path. There was one cause for alarm along the trail, too. Upstream grew many striking yellow flowers - the invasive exotic lesser celandine. Let's hope that the invasives will not spread to more natural areas. We'll stay in touch with the homeowners association and hope they'll continue to welcome us to their hidden jewel.

The Spring Fling garden expo at the fairgrounds was a big success again this year. PWWS had more than 50 people enter the drawing for the plant sale gift certificate. Our own Gina Yurkonis was the lucky winner. Many thanks to Leo Stoltz for setting up and dismantling the display and thanks to Nicky and Charlotte who helped me staff our booth.

For a few years lately the weekend between the garden tours and plant sale has been a time for Warren and me to visit the mountains for a hike and this year was no exception. We headed to "Little Schloss" in George Washington National Forest near Woodstock, VA on Sunday, May 5. Its forest and trails may not be as pristine as Shenandoah National Park, GWNF certainly allows the visitor to find some solitude. While

there we never saw another human being until we returned to our vehicle. The plants and flowers did not disappoint either. Bluets appeared in huge masses making for a striking display, cinnamon and ostrich ferns were just beginning to unfurl, and the stands of pink lady's slippers and vernal iris were absolutely stunning with their vivid colors. The woods were also full of countless bird melodies, but most of the songsters were well-camouflaged in the trees that were just leafing out. Formal birdwatching will have to wait for me to find more time.

The plant sale is nearly here. Don't miss it!

- Nancy

June Board Meeting

The next PWWS Board meeting will be held June 17 at 7:30 p.m. at Bethel Lutheran Church. All members are welcome to attend. For further information, call Nancy Vehrs at 703-368-2898.

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

President	Nancy Vehrs, 703-368-2898, nvehrs@attglobal.net
VP/Publicity	Leo Stoltz, 703-791-6175, osamukato@aol.com
Secretary	June Najjum, 703-494-1891
Treasurer	Marie Davis, 703-361-1626
Botany	Marion Lobstein, 703-536-7150
Conservation	Wendy Pierce, 703-754-2932
Education	Kim Hosen, 703-491-8406
Flora Liaison	Gina Yurkonis, 540-937-2312
Historian	Robyn Thoreson, 703-335-1015
Hospitality	OPEN
Membership	Nancy Vehrs, 703-368-2898
Programs	Charles Smith, 703-361-5125
Plant Sale	Nancy Arrington, 703-368-8431
Refreshments	Joann Krumviede, 703-938-4378
Registry Site	Claudia Thompson-Deahl, 703-754-9235
Editor	Nancy Vehrs, 703-368-2898
Original Artwork	by Nicky Staunton, 703-368-9803

Deadline for the July-August issue is July 1, 2002. Mail information to Nancy Vehrs at 8318 Highland St., Manassas, VA 20110-3671 or send email to nvehrs@attglobal.net.

Events of Interest

May 10-12: Shenandoah National Park's Wildflower Weekend. Programs free, \$10/car park entrance fee. 540-999-3397, www.nps.gov/shen.

May 10, 11, & 31, June 14, 22, & 28: 6:30-9 p.m., evening canoe trips at Bull Run Marina, \$30/canoe, 703-993-9827 or 703-993-4313.

May 11-12: Garden Fair and Plant Sale at the State Arboretum at Blandy, 540-837-1758, ext. 21

May 16: 7:30 p.m., Md. Native Plant Society wildflower slide show and book signing, Barbara and Victor Medina, Audubon Naturalist Society Headquarters, Chevy Chase, 301-652-9188.

May 18: VNPS Potowmack Chapter's Semi-Annual Native Plant Sale, part of Garden Day at Green Spring Gardens Park, 4601 Green Spring Road, 703-642-5173.

May 19: 1-3 p.m., explore Powell's Creek at Leesylvania State Park., \$6/participant, advance registration required. Kim Hosen, 703-491-8406, khosen@pwen.org; Cliff Fairweather, 703-803-8400.

May 19, June 15, July 21: 10 a.m.-12:30 p.m., walks with Marion Lobstein, Great Falls Park, VA, 703-536-7150.

June 5-8: Native Plants in the Environment Conference, Millersville University in PA. Fees. Cintra Murray, 610-869-4403.

June 19: 7:30 p.m., Lake Jackson Garden Club program on raingardens, LJ Fire Hall, Coles Drive, Manassas. Diane Flaherty, 703-330-9862.

Atlas Now Available

Because of continuing high demand, The VA Botanical Associates, Inc. is offering reprints of the 1992 *Atlas of the VA Flora, Ed. III* while supplies last. This document is the most up-to-date information offered on the state-wide distribution of individual vascular plant species in Virginia. To receive this book postpaid, send check/money order for \$22.75 payable to Virginia

Botanical Associates and postal shipping address to: Robert Wright, Sec./Treas., Virginia Botanical Associates, Inc., 10210 Commonwealth Boulevard, Fairfax, VA 22302.

Last Call for License Plates!

The DMV has received only 291 of the required 350 advance orders for the Virginia wildflower license plates required by June 30, 2002. Support native plantings on roadsides by ordering your plate now. For information visit the website www.dmvnow.com and click "new plates in development" or call 804-371-6825.

Lady's Slippers

The February 2002 issue of *Martha Stewart Living* featured an article on Scott Durkee of Vermont who propagates lady's slippers from seed, a process that takes years to attain blooming size. He asserts that soil fungus thought to be necessary for maintaining these flowers is only important for seed germination. The fungus invades the seed, which manages to use it for food. However, if the conditions aren't perfect, the fungus can kill the seed. According to Durkee, pink lady's slippers are difficult to grow because they require very acidic soil. For more information, including answers to frequently asked questions, visit his website: <http://www.vtladyslipper.com>.

Auction Items Needed

The Pocahontas Chapter is requesting auction items from chapters for the annual meeting it is hosting in the Richmond area September 13-15. This auction is a major fundraiser for the society at the state level. Please consider donating a plant-related item. Contact Nancy Vehrs at 703-368-2898, nvehrs@attglobal.net for more information.

March Meeting Minutes

At 7:40 Nancy Vehrs called the meeting to order. The motion to accept the minutes from the February meeting was seconded and approved.

Marie Davis gave the Treasurer's report. The current balance is \$1,709.27, the rest of the society funds in CDS.

Nancy Vehrs pointed out two volunteer opportunities; the Spring Fling on April 27 at the Prince William County Fairgrounds and the Spring Garden Tours on April 28 at three gardens in the Gainesville/ Haymarket area. Ed Milhous, Frances and Phil Louer, and Claudia Thompson-Deahl will host the tours. The Summer Garden Tour is scheduled for July 21. Marie Davis will be one of the hosts. More gardens are still needed for that event.

Nancy Arrington, Chairman of the plant sale, has printed labels and Nancy Vehrs has blank labels available for those potting up items for the sale.

Announced events included: Ray Smith of Dogwood Developers has invited our members to tour River Bend Walk, his Occoquan development at 9 a.m. on April 6th. On March 28 at Long Branch Nature Center the presentation is "Maryland's Rare and Endangered Butterflies."

Charles Smith encouraged members to pot up shrubs asap. He will have persimmon, holly, and maple leaf viburnum for the sale on May 11th.

Charles mentioned the recent fuel efficiency bill, arctic wilderness preservation, and water toxicity in the Chesapeake Bay as issues members may want to pursue.

Charles is still open to suggestions for a May speaker/topic.

On March 30th from 1 - 4 p.m. there will be talks on "Food from the Landscape; Jefferson's garden and Mt. Vernon" at the Lyceum in Alexandria. Charles is guiding a walk at Eleanor Lawrence Park in Centreville on April 7th.

Charles recommended the following three websites: www.hummingbirds.net, www.MonarchWatch.org/dplex, and

www.learner.org/jnorth/spring2002/species/index.html.

Regina Yurkonis mentioned the plant sale at Lahr Symposium, National Arboretum this Saturday.

Elaine Haug won a *Phlox paniculata* 'David', Deanna High won the book *Hallowed Ground*, and Jeanne Endrikat won a *Solidago flexicalis* as door prizes.

Marion Lobstein gave the evening's presentation on the *Flora of Virginia* Project, describing it as an identification manual to vascular plants with dichotomous keys, descriptions, illustrations. It will be useful to professionals, government (VDOT), gardeners, and students as well as botanists. Marion described Virginia's great diversity of flora and physiographic provinces. Her review of the rich botanic history of Virginia ranged from Thomas Harriot's account of plants and animals of the colony in 1588 to Presidents Washington and Jefferson, both amateur botanists.

Marion mentioned Chris Ludwig, director of the *Flora* project and Alan Weakley as author. They hope to offer a CD-rom tutorial, illustrated glossary, and portable version for field use. She invited volunteers for field testing to use the keys which will be available on the website to test their system. The website is under development; <http://www.vnps.org/vaflora/vaflora.htm>

- Submitted by Wendy Pierce, Acting Secretary

Attendance: Betty Andreas, Nancy Arrington, Tiana Camfiord, Charlotte Cochar, Marie Davis, Angela Dunavent, Jeanne Endrikat, Diane Flaherty, Jeanne Fowler, Elaine Haug, Deanne Lavalley High, Tracy Johnson, Joanne Krumviede, Margaret Lewis, Phil Louer, Francis Louer, Blythe Merritt, Wendy Pierce, April M. Pilhorn, Helen Rawls, Warren M. Ryder, Sandra Sheriff, Charles Smith, Effie Smith, Linda Stoltz, Leo Stoltz, Mickey Sullivan, Nancy Vehrs, Karen Waltman, Janet Wheatcraft, Helen Winn, Regina Yurkonis

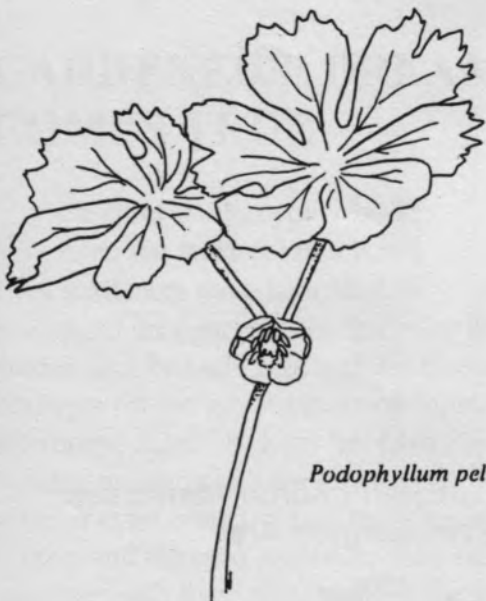
In Memoriam

PWWS mourns the loss of longtime member Catherine ("Kitty") Arrington who died April 14.

MAYAPPLE

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

Podophyllum peltatum or mayapple is one of the most recognizable spring wildflowers by its distinctive foliage. By early to mid-April the unfurled peltate leaves of mayapple begin to poke through the forest litter and resemble fat green umbrellas that are ready to unfurl. The forked stems bearing two leaves will have a tight flower bud nestled at the base of the two petioles. The single-leaved stems will not produce a flower that season. By the end of April and often the first week of May the lovely waxy white flowers begin to open. This species is found in rich woods, thickets, and even roadsides from Quebec and Ontario south to Florida and Texas. This species is now placed in the Berberidaceae or barberry family although it once was included in the Ranunculaceae or buttercup family. Linnaeus assigned the binomial of *Podophyllum* from "podos" meaning foot, and "phyllum" meaning leaf and "peltatum" meaning shield. Other common names are mandrake, wild lemon, and raccoon berry.



Podophyllum peltatum

The flowers of Mayapple are up to two inches in diameter with six sepals that are shed early in blooming, 6-9 white waxy petals, numerous yellow stamens (usually twice the number of petals) with the anthers opening down the side, and a pistil with a large stigma. The flowers lack nectar, but offer the native bees and bumblebees that visit them a rich pollen reward. There is a fragrance to the flower that is a bit pungent or musky. The frequency of pollination success is often not that high in *Podophyllum*, even though there is extended anthesis (shedding of pollen) as well as receptiveness of the stigma if pollination has not been accomplished. Queen bumblebees are especially attracted to mayapple flowers to collect pollen for rearing workers and thus may be primary pollinators.

Fruit set rates are often low for individual colonies of plants and mature fruits are even rarer. Mature fruits resemble a small lemon-colored, egg-shaped fruit this is technically a berry 1-2 inches long. The fruit matures by late August to early September. If the seed does germinate, the seedling may be shaded out by other individuals the next spring. The Eastern box turtle is thought to be the primary seed disperser. In studies of seeds ingested by and passed through the digestive tracts of box turtles, these seeds germinate faster. There is some evidence that the white-footed mouse, squirrel, and grackle may also be seed dispersers with opossum, raccoon, fox, and even black bear as possible seed dispersers.

Each plant has one to two deeply divided, umbrella-like leaves that may be up to ten inches broad. Only the plants with two leaves will bloom. Plants can be up to 15 inches tall. The underground storage structure is a rhizome that has thick fibrous roots. The mayapple may put up to 40% of its energy into its underground rhizome compared to only 8% of its energy into sexual reproduction. The rhizome is the main method of producing new plants. A colony of mayapple plants may all have developed from a single seed. A seed once it germinates will not form a rhizome

until it is over five years old and may not produce blooms until the plant is 12 years old. Colonies grow at a rate of 5 inches per year and many larger colonies may be more than 100 years old. One colony may contain up to 1000 shoots. If an individual plant has produced mature fruit during a given season, it will have decreased rhizome growth and decreased chance of being forked the next year and bearing flowers. If a plant does not produce fruit or if it is a single-leafed plant, the leaves usually senesce by early summer. The leaves persist in plants that have maturing fruits.

The immature fruits as well as the vegetative structure of mayapple are poisonous. As with many drugs, there is a fine line between poison and effective medicinal use. The Native Americans ate the ripe fruits as well as had a number of medicinal uses of mayapple preparations. The list of their uses include use as a laxative as well as treatment for rheumatism, diarrhea, ulcers, sores, liver and bile problems, hemorrhoids, headaches, diuretic, whooping

cough, cholera, pneumonia, problems of the male and female reproductive tracts, purgative, and antihelmenthic (worming) purposes. Reportedly some tribes even used rhizomes of this plant to commit suicide. Later it was used as the active ingredient in Carter's Little Liver Pills and as an extract called *Podophyllin* to remove genital warts. Now drugs derived from the rhizome are being used in Europe and are being tested in this country to treat 5-6 forms of cancer such as cancer of the testis, two forms of lung cancer, Kaposi sarcoma, and some forms of leukemia. It has also been used to treat syphilis. There is some evidence that Native Americans also used this plant to treat forms of cancer such as ovarian and skin cancers. The ripe fruits are edible and there are recipes for jellies and pies as well as for a juice extraction to add to lemonade.

This spring enjoy the beauty of mayapple. Be very cautious if you wish to sample the fruit. It is difficult to find before the forest animals enjoy it!

PRINCE WILLIAM WILDFLOWER SOCIETY

A Chapter of the Virginia Native Plant Society


PO Box 83, Manassas, VA 20108-0083



Nancy Arrington
8388 Briarmont Lane
Manassas, VA 20112-2755

exp. 10/02



 **Next Meeting: 7:30 p.m., Monday, May 20, Bethel Lutheran Church, Manassas**
Mark Richman on "Mushrooms of the Washington Area"