



WILD NEWS

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

Number 2002-06

November-December 2002

NOVEMBER 18 MEETING

You've all seen those large, ugly, trash-collecting fenced depressions near shopping centers and new developments. Did you know that the purpose of these "dry ponds" is to protect water quality and the natural environment? Is there a way to make them attractive, yet still functional? Meet native Northern Virginian Dave Brown, an engineer with Fairfax County, who will tell us how he is incorporating native plants in those areas when he presents our November program entitled "Creating Wetland Habitats in Existing Dry Ponds to Improve the Environment."

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, November 18, 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 President Charles Smith at 703-361-5125 or Vice-President Martha Slover at 703-331-0302.

NEXT MEETING

Mark your calendar now for the January 20, 2003, meeting at 7:30 p.m. at Bethel Lutheran Church in Manassas. This is the traditional member slide show program. If you have slides you can share, contact President Charles Smith at 703-361-5125.

NEW NATIVES?

There are some NEW native perennials appearing soon at a garden center near you. "What!?" you say. You thought the whole point of native plants is that they have evolved here over millions of years, so how can there be new ones?

The answer is people: plant breeders and plant watchers find them or make them. Some "new" colors and varieties appear naturally. It happens all the time in fields and forests; it just takes somebody with an interest to notice. The color, height, or blooming season may differ from typical. Sometimes varieties appear in botanical gardens or at nurseries. It makes sense. Where there are more plants, there will be more unusual plants. People with their eyes on the plants then select the unusual and make more of them either by cuttings or careful crossings for seeds.

Some native plant aficionados do not consider these cultivated varieties or "cultivars" to be true "natives"; some do. You decide for yourself. In 2003, about 170 new perennial cultivars will be introduced to nurseries. Thirteen species are native to our area. Some plant families lend themselves well to breeding for unusual traits. Heuchera, also called Coral Bells even though their bells are now many colors, make a mound of color in shade. Leaves can be burgundy, silver, chartreuse, and combinations thereof. Some new cultivars are "Obsidian" with black leaves and cream flowers. There is also the Planet Series including "Saturn": red-edged pewter leaves with dark veins and "Mercury": mint green with black patches. Any would be great skirting a tree with interesting bark or among shady stepping stones.

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From the President - Charles Smith

I am glad to be coming in as the new PWWS President . . . And, yes, I did bring in the beautiful fall weather with me.

I want to thank all of those who have served as chapter officers in the past and present. They have made the chapter what it is. If you have never served, I encourage you to do so. It does not take up a large amount of your time; and the rewards are tangible.

Next year, our chapter will face the challenge of hosting the VNPS annual meeting. We will continue the plant sale as our primary fundraiser and the garden tours as a means of educating the public and showing off some of our members' spectacular gardens. Our membership meetings will remain the primary venue for members to get together and to invite non-members to meet us and learn something along the way. I also hope to establish a working relationship with some of the county's largest landholders such as Manassas National Battlefield Park.

We need input and ideas to move forward. I encourage you to share your thoughts with other members and chapter officers. Please feel free to call me at 703-361-5125 or email me at chrissmith@juno.com.

In the midst of cooking up new ideas and carrying on chapter business, I hope that everyone will remember why they joined this chapter. I joined PWWS and VNPS because I love plants and the communities they make up. I enjoy sitting in the sun on the edge of a field next to a stand of oaks on a warm fall day and watching the world go by. I enjoy growing native plants and learning from other members. I also enjoy discovering an unexpected plant in an unexpected place.

A couple of weeks ago, my kids and I were in the back yard. With all of this rain, many plants sent out new growth and seeds were germinating. We found a young pokeweed plant (*Phytolacca americana*) in full bloom next to a path in my garden. Of course, I did the first thing most people

would do - I pulled it. But then I really looked at pokeweed for perhaps the first time.

This is a spectacular plant with blooming spikes that flower from bottom to top in succession. Once fertilized, the five part flowers produce the berries from superior ovaries. Since everything happens on the flower spike from bottom to top, each spike looks like a series of still pictures, showing the progression as the flowers open and as the berries mature. I was humbled.

So I hope that all members will do two things: enjoy the world around them and participate.

-Charles

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

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Deadline for the January-February issue is January 1, 2003.
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Manassas, VA 20110-3671 or send email to
nvehrs@attglobal.net.

October 6 Meeting Minutes

The annual meeting was preceded by a delicious pot-luck picnic on a beautiful autumn afternoon. The meeting was called to order by PWWS President Nancy Vehrs at 2:40 pm, Sunday, October 6, 2002, at the home of Gary and Charlotte Cochard.

The first order of business was the President's Report submitted by Nancy Vehrs. Her report summarized and highlighted the chapter activities and accomplishments during the period November 1, 2001, to October 31, 2002. Spring and summer garden tours, the annual plant sale and support to the *Flora of Virginia* Project were noted. Nancy thanked PWWS board members for their valuable work and support to her during her term as president.

Nancy Vehrs announced that the nominating committee (Nancy Arrington, Jeanne Endrikat, Charles Smith, Diane Flaherty, and Martha Slover) submitted the following slate of officers for the two-year term beginning on November 1, 2002:

President - Charles Smith

Vice President - Martha Slover

Secretary - Charlotte Cochard

Treasurer - Diane Flaherty

Jeanne Endrikat moved to accept the slate submitted by the nominating committee. Leo Stolz seconded the motion. There being no nominations from the floor, by voice vote the slate was approved.

Charles Smith moved to accept the budget proposal for 2003 as submitted by Treasurer Marie Davis and as published in the *Wild News*, Issue #2002-05. Martha Slover seconded the motion. The motion passed on unanimous voice vote.

The following announcements were made:

Information on the November 5, 2002, bond referendum for Virginia Parks and Natural Areas is in the latest edition of the *Wild News*.

Marion Lobstein encouraged support for the Education Bond, also on the November 5th ballot.

Marion reported that the *Flora of Virginia* Project has "taken root" and she thanked the chapter for its continued support.

Marion also announced that the wildflower garden at NVCC needs attention. Plant donations and volunteers to weed are needed. Contact Marion.

Nancy Arrington and Marion Lobstein presented thank you gifts to outgoing chapter president, Nancy Vehrs.

Following door prizes and plant exchanges, the meeting adjourned at 3:30 pm. Following the meeting, members enjoyed guided walks down to the banks of the Occoquan River with Marion Lobstein.

-Submitted by Charlotte Cochard, Secretary-Elect

Attendance: Nancy Arrington, Charlotte & Gary Cochard, Jeanne Endrikat, Jeanne & Stan Fowler, Diane & Rick Flaherty, Amy Hamilton, William Hendrickson, Tracy Johnson, Joann Krumviede, Marion Lobstein, Helen Rawls, Martha Slover, Charles Smith, Linda & Leo Stoltz, Nancy Vehrs, Helen and Rob Walter

Welcome New Members

PWWS welcomes the following new members who joined in 2002:

Cynthia Hogan, Warrenton

Helen Leino, Manassas

Judy Kenyon, Woodbridge

Marilyn Chambers, Manassas

Linda Guinn, Gainesville

Donald & Susan Schupp, Warrenton

Harold Jones, Woodbridge



Message from the Former President

It's been a pleasure and honor to serve as president the past two years, but I am so pleased that Charles has agreed to serve for the next two. It's vital for an organization to encourage new leadership if it wants to continue to develop.

I thank all the officers and members of the Board who served with me. Much work is accomplished behind the scenes and I am grateful for their volunteer efforts.

I was pleased that we began some new things during my term including the summer garden tours. There's so much I would have liked for us to accomplish, especially in the conservation, education, and outreach areas, but I know that our members lead very busy lives. There is a core group of active members who we see regularly and for whom we are very appreciative, but we also welcome members who simply support our efforts with their membership.

Being a late-night person, email made the communications piece of my job so much easier than when I first served as president in the early 1990s. One can send a midnight email, but not make a telephone call at that late hour. Also mass emails are terrific for communicating with the entire board or for sending out a simple announcement to members. I marvel that I ever functioned without it.

I wish Charles and the new officers the best as we forge ahead. I will continue on as Membership Chair and editor of this newsletter, so I'll still be around.

- Nancy Vehrs

State Park Bond Passes

Many thanks to those who voted in favor of the state park bond despite an anti-tax sentiment this year. Some of the proceeds will go toward acquiring additional natural areas as well as preserving existing ones.

Support of *Flora* Appreciated

Continued support of the *Flora of Virginia* by PWWS is greatly appreciated. Another contribution to this project has been made by the chapter. Work on writing descriptions and also work on illustrations for the *Flora* has begun. The "seed money" from PWWS and other VNPS chapters continues to be instrumental in helping the Project take root. If you would like more information on the Project, please check out the website at www.dcr.state.va.us/dnh/vaflora.htm.

-Marion Lobstein



Update on the Jack Finzel Wildflower Garden

I am happy to report progress on work on the campus wildflower garden at Northern Virginia Community College in Manassas. A number of my general biology students have scheduled workdays to "spruce up" the garden and get it ready for the winter. Native plants donated by Nancy Vehrs and Warren Ryder are being planted. If you have native plants you would like to donate now or next spring, please contact Marion. The work is being coordinated by Josh Sink, one of my students and an expert on landscaping. Josh also works at the Manassas Home Depot store in the garden department. Home Depot is donating mulch and other supplies for this work. Much thanks to Josh, other student helpers, and Home Depot for their efforts. Marie Davis designed and installed the original garden and her efforts and contribution to maintaining it over this years is greatly appreciated.

-Marion Lobstein

(*New Natives* - continued from page one)

Heuchera's kissin' cousin is Tiarella or Foamflower. Though Tiarella is usually grown for its foliage, "Pink Brushes" will have soft pink blooms for three months or more. You may also find "Pink Pearls" to bloom pink in spring then have foliage turn wonderful autumn colors. Heucherella "Sunspot", a hybrid of the two, will be available bearing bright yellow leaves splashed with red. Not for the timid, I doubt this electric shade plant naturally occurred in any forest I'd admit to being in.

Our native trumpet vine blooms red-orange from June through August. Campsis "Balboa Sunset" or "Monbal" will bloom bright, fiery red attracting hummingbirds by the score. Most Campsis take a few years to establish and need very strong support for their 30 foot vines. No wimpy trellis or lamp post for this guy. Grow it on a wall, sturdy arbor, or its natural habitat - in a Virginia Cedar tree.

Baptisia is a stunning native perennial, with tall clusters of snapdragon-like blooms. "Carolina Moonlight," a naturally occurring cross, will bloom thickly in butter yellow mid-spring then hold gray-green foliage until frost. Expect the plant to be at least four feet tall and equally wide. It completely dies back in winter and re-grows each spring from asparagus-like shoots. Great to cover early bulbs.

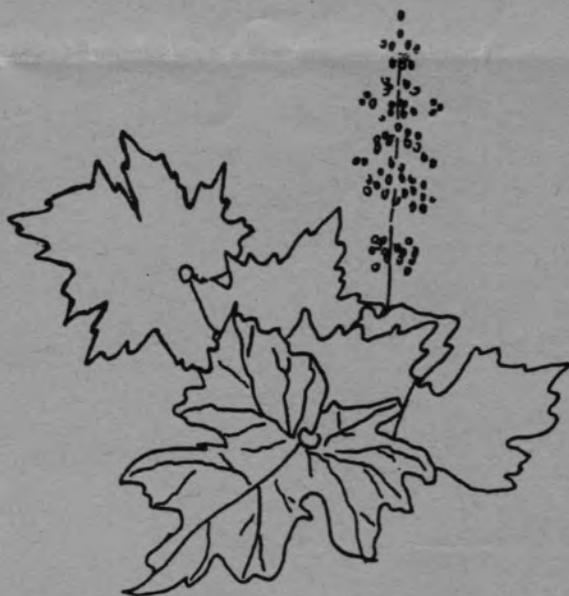
No butterfly garden is complete without Coreopsis. The yellow cultivar "Moonbeam" won awards and a faithful following years ago. New on the scene is "Limerock Ruby," a natural cross found in Rhode Island with 1½ inch flowers of red with yellow centers. Expect it to bloom about a foot tall for most of the summer. Do not expect it to tolerate a soggy winter. Planting in a raised bed or on a slope will help.

There is also a new Gaillardia or Blanket Flower "Summer's Kiss" coming out in apricot and a Joe-Pye called "Little Joe" reported to only reach four feet tall. I've heard that one before. As they say, "power corrupts" and it holds true in plant breeding. A new type of garden phlox is

being released that produces no flowers. The natural heads of nectar-rich blossoms have been replaced with sterile bracts producing no nectar or pollen. The colorful heads will last four months in the garden, but any butterfly landing for a drink will go away with an empty tummy.

Some new releases were available this year, but most are just now being offered to growers as tiny starts. Check mail order sources like Niche Gardens and Plant Delights in spring or mention them now to your favorite, more adventurous nursery manager. And keep your eyes open for unusual varieties on your own property. Oenothera "Cold Crick" was found in Middleburg a few years ago and has become a popular evening primrose. Maybe you can find a new native plant of your own.

-Gina Yurkonis



Heuchera americana

Note from VNPS

Many thanks to Prince William Wildflower Society for all of its generous support this past year. The VNPS finances really benefited from the donation of \$500 to help get us over the hurdle to running a monthly deficit. The dues increase of \$10 should help us get on firm financial ground again.

And, the auction donations sent by Prince William Wildflower Society were wonderful and went home with the lucky bid winners! The annual meeting was full of good events, speakers, and hikes. We look forward to being here next year in 2003.

You are a great group of wildflower friends!
-Nicky Staunton, VNPS President

Spring General Botany Class Offered

In the Spring Semester 2003, Marion will offer General Botany from 4:30-7:15 pm on Tuesdays (lecture) and Thursdays (lab) at the Manassas Campus of the Northern Virginia Community College. In this class she will cover the characteristics, ecology, and evolutionary history of plants, algae, and fungi. Lab will include hands-on work with these groups as well as fieldtrips (the dates to be decided by the class). If you have any questions about this fun and informative course, please contact Marion at mblobstein@earthlink.net or call her at 703-536-7150.

Happy holidays to all and best wishes for a peaceful new year.

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



exp. 10/03

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Next Meeting: 7:30 p.m., Monday, November 18, Bethel Lutheran Church, Manassas
"Creating Wetland Habitats in Existing Dry Ponds to Improve the Environment"