



# ***WILD NEWS***

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

Number 2003-01

January-February 2003

## **JANUARY 20 MEETING**

Chase away the winter chill and come to the annual member slide show meeting to view photos of flowering plants and other wonders of nature. Members are invited to bring slides of their nature-related travels to share with fellow members. In past years we have visited places as diverse as Scandinavia, the Florida Everglades, the Bruce Peninsula in Canada, the west coast, Italy, and the Rocky Mountains. Only the members can determine our journey this year and there's still room on the program for you, too. Call President and Program Chair Charles Smith at 703-361-5125 if you can present photos so he may coordinate the entire evening's program.

Following the program there will be a short business meeting to discuss upcoming events and issues.

The meeting, which is open to the general public, will be held on the usual third Monday of the month, January 20, at 7:30 p.m. at Bethel Lutheran Church, corner of Sudley Road/Rt. 234 and Plantation Lane in Manassas.

## **NEXT MEETING**

Mark your calendar now for the March 17, 2003, meeting at 7:30 p.m. at Bethel Lutheran Church in Manassas. Program details will appear in the next edition of *Wild News*.

## **INVASIVE EXOTIC PLANT SPECIES**

The Parks and Recreation Department of the Reston Association and the Virginia Native Plant Society share an area of interest. Both believe that a major component of natural areas management is the removal of invasive exotic species. This subject has been in the news so much that you are probably familiar with the concerns ecologists have about the impact of these plants on our parklands.

While most exotic plant species do not persist in the wild, introductions since European settlement have substantially changed the composition of native plant communities throughout North America. Of the estimated 2500 species of vascular plants that grow in the wild in Virginia, some 350 are not native to the state. While many of these are restricted to roadsides and other heavily disturbed sites, others readily invade natural and semi-natural landscapes. Invasive exotic plant species typically exhibit the following characteristics:

- \* Rapid growth and maturity
- \* Prolific seed production
- \* Highly successful seed dispersal, germination, and colonization
- \* Rampant vegetative spread
- \* Ability to out compete native species
- \* High cost to remove or control

Invasive exotic plants thrive on disturbed sites. Native plant communities are fragmented more and more by development and these areas are the most vulnerable to being taken over by exotic species. Yet, even the most intact ecosystems can become infested by aggressive species.

(continued on page four)



## From the President - Charles Smith

As we finish up the holiday season, it is hard for many folks to enjoy the bleak landscape of winter. However, I find the winter floral landscape full of life and promise for the future.

Many of us use greens to decorate for the winter holidays. This tradition goes back to at least Roman times. Pre-Christian religions used greens to symbolize rebirth in a new year and promise for a good harvest and prosperity. Christians adopted this tradition, including the use (in some areas) of live trees.

It is not just in our homes that the promise of rebirth can be seen. In fact, I like to look at this time of year as one of the most important times for our native flora. Large numbers of warm-blooded animals (i.e., mammals and birds) are feasting on the fruits and seeds of numerous species including poison ivy, false nettle, grape, roses, juniper, coral berry, oaks, persimmon, and hackberry. For these plants winter may be a time of dormancy, but it is also a time of dispersal. The seeds for future plants are being spread near and far in feces and food caches.

There is also another area in which our plants - or at least some of their parts - are contributing to peak activity levels during the winter: in our streams. Much of last year's energy went into leaves that fell several months ago and now clog streams. This huge available store of food comes at a time when low water temperatures provide very high oxygen levels. This combination of high food and oxygen availability brings about a boom in small animal populations. Many of these animals are the larvae of insects; some are little shrimp-like creatures; and still others are snails and crayfish. It is fascinating to think that while all seems quiet on the land, life is going through a boom cycle under the water.

As our holiday greens shrivel, we can compost them or burn them and spread the ash on the vegetable plot and contemplate the new life that is getting ready to spring forth.

## Join the VNPS Annual Meeting Planning Team

PWWS is beginning to make plans for hosting an exciting Virginia Native Plant Society annual meeting September 12-14. Charles Smith is seeking members to assist in the planning of this big occasion that will include speakers, field trips, and a fundraising event. Contact Charles at 703-361-5125 if you'd like to help or have ideas to offer.

## Next Board Meeting

The next PWWS Board meeting will be held Monday, February 17 at 7:30 p.m. at Bethel Lutheran Church. All members are welcome to attend. For further information, call President Charles Smith at 703-361-5125.

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

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Deadline for the March-April issue is March 1, 2003. Mail information to Nancy Vehrs at 8318 Highland St., Manassas, VA 20110-3671 or send email to [nvehrs@attglobal.net](mailto:nvehrs@attglobal.net).



## November 18, 2002, Meeting Minutes

The meeting was called to order by Vice-President Martha Slover at 7:35 p.m. at Bethel Lutheran Church, Manassas, Virginia. Martha welcomed all and introduced the guest speaker, Dave Brown, an engineer with the Department of Public Works, Fairfax County, Virginia. Dave presented a very informative and enthusiastic program entitled "Creating Wetland Habitats in Existing Dry Ponds to Improve the Environment."

Dave explained that the field of storm water management is beginning to use new techniques to control erosion, flooding, and pollution. In Fairfax County, Dave is retrofitting existing dry ponds by removing much of the concrete drain structures and planting the floor of the pond with a wetland seed mixture. The surrounding areas are landscaped with shrubs and trees that are appropriate to the location to promote an attractive wetland. The naturalized areas attract birds and pond life that help keep the environment in balance. Fairfax County is beginning to have some success at educating county officials, developers, and homeowners about the benefits of using these new techniques.

During an intermission, all in attendance enjoyed the refreshments provided by Joann Krumviede.

Martha Slover reconvened the group for a short business meeting. She reminded the chapter that PWWS will be hosting the VNPS Annual Meeting in 2003. Details and plans will be discussed at future meetings.

Diane Flaherty gave the Treasurer's Report. The current PWWS Balance is \$4507.99.

Marion Lobstein, Botany Chair, reported that the NVCC-Manassas Campus Wildflower Garden was recognized recently by the *Manassas Journal Messenger*. Student-led efforts to clean up and maintain the garden included planting native plants donated by Nancy Vehrs and Warren Ryder. The garden can always use donations of plants and time. Contact Marion

to help with the garden.

Marion also reported that there is real progress on the *Flora of Virginia*. She recently previewed the initial drawings. The project is moving forward with the continued support of many groups, including the PWWS.

Marion announced that the NVCC spring schedule includes her Tuesday-Thursday botany course and the popular Field Botany course she teaches will be offered this summer.

Martha announced that several board positions remain open, including the Program Chair. Anyone who is interested in filling this important position or has suggestions for future programs should contact Charles Smith, PWWS president, or Martha Slover, PWWS vice president.

George Mason University will offer "Everglades Expedition" a two week canoeing and camping exploration led by Martha Slover, 3-17 January 2003. Contact Martha for more information.

The next meeting is on January 20, 2003. Members who are interested in showing slides at this annual "members' slide show" should contact Charles Smith or Martha Slover.

Lucky door prize winners were: Martha Slover, Helen Rawls, June Najjum, Amy Hamilton, and Betty Andrews. Joann Krumviede's name was drawn, but she graciously declined.

The meeting adjourned at 9 p.m.

*Respectfully submitted,  
Charlotte Cochard, Secretary*

### Attendance:

Betty Andrews, Nancy Arrington, Tom Attanaro, Charlotte Cochard, Michel Cox, Jeanne Endrikat, Diane Flaherty, Jeanne Fowler, Amy Hamilton, William Hendrickson, Tracy Johnson, Grace and Harold Jones, Joann Krumviede, Marion Lobstein, June Najjum, Carol and Ronald Nelson, Helen Rawls, Sandra Sheriff, Martha Slover, Nicky Staunton, Sally Underwood, and Karen Waltman

*(Invasives - continued from page one)*

Invasive alien plants are free of natural controls such as insects and disease that keep them in balance in their native habitats. They further threaten biodiversity with non-native pathogens, fungi, or other organisms that can decimate native species, as with chestnut blight. The forest our grandparents saw were very different, with one in four tree species being a chestnut.

In addition to invasive exotic plants spread by birds or by seeds drifting downstream, many of Reston's plant problems are actually brought in by homeowners, and the plants quickly encroach on the adjacent natural areas. The garden escapes listed here are some of the greatest threats to Reston's natural areas.

**English Ivy** (*Hedera helix*): Commonly planted as a ground cover and to prevent erosion, this plant quickly out competes the native forest floor. The dense growth prevents sunlight from reaching other plants. When the vine climbs trees, it covers branches and twigs, again blocking light from reaching the host tree. It also provides a hiding place for the gypsy moth to lay her eggs. Native Alternatives: Vine - Virginia creeper (*Parthenocissus quinquefolia*), Groundcovers - foam flower (*Tiarella cordifolia*), evergreen wood fern (*Dryopteris marginalis* or *intermedia*), creeping phlox (*Phlox stolonifera*), and wild ginger (*Asarum canadense*).

**Burning Bush** (*Euonymus alatus*): This shrub is commonly planted for hedges and borders as a landscape ornamental. It tolerates dense shade where it crowds out native shrubs. Native alternatives: red chokeberry (*Aronia arbutifolia*), Virginia sweetspire (*Itea virginica*), mapleleaf viburnum (*Viburnum acerifolium*).

**Bamboo** (*Bambusa*, *Phyllostachys* and *Pseudosasa* species): Planted by homeowners for screening or windbreak, bamboo is one of the most aggressive and difficult to control invasives in Reston. It spreads very rapidly, even under fences, and when it is pruned by homeowners and the clippings dumped onto natural areas, it quickly roots and forms a very dense monoculture. Native alternative grasses: big bluestem (*Andropogon*

*gerardii*), Indiangrass (*Sorghastrum nutans*). Screening tree alternative: American holly (*Ilex opaca*).

**Periwinkle** (*Vinca major*) and *Pachysandra* (*Pachysandra terminalis*): Both of these are commonly planted for ground covers. Once established, both of these species have vigorous growth, choking out and smothering the diversity of native vegetation. Native alternatives: Plant a mix for diversity, partridgeberry (*Mitchella repens*), creeping phlox (*Phlox stolonifera*), New York fern (*Thelypteris noveboracensis*).

**Bradford Pear** (*Pyrus calleryana* "Bradford"): Widely used as a landscape tree, this plant was first introduced with sterile fruit. However, new hybrids that were developed to correct the tendency of this tree to split and fall apart with wind and snow were not sterile. As a result we are finding numerous seedlings of this tree sprouting through the forest. Native Alternatives: redbud (*Cercis Canadensis*), fringetree (*Chionanthus virginicus*), and serviceberry (*Amelanchier Canadensis*).

**Norway Maple** (*Acer platanoides*): Norway maples are planted as an ornamental landscape tree. This tree's invasive nature has been widely recognized. It escapes cultivation and invades nearby forests, fields and other landscape habitats. It forms dense stands and displaces native trees, shrubs and wildflowers. Native alternatives: black gum (*Nyssa sylvatica*), sourwood (*Oxydendrum arboreum*), American beech (*Fagus grandifolia*).

In addition to garden escapes, there are also species that are aquatic invasives that tend to take over lakes and ponds. Many of these species spread rapidly through fragmentation of plant parts, which eliminates using mechanical control since this will only enhance the spread of these plants. Some aquatic invasives include parrot's feather, water hyacinth, hydrillia, and purple loosestrife.

Invasive plants that are spread by birds may be the most difficult to control. These include Japanese honeysuckle, bush honeysuckle, multiflora rose, autumn olive, and porcelain berry. Other concerns are Japanese stilt grass, Chinese



wisteria, and garlic mustard.

As stated by the Society for Ecological Restoration, preservation of native biological diversity is one of the major challenges of this century. Invasive non-indigenous species are a part of this challenge because a small but significant fraction of them contribute to the demise of native species. When removing invasive plants it is best to replant with native species or you may simply be preparing the site for another non-native plant to move in. For more information, contact the Department of Conservation or the Virginia Native Plant Society at

<http://www.state.va.us/-dcr/vaher.html>.

- Claudia Thompson-Deahl

(Editor's note: Claudia, a former PWWS president and a resident of Bull Run Mountain, is environmental resources director for the Reston Association.)

## Take a Course with the Fairfax Audubon Society

Two courses of the Fairfax Audubon Society's upcoming LEAPP (Learn, Enjoy, Appreciate, Preserve, and Protect) Program should appeal to plant lovers. Call 703-256-6895 or email [fairfaxaud@erols.com](mailto:fairfaxaud@erols.com) for more information.

**Botany**, Wednesdays, Feb. 19 - April 16, 7-9 p.m., Fairfax High School and 2 field trips. Led by Marion Lobstein, students will gain basic botanical knowledge as they learn how stems, leaves, roots, and flowers or other reproductive organs of plants can help to identify their species and understand their life cycles. The ecological relationships as well as the life cycle information of mid-Atlantic plants will be part of the course. Field trips will explore winter botany and the spectacular springtime display of Mid-Atlantic wildflowers. Cost is \$175 for non-members.

**Creating a Backyard Habitat**, Saturday, March 15, 9 a.m. - noon at Fairfax High School. Carol Hadlock will lead the class through the basic habitat requirements and students will create their own backyard habitats on paper. \$35.

## Potowmack Chapter to Present Programs in February & March

The Potowmack Chapter of the VNPS offers the following programs to be held at Green Spring Gardens Park. All are free of charge and no reservations are required.

**February 13**, 7:30 p.m.: "Native Plants in the National Arboretum's Fern Valley." Joan Feely of the National Arboretum will present a slide show tour of Fern Valley throughout the seasons.

**March 13**, 7:30 p.m.: "The Threat to Biodiversity from Invasive Alien Plants." Gain a better understanding of how invasive alien plants affect biodiversity in a program presented by Dr. Faith Campbell of the American Lands Alliance.

**Directions to Green Spring Gardens Park:** From Interstate 395, exit at Route 236 West (Little River Turnpike) in Alexandria, turn right at Green Spring Road and proceed 1 block north to the park entrance.

## Plant Sale May 10

The annual PWWS plant sale is scheduled for the morning of Saturday, May 10 at Bethel Lutheran Church. Plant Sale Chairman Nancy Arrington and volunteer Joann Krumviede are readying the inventory of printed plant labels. Anyone with leftover plant labels from last year's sale should bring them to an upcoming meeting to replace the chapter's stocks or communicate with Nancy Arrington at 703-368-8431 regarding label use at this year's sale.

It's not too early to start seeds for popular perennials such as butterfly weed. Seedlings not mature enough for this year's sale can be offered at the 2004 sale.

## Anyone for "The Bruce?"

That's the Bruce Peninsula in Ontario, of course. VNPS members are invited to travel to Wildwood Lodge, Mar, Ontario to enjoy the orchids and ferns of the Bruce Peninsula along the Niagara Escarpment and shore of Lake Huron June 8 - 14. Nicky Staunton is organizing the trip, which Dr. Stanwyn Shetler, Botanist Emeritus of the Smithsonian, and his wife, Elaine, will co-lead. The cost is \$600/person and includes lodging and all food plus the boat ride and fee to Flower Pot Island across the Georgian Bay. Please note that transportation to and from Canada is not included. To reserve your space, send a deposit of \$250 payable to VNPS to Nicky Staunton, 8815 Fort Drive, Manassas VA 20110. For further information, visit the fieldtrip section of the VNPS website at [www.vnps.org](http://www.vnps.org) or call Nicky at 703-368-9803.

## Plan to Attend the Winter Workshop on Biodiversity

The importance of biodiversity is the subject of the VNPS Winter Workshop to be held on Saturday, March 8 at the University of Richmond's Gottwald Science Auditorium. These annual workshops attract members from all over the state to hear lectures from experts on topics related to the mission of the VNPS. Mark your calendar now. For further information, watch your mailbox in early February when details of the workshop will be mailed to all members or contact VNPS President Nicky Staunton at 703-368-9803.



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



exp. 10/03

Nancy Arrington  
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Manassas, VA 20112-2755



**Next Meeting: 7:30 p.m., Monday, January 20, Bethel Lutheran Church, Manassas**  
**"Member Slide Show"**

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