



WILD NEWS

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

Number 2003-06

November-December 2003

NOVEMBER MEETING

The PWWS annual meeting will be held on Monday, November 17 at 7:30 p.m. at Bethel Lutheran Church in Manassas. Dr. Kenneth Lawless, Professor Emeritus at the University of Virginia, will present "The Wildflowers of the Blue Ridge Mountains." His passion for native plants and for photography have come together to make him one of the best wildflower photographers in the Commonwealth. He is a regular presenter at the Wintergreen Wildflower Symposium and is an active member of the Jefferson Chapter of VNPS. He also serves on the Flora Advisory Board of the *Flora of Virginia* Project. His photograph of *Claytonia virginica* is the one used on the color brochure for the *Flora of Virginia* Project. Come out and enjoy this entertaining speaker and the beauty of his photographs of Blue Ridge Mountain native plants.

This meeting serves as the annual meeting because a quorum was not present on October 26 to vote on the slate for the nominating committee. Call President Charles Smith at 703-361-5125 for additional information.

LOOKING AHEAD

January Meeting - Member Slide Show

It's the annual member slide show! Mark your calendar now for the January 19, 2004, meeting at Bethel Lutheran Church at 7:30 p.m. Members are invited to share nature-related slides from their travels. Call Charles Smith at 703-361-5125 to add your slides to the agenda.

PWC SEEKS CHAMPION AND HISTORIC TREES

Prince William County's Department of Public Works and its Cooperative Extension Office are currently preparing a registry of the largest individual of each tree species found in the county. But they need the help of citizens to accomplish this major task in time for next April's Arbor Day. Staff is especially interesting in adding tree species that have never been nominated.

Individual trees need not be immense; they simply need to be the largest of their type. Small understory trees such as dogwoods and serviceberries compete only against their own species, just as oaks and hickories compete against their own types. The determination of a champion tree is based on its circumference, average crown spread, and height.

The county staff plans to use the information collected by adding it to the county maps to create a registry so residents can learn about the significant trees in their own neighborhoods. In addition, the registry will serve as a tool for developers and builders to identify champion trees on new construction projects to provide for their preservation. The Extension Office also plans to produce driving tour brochures for trees that are readily accessible.

Nomination forms, methods for calculating crown diameter and height, as well as a list of species never before nominated, are available on Prince William County's newly redesigned website at: http://www.co.prince-william.va.us/pworks/env_services/Bigtree.htm. That web page also has links to the state and national big tree registries. For further information, call the county arborist at 703-792-7070.



From the President - Charles Smith

My Two Cents

I had the good fortune to be able to make the journey to my college homecoming at William and Mary this fall. The main focus of the weekend was to reconnect with old friends. But an unexpected treat was to experience again some of the best things Virginia has to offer naturally and culturally.

The sun was just coming up as I got on I-95 south early on November 1. I became amazed within minutes at the fall color display. I've read and heard complaints about how disappointing the tree colors on Skyline Drive have been this year. Those critics must have forgotten to drive one of the most heavily traveled corridors on the east coast when looking for color.

The oaks, hickories, maples, tulip trees, and conifers provide the foundation in both texture and color. Oaks have a wonderful variety of subdued tones – mostly browns and reds. The hickories mostly provide bright yellows. The tulip trees are often a lighter yellow than the hickories, and they also provide a thinner, more symmetrical shape to the canopy. Maples have often amazing reds, both varied in tone and shade. In some areas the conifers dominated, but in many they just added muted green accent to the show.

Then there were those trees that provided the more dramatic colors. Ashes would appear with yellow leaves toward the trunk fronted by reddish-brown leaves. A (rare) dogwood added its dark red color here and there. Every now and then there would be a spectacular display by a blackgum or a river birch. But no species could produce variety and abundance greater than that of the sweet gum.

Liquidamber styraciflua, sweetgum, produces more colors on one tree than any other tree I have seen. The sweetgum also produces more trees in disturbed areas than almost any other tree I've seen. It is this combination of great

variety and super abundance that made that species' presence so spectacular along the road corridor. These trees have such a balanced shape. On young trees the leaves are suspended from the trunk at measured distances so that each leaf is visible and together they form a kind of narrow cone. Then, as the leaves begin to die, they do so from the outside in – producing a range of colors from almost black, to red, to orange, to yellow, to green, with the lighter colors toward the trunk. Every fall I find myself standing and staring at sweetgums – marveling at their display.

This show continued as I headed south, choosing to take Route 5 east to Williamsburg, rather than 64. Route 5 is one of the best back roads in Virginia. A twisty two-lane that takes you through forests, past many battlefields and plantations, through agricultural land, and across

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

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Deadline for the Jan-Feb issue is January 1, 2004. Mail information to Nancy Vehrs at 8318 Highland St., Manassas, VA 20110-3671 or send email to nvehrs@attglobal.net.

(From the President, *continued from page 2*)

swamps and rivers. This is a route that everyone should treat themselves to at least one time. But don't rush, and try to go on days when you think the traffic will be light. As you head southeast into the coastal plain, the species change rather significantly. Loblolly pines and American holly become abundant. Groundsel is very evident in open areas. And as marshes open up here and there (closer to Williamsburg), you can see the occasional bald cypress. One other thing I noted as I went further southeast was the impact of Hurricane Isabel. In some places there is so much debris that it is like a wall on the side of the road. Trucks pulling trailers with huge plywood boxes on the back will still be hauling away debris in the winter. There is no shortage of firewood.

I've gone on long enough. I just hope that next year some of you may see the stream of traffic heading toward the mountains and remember to go a different way.

-Charles

Battlefield Park Picnic Meeting

The October 26 picnic meeting at Stuart's Hill at Manassas National Battlefield Park was a small gathering of wildflower and native plant enthusiasts. Unfortunately, it was too small to meet the 15 percent membership requirement to conduct the annual meeting and elect the members of the nominating committee, and very few absentee ballots were returned. Nevertheless, the hardy band enjoyed a delicious potluck spread and plant exchange on a warm fall afternoon. The predicted evening rain held off long enough for participants to enjoy a leisurely walk through woods and meadow. Grasses in the meadow were in their fall glory, and little bluestem was a lovely shade of red.

Board Meetings

There is no PWWS Board meeting scheduled for December. The next board meeting will be February 16, 2004.

Salute to Charter Members

As PWWS nears its 21st birthday in January 2004, we salute all of our charter members who have been the bedrock of the organization since its inception:

Nancy Arrington, Manassas
 Fran & Ken Bass, Nokesville
 Marie Davis, Manassas
 Diana Dutton, Calverton
 Jeanne Fowler, Manassas
 Judy Gallagher, Woodbridge
 Elaine Haug, Dale City
 Mary LeKander, Catharpin
 Marion Lobstein, Arlington
 Frances & Phil Louer, Haymarket
 Ed Milhous, Haymarket
 Nicky Staunton, Manassas
 Claudia Thompson-Deahl, Haymarket
 Roxetta Wyer, Richland, WA

Thank you all!

Gardeners Wanted!

It's always time to think about future spring and summer garden tours. How did your wildflower garden grow this year? Are you ready to share it with PWWS and the general public? Contact Nancy Vehrs at 703-368-2898, nvehrs@attglobal.net, if you would like to be on an upcoming tour. Think you're not quite ready? Well, hosting a tour is a powerful motivator, and you'll be pleased with the results. Consider calling today.

Events of Interest

November 13: "Fire on the Mountain: A Study of Turkeybeard, a Rare, Fire-Adapted Temperate Forest Herb," a program presented by Norm Bourg at a meeting of the Potowmack Chapter at 7:30 p.m. at Green Spring Gardens Park, Alexandria. 703-920-1913.

November 13: Plant Conservation Forum, 9:30 a.m.-3:30 p.m., Lewis Ginter Botanical Gardens, Richmond. Multiple speakers. Find new ways to solve ecological problems. Presented in partnership with the Chesapeake Bay Foundation, *The Flora of Virginia* Project, the Garden Club of Virginia, The Nature Conservancy, the Virginia Department of Environmental Quality, and the Wintergreen Nature Foundation. \$40. To register, call 804-262-9887, ext. 322. For complete program details, visit www.lewisginter.org.

December 6: - Pruning "Clip it Right!" Prince William County workshop held at the Teaching Garden at St. Benedict Monastery, 9535 Linton Hall Rd., Bristow. 9 a.m. - Noon. Free, but registration required. Call 703-792-7747, and leave your name and daytime phone number.

January 14-March 10: Winter Woody Plant Identification. (10 classes, 3 field trips) USDA Graduate School, Woodend Sanctuary, Chevy Chase, MD, Wednesdays, 7-9 p.m., Cris Fleming, Instructor. \$295. Register online at www.grad.usda.gov or call 202-314-3320.

HAPPY HOLIDAYS TO ALL!



PRINCE WILLIAM WILDFLOWER SOCIETY

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



exp. 10/04

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**Next Meeting: 7:30 p.m., Monday, November 17, Bethel Lutheran Church, Manassas
"The Wildflowers of the Blue Ridge Mountains"**