



WILD NEWS

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

Number 2004-03

May-June 2004

MAY 17 MEETING

Phil Sheridan, Founder and Director of the Meadowview Biological Research Station in Woodford, VA (next to fort A.P. Hill) will be our May speaker. Phil is a passionate and tireless champion of Virginia's bog plant communities.

Meadowview is working to locate and protect remaining bogs, restore bogs and associated habitat, conduct research on native bog plants, and propagate and promote these plants to the general public. Its website is www.pitcherplant.org.

The program will focus on native bog species such as *Sarracenia*, bog communities, and establishment of bogs in the garden. Phil will even bring some plants along for sale.

The meeting, which is open to the general public, will be held on the usual third Monday of the month, May 17, at 7:30 p.m. at Bethel Lutheran Church, corner of Sudley Road/Rt. 234 and Plantation Lane in Manassas. For more information, contact President Charles Smith at 703-361-5125.

LOOKING AHEAD

Mark your calendar now for the July 19 meeting at Bethel Lutheran Church at 7:30 p.m. The program has not yet been determined. See the next edition of *Wild News* for details.

LAST CALL FOR PLANT SALE MAY 8

The 22nd Annual PWWS Plant Sale is scheduled for Saturday, May 8 from 9 a.m. - noon on the grounds of Bethel Lutheran Church on Plantation Lane in Manassas. Native plants for sun, shade, dry, or wet sites will all be for sale including traditional native perennials and ferns. This sale is the chapter's only fundraiser and needs your support. Be sure to come early for the best selection.

It's not too late to volunteer to help. Just come to the sale by 7:30 a.m. and we'll find a job for you. It's only through the efforts of our "cast of thousands" that this sale has been so successful throughout the years. For further information, please contact Plant Sale Chair Nancy Arrington at 703-368-8431, narrington@starpower.net.

SUCCESSFUL SPRING GARDEN TOURS

Many thanks to Kathy and Don Ehrenberger, Martha Slover, and Janet Wheatcraft for opening their gardens for another successful spring tour. Following some hot, sunny spring days, the weather cooled to the 60s, but there was no rain to spoil the show despite the cloudy skies. Approximately 100 visitors toured each garden.

Thanks also to volunteers Nancy Arrington, Toni Crouch, Marie Davis, Jeanne Endrikat, Joann Krumviede, Nicky Staunton, Linda Stoltz, Nancy Vehrs, and Karen Waltman. Their contributions included hosting, providing refreshments, and preparing and mailing the brochures.



From the President - Charles Smith

My Two Cents

Every spring is different. This one has been more so than usual for me since moving from next to Manassas City to a house with a wooded lot off of Yates Ford Road. I moved from a yard that I truly loved in a neighborhood built on an old dairy farm with red soil and lots of sun, to a yard with eastern hemlocks, moss in abundance AND DEER! I was walking near my house a couple of weeks ago, and as I descended a gravel road into a ravine flanked by oak, beech and hemlocks, hermit thrushes were singing along with Louisiana waterthrushes - spectacular. In the second to last week of November, I was sitting out on the deck talking with an old friend when a whip-poor-will sang about 100 feet away. So this year I will mourn the loss of the old yard and neighbors, but I will enjoy the new even more.

I hope you can come out to our May events: plant sale Saturday, May 8, and membership meeting Monday, May 17. For the plant sale, come lend a hand or just come and shop. I enjoy the conversations with people there as much as the plants.

Our speaker for the membership meeting, Phil Sheridan, is one of those rare people you encounter every now and then who is completely passionate about what he does. Phil is one of the leading experts in the state on bog plants, and is working hard to preserve them.

One last item I wanted to share was a comment on the many resources that are available for reference online. There are many educational and professional web sites that have good information (and many others that don't). One web site that I have begun using a lot is that of the state's Division of Natural Heritage. Just go to the VA Department of Conservation and Recreation (DCR) website at <http://www.dcr.state.va.us/> and click on Natural Heritage. This web page has an enormous amount of information including

rare and endangered plants (several names of contributors to this report may be familiar like Marion Lobstein, Nicky Staunton, and Elaine Haug), natural area preserves, invasives, and native plants. The native plants section includes the complete lists of native plants recommended for landscaping, gardening, and restoration that VNPS helped create. These lists and the other information can be downloaded easily. It is definitely worth a visit.

-Charles

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

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

In Memoriam

PWWS mourns the recent loss of longtime member Vivian Emerson, mother of former president Helen Walter.

March Meeting Minutes

The Prince William Wildflower Society met on March 15, 2004, at Bethel Lutheran Church, Manassas, Virginia. Charles Smith, chapter president, opened the meeting with an introduction of the guest speaker – Laura Burrell Baxter, Senior Education Manager at the Chesapeake Bay Foundation. Laura presented an enthusiastic and informative program on rain gardens. The Foundation works to educate the public about the Chesapeake Bay watershed and to improve the water quality of the Bay. The annual "State of the Bay" Report gives the Bay a "grade" on a scale of 0-100. The 2003 "grade" was "27."

The Foundation's education arm promotes rain garden projects at schools and similar locations with substantial amounts of impervious surface where rainwater runoff causes erosion and carries pollutants that degrade the water quality in the watershed. Laura described the design and building of some of the model projects in the watershed and gave step-by-step instructions for constructing a rain garden anywhere. The members were very interested in the program and many were very knowledgeable about the use of rain gardens. Laura answered many questions and provided detailed handouts. She encouraged everyone to use the Foundation's website (www.cbf.org) for more information.

Following the program, Charles opened the meeting to announcements:

The annual Plant Sale is May 8, 2004, 9 a.m.-noon, under the trees at Bethel Lutheran Church. Nancy Arrington, sale chairwoman, announced that she has the plant labels and price tags. Help is needed at the sale. Also, help is needed to pot plants for the sale. Call Nancy Arrington.

The Spring Garden Tours are April 25, 2004. Nancy Vehrs announced that help is needed to provide refreshments and to serve as greeters at the gardens.

PWWS will be represented at the Prince William County Spring Fling on April 24, 2004, from 9 a.m. to 3 p.m.

Nancy Arrington announced a field trip to see

the wildflowers of southwest Virginia on May 22-23, 2004.

Spring clean-up at the Ben Lomond Garden is scheduled for March 27, 2004, 1-4 pm.

Charles Smith adjourned the meeting at 8:40 p.m. and members enjoyed refreshments.

*Respectfully submitted,
Charlotte Cochard, Secretary*

Attendance: Nancy Arrington, Phyllis and Paul Boyd, Tiana Camford, Charlotte Cochard, Toni Crouch, Kathy and Don Ehrenberger, Jeanne Fowler, William Hendrickson, Blythe Merritt, Sandra Sheriff, Mary Sherman, Charles Smith, Nicky Staunton, Linda and Leo Stoltz, Nancy Vehrs, Karen and Gerald Waltman.

Rain Garden Plants

Virginia's Department of Natural Heritage (<http://www.dcr.state.va.us/>) has a list of suggested rain garden plants. In addition, the November 2002 edition of *The Avant Gardener* lists many trees, shrubs, and perennials suitable for rain gardens. Contact Nancy Arrington at 703-368-8431 for that list.

Organic Weed Control

In response to some discussion at a recent meeting, member Wendy Pierce recommends the following websites for more information on organic weed control:

Organic Weed Control Guide:

http://www.hergardenweb.com/organics/archives/organic_weed_control.shtml

Organic Gardening Basics:

http://www.organicgardening.com/steps/weed_control.html

You Grow Girl: Weed & Herbicide Free:

<http://www.yougrowgirl.com/garden/herbicides.php>

Organic Weed Control:

http://homepages.picknowl.com.au/sasa/info_advice/folder1/weed_control3.htm (This site is from Australia, but has some excellent tips on organic weed control; see parts 1-5.)

Events of Interest

May 8: PWWS Wildflower Plant Sale, Bethel Lutheran Church, Manassas, 9 a.m. - noon. 703-368-8431.

May 8-9: 15th Annual Garden Day at Blandy, 9 a.m. - 4:30 p.m., \$5 parking fee. Native plants, garden art, hand tools, kids' activities, and more. Call 540-837-1758 or email ejd4u@virginia.edu. More info at <http://www.virginia.edu/blandy/>.

May 14-16: 21st Annual Spring Wildflower Symposium, Wintergreen Nature Foundation, <http://www.twnf.org/programs/wfs.asp>, 434-325-7451. Fee.

May 15: Potowmack Chapter Native Plant Sale, 9 a.m. - 3 p.m., Green Spring Gardens Park, 4603 Green Spring Road, Alexandria. Spring ephemerals, ferns, perennials, woody plants and small trees will be available along with expert advice for planning and planting your garden. For further info, phone 703-534-8746.

May 16: Marion Lobstein's monthly wildflower walk, 10 a.m. - 12:30 p.m., at Great Falls Park, Va. Contact Marion at 703-536-7150 or by email at mblobstein@earthlink.net for further information.

June 2, 4, and 9: *Photography in the Garden* workshop, Green Spring Gardens Park, Alexandria, fee. 703-642-5173.

June 3-5: *Native Plants in the Landscape*, Annual Conference, Millersville University, Pennsylvania, fee. Info at www.millersvillenativeplants.org.

June 5: First Saturday Walk: *Invasives of the Plant Kind*, 10 a.m. - noon, State Arboretum at Blandy, no reservations needed. Fee. For information call 540-837-1758 or email ejd4u@virginia.edu.

June 24: *Ferns and Fern Identification with Cris Fleming*, 7 p.m., Green Spring Gardens Park, Alexandria. Call 703-920-1913 for info.

July 19: PWWS regular membership meeting, 7:30 p.m., speaker to be announced. Bethel Lutheran Church, Manassas.

August 28: 13th Annual Native Plant Seminar and Sale, Irvine Nature Center, Stevenson, Maryland, fee. 410-484-2413, www.explorenature.org.

Natives for the Garden

(Ed. Note: The following articles originally appeared in past editions of Wild News.)

Stokes Aster

Gardeners who long for English-style perennial borders, but are faced with the heat, drought, and humidity of our summers, should look to native plants, especially those from the Southeast.

Stokes aster (*Stokesia laevis*), native to the coastal plain from South Carolina to Florida and Louisiana, is a familiar perennial in southern gardens and has been cultivated in English gardens since 1766. Also called cornflower aster, its 2-4" fluffy, light lavender blue flowers are carried on 1-2' sturdy, well-branched stems. *Stokesia* honors Dr. Johnathan Stokes, an English botanical writer, and *laevis*, meaning smooth, refers to the narrow 7-10" leaves which form an evergreen rosette and appear in a smaller version along the purplish stem.

The rounded shape of Stokes is a good filler among tall spikey plants in the perennial bed or border. A mature plant will cover two square feet and will be literally covered with blossoms from mid-June into July. Its pale color combines beautifully with pinks and other lavenders and is a cooling color contrast to the warm colors of daylilies, coreopsis, butterfly-weed, and redbeckias.

Stokes' native habitat along the coastal plain suggests a sunny, well-drained situation in the garden. Add sand to ordinary garden loam to insure good drainage because plants will die in a heavy, wet soil.

Flowers are attractive to bees and butterflies and are beautiful and long-lasting in arrangements. In the garden, fading flowers are never unsightly as they quickly turn into thistly seed pods prized by arrangers.

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Seed, collected about two months after flowering, can be sown any time in an outdoor bed or indoors in late winter. Germination and seedling growth are rapid. Plants spend the first year developing a strong root system and will produce a few blossoms the second year. Mature plants can be divided in spring or fall.

In addition to their beauty and ease of cultivation, an advantage to growing Stokes and other natives is their resistance to most pests and diseases, allowing us to garden without the use of environmentally harmful chemicals. Several named varieties such as 'Blue Star' are available at area nurseries and the species is available from wildflower nurseries and our spring wildflower sale.



Stokesia laevis

Creeping Phlox

Creeping phlox, *Phlox stolonifera*, native to wooded slopes from Pennsylvania to Georgia, including Virginia's far western counties, is an excellent ground cover for the shade garden. A Georgia nurseryman called it "the perennial of the

1990s" in his price list at the time, and a North Carolina nurserywoman says, "We have never found any plant better than the stoloniferous phloxes for bringing unity to a bed. We use a different color in each of our woodland gardens and they weave between plants providing a fine ground cover with the bonus of good flowers in early spring."

Not to be confused with *P. subulata*, the rock garden phlox known as moss phlox, mountain phlox, or moss pink, creeping phlox has small spoon-shaped leaves and flowering stems that rise 6-10" above the foliage. It spreads by surface runners which root and produce flowering shoots at frequent nodes. Foliage is evergreen in our area. Plants bloom in mid-April into May in a soft pinkish lavender, but a range of colors is available in the many named forms including 'Blue Ridge,' 'Pink Ridge,' 'Bruce's White,' and 'Sherwood Purple.'

In the garden, as in its native habitat, creeping phlox prefers partial shade and a humusy, moist, but well-drained, moderately acid soil. After becoming established, it will adapt to some summer drought. It doesn't grow well in deep shade, and, like all creeping plants, is easily killed by a deep accumulation of leaves.

Plants form a loose ground cover allowing other plants to grow through, thus making it a good companion for taller ferns and wildflowers, such as trilliums and Solomon's seal, and for big-leaved shade plants such as hostas and brunnera. One of its best uses is as an edging beside woodland paths where it can be appreciated up close.

Creeping phlox can be grown from seed which, like all phloxes, needs a cold, moist period (stratification) for good germination. Propagation is much easier by division and cuttings. Rooted sections can be moved in spring or fall and quickly adapt to new areas. Cuttings, taken any time during the growing season, will root in a moist sand-peat mix.

-Nancy Arrington

Wildflower Course

Marion Lobstein is once again offering her summer field botany course at Blandy Experimental Farm at the State Arboretum in Boyce, near Winchester. This year's dates are June 21-24, June 28-July 1, and July 5-8. After this year she will offer this course only every other year. Contact Marion at 703-536-7150, or by email at mblobstein@earthlink.net, for further information.

June Board Meeting

The PWWS Board will next meet on June 21 at 7:30 p.m. at Bethel Lutheran Church in Manassas. Board meetings are also open to all members. Call President Charles Smith at 703-361-5125 for further information.

Summer Gardens Sought

Does your garden shine along with the hot sun in the summer? If you have a garden with many summer-blooming native plants, please consider participating in the summer garden tour. The exact date is to be determined, but in the past it has been the third Sunday in July. These tours have been especially popular since they began because they offer a glimpse of gardens when they are not traditionally showcased. They can only continue if members are willing to open their gardens. Please email Nancy Vehrs at nvehrs@attglobal.net, or call her at 703-368-2898, to volunteer your garden or to nominate someone else's garden for the tour.

PRINCE WILLIAM WILDFLOWER SOCIETY


A Chapter of the Virginia Native Plant Society
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exp. 10/04

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Manassas, VA 20112-2755



 **Next Meeting: 7:30 p.m., Monday, May 17, Bethel Lutheran Church, Manassas**
"Bog Plant Communities"