



WILD NEWS

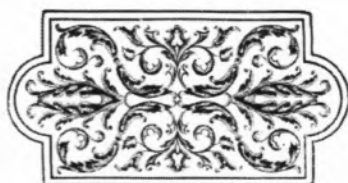
Prince William Wildflower Society

A Chapter of the Virginia Native Plant Society

Number 2007-03

May-June 2007

PWWS ANNUAL NATIVE PLANT SALE



SATURDAY MAY 12, 9:00 am-Noon

Where: Bethel Lutheran Church, located at the corner of Plantation Lane and Sudley Road (Rte. 234 business) in Manassas, Virginia

Good News: THE PWWS plant sale has been listed in *Horticulture Magazine* (thanks to Nicky Staunton) as "not to miss" along with Adkins Arboretum and other well-known regional native plant sales. The pressure is on to make this sale the best ever. It's not too late to contact Nancy Arrington to see how you can contribute—volunteers are needed to help in the early morning before the sale and it's still possible to donate plants for the sale. Email Nancy at narrington@verizon.net or call her at 703/368-8431 for details.

PWWS Volunteers: Please consider rounding out the cast of thousands needed to make the plant sale a success. We need you to help! Please show up early—6:30 is requested—to help out with the set up, sorting, labeling, and other necessary tasks! **Please be there by 6:30 a.m. to help with set up.**

Plants: Nancy Arrington has preprinted labels for most of our regional natives. There will be many different plants available, but come early for the best selection. Plants will be sorted by habitat (sun/shade) and type. There will be many early spring bloomers, including Virginia bluebell, wood poppy, tiarella, and bloodroot, as well as mid spring and summer show-offs, such as Jacob's ladder, golden alexander, purple coneflower, rudbeckia, ironweed, and several types of late summer and fall blooming asters. On the shadier side, the sale will offer a variety of valuable and special perennials such as native ginger, jack-in-the-pulpits, several kinds of trillium, and a variety of ferns. On the woody side, there will be a good selection of some fantastically easy and beautiful shrubs and small trees, such as itea, oakleaf hydrangea, viburnum, ironwood, and others.

Just in time to plan for the sale, Diane Flaherty has sent the following link to the **Wildflower Color Chart**: <http://www.wildflowerinformation.org/ColorListing.asp>

This site allows you to identify wildflowers using a color spectrum. Click on a color and each flower listed has a detailed description of both the shades of color and the flower itself. The link then takes you to a picture and information about the plant. -Diane Flaherty

PWWS MAY MEMBERSHIP MEETING: Just around the Corner

Thursday, May 19, 2007 at Bethel Lutheran Church in Manassas, 7:30 p.m.

Please note *new day of the week* -Thursday--for our member meetings.

SUBJECT: Charles Smith, president of PWWS, will present a program on "**Landscaping for Wildlife.**" (This will be similar to the presentation he will give at Heritage Hunt on May 24.) There will also be a presentation and facilitated discussion from members of the *Prince William Futures Commission* to solicit input from the PWWS members on what we would like to see Prince William County look like in 20-30 years.

Please join us for this fun and informative program, enjoy some delicious homemade refreshments, and learn more about wildlife-friendly landscapes and the future of our home county. The meeting is open to everyone, and guests are welcomed!

PRESIDENT'S CORNER

I hope everyone can make it by the plant sale on Saturday, May 12. It is a good time to buy new plants, see other members and support the chapter. Tell your friends and also encourage them to come to the membership meeting on May 17. We will have a rare opportunity to give input to help shape the future of Prince William County through the Futures Commission and help further goals of preserving open space and native plant habitat for future generations.

This year's Prince William Lawn and Garden Show will be held on June 9 at Linton Hall. This is a change of venue and date. PWWS will share a table with the Master Gardeners next to the teaching garden. If you would like to help with the table please let me or Diane Flaherty know.

Also I encourage you to check out the Virginia Native Plant Society website at www.vnps.org. The website was recently revamped, and has good information about the organization, chapters, efforts such as the Virginia Flora Project, and field trips and educational opportunities.

Enjoy the spring!

--Charles Smith

VIRGINIA BLUEBELLS RING THE COUNTY

**Prince William Wildflower Society
Membership Meeting
March 22, 2007**



The meeting came to order at about 7:40 pm. The meeting took place on Thursday night for the first time due to conflicts with other scheduled activities at Bethel Lutheran Church. It was discussed and decided that the Bethel location is good and members felt that Thursday night is OK and we will continue to meet on Thursdays at Bethel.

Refreshments were provided by Joann Krumviede, Betty Truax, and Charlotte Cochard (not in attendance).

Bonnie Fulford Nahas stated that due to the meeting night, the National Wildlife Federation presenters could not attend. Bonnie, however, has a certified backyard habitat. She had handouts on how to become a certified backyard habitat. Bonnie did a presentation and led a discussion on what should go into a backyard habitat and talked about her experiences.

Following the program there was a short business meeting:

- Nancy Arrington discussed the upcoming plant sale. Primarily she encouraged people to pot up their plants early enough to ensure they will be ready for the plant sale.
- We discussed the chapter efforts to select a wildflower to nominate as the Prince William County official flower. It was mentioned that in initial discussions, most folks liked Virginia Bluebells – they are our chapter flower, can be found throughout the county, and are a visible flower that can be appreciated by all. The group consensus was that the county flower should be Virginia Bluebells.
- We discussed that at the May meeting representatives from the Prince William Future Commission will come speak to the membership and solicit our input on what we want to see happen in Prince William County over the next 20 or more years.
- Charles gave a brief update on the efforts of the Prince William County Comprehensive Plan revision efforts. The citizen group that PWWS is part of is planning one more public meeting and will complete final drafts of the Open Space, Trails and Parks chapters for submission to the Planning Commission in April.
- Charles also mentioned that Kim Hosen is leading renewed efforts to purchase the Merrimac Farm property as County park land.

Attendance: Joann Krumviede, Nancy Arrington, Rosemary Luckett, Bonnie Fulford-Nahas, Charles Smith, Diane Flaherty, Martha Slover, Nancy Vehrs, Bonny Shilton, Helen Walter, Jeanne Fowler, Laurie MacNaughton, Jeanni Couch, Tom Attanaro, and Betty Truax.

EVENTS

May 12 (Saturday) 9:00-12 noon. PWWS CHAPTER PLANT SALE. Bethel Lutheran Church, Plantation Lane, Manassas. (See above for more information)

Tuesdays, May 1 through September 25

Master Gardener Volunteers will be in the lobby area of Chinn Library from 6:30pm - 8:00pm. Bring in plant or insects samples for diagnosis, or just stop by to get research-based solutions to your garden problems. Drop by to have your questions answered!

May 17 (Thursday) from 7:00pm-8:30pm , Bees, Butterflies, and Hummingbirds.

Community Room at Chinn Park Regional Library in Prince William, VA.

Environmental and Natural Resources Program of the Prince William Cooperative Extension. Learn tips for attracting these beneficial and enjoyable creatures to your gardens. Find out specific cultural requirements for the plants that provide valuable food sources or shelter. Cost is Free but registration is required. Please call 703/792-6285 to register.

TWO HIKEs: June 9 (Saturday): Shenandoah National Park

Hawksbill Gap Area, 10 am - 3 pm

Sample some of the Park's high-elevation natural communities with Gary Fleming, vegetation ecologist with the Virginia Department of Conservation and Recreation, Division of Natural Heritage. This hike, of moderate difficulty on steep and rocky trails, will leave from the Hawksbill Gap parking lot (Milepost 45.6) and will last four to five hours. Natural communities to be explored include boulderfield woodlands with mountain ash and yellow birch, rich cove forests, high-elevation seeps and greenstone barrens. Sturdy footwear, preferably hiking boots, are required.

Stoney Man Nature Trail, 10 am - 3 pm

For a less challenging hike that still offers an abundance of wildflowers and a stunning view of the Shenandoah Valley, join Maryland Native Plant Society board member Joe Metzger at Stony Man Nature Trail. Expect to see a variety of ferns and possibly white clintonia, (*Clintonia umbellulata*) and shrub honeysuckle in flower. Meet in the parking area at the Stony Man trail head.

June 9 (Saturday): 9:00 am to 3:00 pm, rain or shine. Prince William County 8th

Annual Spring Fling Lawn and Garden Show and Sale. The Teaching Garden, 9535 Linton Hall Road, Bristow. Note new date and location this year! PWWS will have a booth at this show. For more information, please contact Anne Seiff at 703/792-6285 or master_gardener@pwcgov.org. The Web site for the events is <http://www.pwcgov.org/vcel/enr>. The event is free and there is free parking available. The theme of this year's show is "Lessons in the Garden," and will feature the real garden setting of the Teaching Garden

on the grounds of the St. Benedict Monastery. There also will be plant vendors, lectures, demonstrations, and Master Gardener exhibits, along with children's activities.

June 7-9, 17th Annual Conference, "Natives in the Landscape," Millersville, Pa.

Featured topics for this years conference are: Green architecture and biophilia; Garden Design Inspired by Plant Communities; A Sustainable Residential Property; and Restoring Diversity to Your Garden. Other topics include: Butterflies in the Garden; Invasive Plants and Insects; Plant and Animal Interactions; American Beauties; Grasses, Rushes, and Sedges; Great Natives for the Garden; and Sustainable Landscapes. Optional pre-conference workshops and field trips are also offered. There also will be a native plant sale. For conference information and registration: Phone, 717/872-3030; email, profdev@millersville.edu; website, www.millersvillenativeplants.org. Financial aid and continuing education credits are available.

I think I could turn and live with animals, they're so placid and self contain'd,
I stand and look at them long and long.
They do not sweat and whine about their condition,
They do not lie awake in the dark and weep for their sins,
They do not make me sick discussing their duty to God,
Not one is dissatisfied, not one is demented with the mania of owning things,
Not one kneels to another, nor to his kind that lived thousands of years ago,
Not one is respectable or unhappy over the earth.

Walt Whitman, from Song of Myself (*Leaves of Grass*, 1855)

Native Plant Profile: Virginia Bluebells (*Mertensia virginica*)

Other Names

Virginia-cowslip,
Roanoke-bells, lungwort,
and oysterleaf.

Derivation of Latin name

Linnaeus named the genus *Mertensia* to honor the 18th-century German botanist Franz Mertens, and the specific name, *virginica*, referred to the Colony of Virginia.



Description

Few blues in nature rival the blue of Virginia bluebells, and a single clump in a garden or a stand of thousands along a stream is a beautiful sight. The flower buds are nestled in the unusual dark purplish-green foliage as it emerges in early spring. The blossoms are pink in bud, changing to varying shades of blue as they mature, and returning to pink following pollination. Occasionally a white-blossomed plant appears, and the blossoms of a few plants remain pink

throughout their blooming period.

Blue, bell-shaped flowers hang in nodding clusters from 1-2' stems. Each is about an inch long and has a narrow funnel-shaped tube broadening to a shallow bell with a scalloped edge. Flowering stems are coiled while in bud but straighten to a graceful arch as the flowers expand, a habit typical of the Borage Family to which Virginia bluebells belong.

Both the stems and the leaves of Virginia bluebells are smooth, while most Borage Family members have hairy leaves. The 8"-long, succulent, gray-green, basal leaves and the 2-5" leaves along the stem are oblong and arranged alternately. Lower leaves are supported by long stems or petioles, and upper leaves are usually attached directly to the stem.

Our native bluebells, known botanically as *Mertensia virginica*, have a host of common names, including those given above. In his correspondence with Peter Collinson of London between 1734 and 1746, John Custis of Williamsburg referred to the Virginia bluebell as the "Mountain blew cowslip." Thomas Jefferson grew them at Monticello, and 19th-century garden writers sometimes called them "Jefferson's blue funnel flowers." The name lungwort probably comes from its use in treating pulmonary disorders, and oysterleaf from the oyster-like flavor of its leaves.

As surely as rivers rise and spring is fleeting, Virginia bluebells spill across the Virginia landscape blooming for two to three weeks in April. Like other spring ephemerals, they bloom as the days lengthen and the sun warms the forest floor, and by early summer as the tree canopy closes they have completely disappeared. Stream banks, low moist woods, and floodplains are Virginia bluebell's native habitat. They like moist, medium to rich, alluvial soils that are neutral to slightly acid. They grow both singly in multi-stemmed clumps and in large colonies; a single plant may light up a stream bank, or a carpet of blue may roll across a river bottom.

Other wildflowers that grow and bloom with Virginia bluebells include spring beauty, Dutchman's-breeches, toothwort, rue-anemone, trout-lily, wild ginger, and violets. Redbud, serviceberry, and dogwood also celebrate spring with the bluebells.

Virginia bluebells grow and spread from rhizomes, persistent underground stems that store energy collected during the plant's brief growing season. They also increase by seeds, stored in half-inch nutlets that mature as the green growth yellows and the plants go dormant. Often seeds carried downstream by floodwaters establish new colonies.

Because they reseed freely, Virginia bluebells are considered among the more secure of Virginia's wildflowers; however, the wetland habitats where they flourish have diminished. Leave bluebells and all other wildflowers and native plants undisturbed in the wild. Dig neither plants nor dormant rhizomes, and avoid clearing, draining, or disturbing their habitat. Virginia bluebells are blessings in blue that were here before the settlers arrived; protecting their habitats will ensure they are still here for future generations to enjoy.

Propagation

Bluebells are among the easiest wildflowers to grow and have been a favorite of American and European gardeners since colonial days. They can be grown with bulbs in partially shaded perennial borders, and in clumps or drifts in a woodland garden. In the garden, as in their native habitat, they need a humus-rich soil, adequate moisture in spring, and sun before the trees leaf out. Soil that is moist to wet in spring but dry in summer suits them fine since they go dormant

soon after blooming. (Dying foliage should be left to mature naturally.) Their fleshy rhizomes will rot in a poorly drained soil that stays boggy year-round.

The lovely soft blue of Virginia bluebells combines so well with the yellows, pinks, and whites of early spring that it is hard to come up with a bad combination. The gardener's main challenge is finding companions that share the bluebells' growing conditions and whose foliage remains to take their place. In well-drained soil that stays moist during summer, ferns, wild ginger, and fall-blooming asters are good choices, as are non-native astilbes and hostas. In soil that becomes somewhat dry in summer try alumroot, green-and-gold, and creamy violets.

Bluebells self-sow in spots where they are growing well and are easily propagated by division when the foliage is dying back. Seed sown in an outdoor bed immediately after collection receives the moist cold period needed for spring germination. Seed can also be started in a flat of moist growing medium, covered with plastic, and kept in the refrigerator for six weeks. Remove to a warm room or outdoors for germination.

Where it grows

Virginia bluebells grow in open woods and bottomlands from New York to South Carolina and west to Minnesota, Kansas, and Alabama.

Where to see it in Virginia

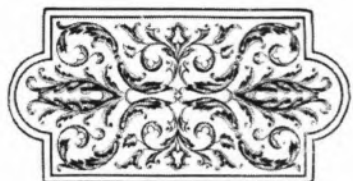
In Virginia, the species is found in about half of the counties in the western part of the state and in most of the Piedmont, but, according to the *Atlas of the Virginia Flora* (1992), it is conspicuously absent in most of Virginia's Coastal Plain, although it grows in gardens there.

Virginia bluebells are particularly abundant in the Potomac River watershed and along the Shenandoah and Cacapon rivers. Bull Run Regional Park in Centreville, Virginia, claims the largest stand of bluebells on the East Coast. There hundreds of acres of bluebells carpet the low woodlands along the banks of Bull Run and Cub Run, where annual flooding has helped them spread. The park sponsors a "Bluebell Walk" in April each year.

Caution to gardeners!

Gardeners should be sure that Virginia bluebells and other native plants purchased for home gardens are nursery-propagated plants, not wild-collected.

For a list of retail sources of nursery-propagated plants and responsibly collected seed, visit our Plant Nursery Page or send a self-addressed, stamped envelope to: Virginia Native Plant Society 400 Blandy Farm Lane - Unit 2, Boyce, VA 22620.



Text from 1989 Virginia Wildflower of the Year brochure

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Deadline for the July-August issue of *Wild News*
is **July 1, 2007**

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exp. 10/07

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NEXT MEETING: THURSDAY, MAY 19, 2007, 7:30 p.m.
Fellowship Hall, Bethel Lutheran Church, Manassas, Virginia