



# WILD NEWS

## Prince William Wildflower Society

A Chapter of the Virginia Native Plant Society

Number 2008-01

January-February 2008

**NOTE NEW MEETING DATE: We're returning to MONDAYS!**

**JANUARY 21, 2008 7:30 p.m. Bethel Lutheran Church, Manassas\***

### **ANNUAL PWWS MEMBER SLIDE SHOW**

Join fellow native plant enthusiasts as PWWS members share their pictures (and stories) featuring botanical and natural beauty from home and beyond.

*Charles Smith* will share Massanutten (highlights: pale corydalis and corymbid spirea) and Jamestown Island shots from the VNPS annual meeting, including the largest *Callicarpa americana* anyone on the trip had ever seen. *Nicky Staunton* will share some of her wonderful photos of plants found on her property; *Marion Lobstein* will treat us to pictures from Canaan Valley, West Virginia, and *Deanna High* will share a few photos of Alaskan natives from a family trip this past summer.

If you have pictures to share, please contact program director *Bonnie Fulford-Nahas* (703-361-7409) or *Charles Smith* (703-361-5125). There will be a laptop and projector available, so bring pics on a CD or a flash drive. Or just come and enjoy the show. Refreshments will be served. ALL – members and nonmembers – are welcome!

\*Bethel Lutheran Church is located on Plantation Lane, just off Bus. 234 (Sudley Road) in Manassas. It is near the post office and opposite the Prince William Hospital.

## UPCOMING EVENTS

### January-February

#### **The Basics of Gardening--Winter 2008 \*\*A Perfect Holiday gift\*\***

This series of basic gardening classes focuses on research-based knowledge of plant resistance, problem avoidance and least-to-most toxic control strategies.

Topics include soils, botany, turf, trees and shrubs, perennials, annuals, insects, diseases and more! Classes are Saturday mornings from **January 26 through March 1**. The fee is \$50; Couples may

register for \$80. **Class size is limited!** Registration ends January 18, 2008. This series will be held at the Dr. A.J. Ferlazzo Government Center in Woodbridge, VA. Download a registration form from [www/pwcv.org/vce/enr](http://www/pwcv.org/vce/enr). For more information please call the Extension Horticulture Help Desk at 703-792-7747 or by email to [master\\_gardener@pwcv.org](mailto:master_gardener@pwcv.org).

**Thursday, January 24, Water Quality,  
7:00pm-8:30pm**

A Senior Naturalist for the Audubon Naturalist Society will present information on local streams and watersheds and the impact of development and landscape practices on our waterways. Local volunteer monitoring programs will also be discussed.

This class will be held at Central Library Community Room, 8601 Mathis Avenue, Manassas, 20110

Cost is FREE but Registration is requested. Please call 703-792-7747 to register.

**Practical Beekeeping for Beginners!**

Classes will begin on **February 7** at the St. Benedict Monastery, 9535 Linton Hall Road in Bristow. To register for this special class, please call John Strecker at 703-6775-8251 or see [www.PWSBeekeepers.com](http://www.PWSBeekeepers.com).

Classes are open to adults and children ages 9 and over. Teaching materials and a one-year membership in a local beekeeper association are included in the class fee of \$85. Classes will meet weekly (except for Valentine's Day) until mid-April.

**March**

**VNPS Annual Workshop  
Saturday, March 8, 2008**

Join VNPS March 8 at the University of Richmond for an all day symposium on Virginia's native orchids, where the lineup of speakers will focus on orchid ecology and distribution. Flyers will go out to VNPS members in January and registration will open at that time.

**Douglas Gill**, professor in the Biology Department at the University of Maryland has studied a single population of pink lady slipper orchids for over 30 years, and will talk about answers to some questions about the life cycle of this orchid, and new questions that have come from his research.

Speaking about his research about the fungal partners of orchids will be **Dennis Whigham** of the Smithsonian Environmental Research Center in Edgewater, Maryland.

**Nancy Van Alstine** of the Virginia Natural Heritage Program will share recent survey work looking for small whorled pogonia and Bentley's coralroot.

A noted photographer and contributor to the Flora of Virginia Project on the Orchidaceae, **Hal Horwitz** will take us on a photographic tour of the orchids of Virginia.

**Monday, March 17, Prince William  
Wildflower Society Member  
Meeting, Bethel Lutheran Church,  
Manassas, 7:30 p.m.**

**Marion Lobstein** will present "Plants of 1607" to PWWWS members and guests. Mark your calendars for this sure-to-be stimulating program. When they become available, program details will be highlighted on the VNPS and our chapter's Web site, as well as in the March/April issue of *Wild News*.

**Prince William Wildflower Society  
Meeting Minutes  
Thursday, November 15, 2007**

Program chairman *Bonnie Fulford-Nahas* introduced the guest speaker, chiropractor Dr. Lisa Bochynski Basler at 7:40 pm. Lisa's presentation was entitled *Oh My Blooming Back!* She stressed that stretching was important before gardening or any other exercise. Our life expectancy average used to be 49 years and now it is 77. No need to spend the last 30 years of our lives in pain. She reminded us that proper eating, sleeping, and exercise, along with adjustments to the spine for pain will help one remain healthy. She invited anyone present to make an appointment at her office for a free screening.

Charles asked what those present thought of going back to the Monday night meetings instead of Thursdays. The Bethel Church choir had returned to Thursday night practices, so that left the big meeting room available to us on Mondays. All agreed that Mondays would be better. So the January 2008 meeting will be on the third Monday evening.

Marion reported that the Flora of Virginia project was progressing.

Those present at the meeting were:  
*Amy Hamilton, Stan and Jean Fowler, Ruth Johnston, Tiana Camfiord, Marion Lobstein, James McNeil, Joann Krumviede, Bonnie Fulford-Nahas, Charles Smith, and Karen Waltman.*

Respectively submitted, **Karen Waltman**, PWWS secretary

**UPDATE OF NATIVE PLANT  
NURSERIES from Horticulture  
Chair, VNPS**

Hi Everyone - I am in the process of updating the VNPS native plant nursery list. We would like the updated list to include only those nurseries that *\*specialize\** in native plants. It is *\*extremely important\** that the nurseries on our list are known to be upstanding nurseries that do not collect plants from the wild and are responsibly collecting seeds. There is a standard form that I am requesting nurseries to complete in order to be considered for our list. I have emailed this form to 39 nurseries and will "snail mail" 10 more.

I would like the list to include more regional native plant nurseries, if possible. I plan to organize the new list by state and would love to organize Virginia by region. Are there any native plant nurseries in your area? Please let me know or send them a copy of the attached form. Now through February is generally a slow time at nurseries so it is important that we get the form to them ASAP before their season becomes too busy.

Please contact me if you have any questions or would like to know if a nursery has already been sent the form. The phone number listed below is my work number. Feel free also to contact me at home at (540) 636-7073 and please leave a message if there is no answer.

Kim Strader, Horticulture Chair  
Virginia Native Plant Society  
(540) 837-1758 ext. 234  
[kas3a@virginia.edu](mailto:kas3a@virginia.edu)

## Natives in the News



Native flowers, ferns, forbs, and trees are getting increasing coverage in national magazines and publications. In the recent December/January Mid-Atlantic issue of *Horticulture*, for example, appears a one page plant profile of *Ostrya virginiana* (American hop hornbeam or ironwood) — a tree whose “time has come,” according to author *Richard Lighty*. Lighty makes a great case for the ironwood as a highly desirable yard tree for both urban and suburban gardens. He also recommends it as a good street tree, having seen it in Boston and Montreal in such use. [photo: Paul Cox, Ladybird Johnson Wildflower Center Slide Library, NPIN Image Id: 3046.]

*Carol Bishop Miller's* “Winters’ Green Wonders” in the same issue describes several natives as “deceptively delicate” yet really tough and beautiful both in winter and spring, including rue anemone (*Anemonella thalictroides*) and toothwort (*Cardamine diphylla*) along with nonnative winter beauties. In the same issue, too, is Part 1 of a special series on invasives, “Understanding the Issue,” by VNPS founding member and

popular garden writer, *C. Colston Burrell*. Part 2 of the series, “Removing and Replacing Invasives,” will appear in the April issue of *Horticulture*.

## IT'S TIME — FOR A WEE TRIP BACK IN TIME!

“PLANTS of 1607” is the title of the program *Marion Lobstein* will present Monday, MARCH 17, at the regular Prince William Wildflower Society membership meeting, Bethel Lutheran Church, Plantation Lane, Manassas.



Mark your calendars for this sure-to-be stimulating, fun program. Program details will be highlighted as they become available on the VNPS and our chapter's Web site, as well as in the March/April issue of *Wild News*.

## IT'S NOT TOO EARLY — to START THINKING ABOUT ...

- Prince William Wildflower Society **Annual SPRING Plant Sale**: January and February are perfect times to start seeds indoors to have extra plants for the sale in April.
- Getting Your Garden in Shape for...the **PWWS Spring Garden Tour!** We need volunteer gardens for this year's show.
- Contact *Nancy Vehrs* at (703) 368-2898 for more details and if you're interested in sharing your garden.

PRINCE WILLIAM WILDFLOWER SOCIETY

President	Charles Smith, (703) 361-5125 <a href="mailto:chrllsmith@msn.com">chrllsmith@msn.com</a>
Vice President & VNPS Co-Treasurer	Martha Slover, (571) 238-5713 <a href="mailto:mslover@gmu.edu">mslover@gmu.edu</a>
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History	OPEN
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Deadline for the March-April issue of *Wild News*  
is March 1, 2008

Please send or email information to Deanna High, 9613 Heather Green Drive, Manassas, VA 20112; [deannah@agb.org](mailto:deannah@agb.org).

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

## Mountain-Laurel (*Kalmia latifolia* L.)



by G.F. Russell

**Other names.** Calico-bush, lambkill

**Derivation of Latin name.** *Kalmia* was named for Peter Kalm, a Finnish botanist and student of Linnaeus sent by him to the New World to collect plants. Kalm was the first to study the genus, and the teacher named it for his student. The specific name, *latifolia*, means "wide leaf," a character that differentiates this from five other species of *Kalmia*, all residents of the New World.

**Description.** An evergreen shrub with a dense rounded crown and crooked branches, mountain-laurel is a member of the Heath family (Ericaceae). The dark brown bark tinged with red becomes flaky in long strips on the older stems, but is smooth on newer wood. New growth, both twigs and leaves, is usually fuzzy. The mature leaves are alternate (rarely in threes), leathery, oblong, about 3 to 4 inches long, with smooth margins tapering to both tip and short petiole. The upper surface is dark green and very

glossy with a yellow midrib, while the lower surface is a lighter yellow-green.

The name "Calico-bush" comes from the pink-trimmed waxy white blossoms. The flowers are borne on one-inch pedicels and produced in terminal clusters or corymbs four to six inches across. The buds are conical, fluted and deeper pink. When the campanulate flowers open, the corollas appear as five-sided, white, inverted parasols about an inch across with pink dots and a wavy pink line in the center. The ten stamens in each flower have anthers buried in individual "pockets" in the corolla completing the illusion of parasols with dainty ribs.

**Mark Catesby** discovered mountain-laurel during his travels in the Carolinas and Virginia and introduced it to Europe in 1726. It was Kalm who discovered the poisonous properties of the foliage when some sheep belonging to the expedition in which he travelled almost died after browsing the leaves, hence the name "lambkill." Horses are susceptible, but deer seem not to be so seriously affected. However, deer do not appear to prefer it, browsing this only when little else is available. Honey made from mountain-laurel is also believed to be poisonous.

**To find mountain-laurel in the wild,** watch for the distinctive shiny evergreen foliage under hardwoods on the coastal plain, along the rivers in cool, acid but well-drained areas, especially along the Blue Ridge or westward. Along openings created by trails and roads and in the interstate medians, these plants often form a glossy green wall at the edge of the forest. Usually six to ten feet high, these handsome shrubs may reach 20-30 feet in height and form tangled patches so dense that they are difficult to walk or even crawl through. That characteristic plus the shiny smooth appearance of large patches earned them the names "laurel hell" and "laurel slick" from early settlers. Where lumbering operations or fires removed the canopy trees, the mountain-laurel often forms almost pure stands. In bloom, the "laurel slicks" of the highlands become "pink beds."

The plants tolerate a range of soils from sandy areas to shallow, rocky, mountain soil, and can tolerate generally dry sites. On richer sites, the plants will be more robust and taller. Where winter wind and ice effects are severe, plants may be shorter with many multi-branched stems. Picking the flowers for bouquets will not work well unless the stems can be placed in water immediately. Branches are sometimes cut to use as Christmas decorations, though this practice is discouraged in the wild. Finding dry capsules in the winter, split like orange sections, is fun for children. Watching for bees to trigger the stamens or trying to produce this effect is amusing, also. Small seed-eating birds perch precariously on small stems and retrieve seeds. In winter bouquets, branches with dry capsules may provide both textural contrast and color.

**Propagation.** Mountain-laurel is a superb landscape plant with year-round interest. Propagation difficulties have kept this wonderful native shrub out of our gardens, but that is changing as a result of recent breeding programs at universities and nurseries. Nurseries are beginning to carry cultivars such as "Sara," with dark pink flowers, and "Bullseye," with deep purple buds opening to white flowers with a cinnamon purple



band. Washington Evergreen Nursery (P.O. Box 388, Leicester, NC 28748, catalog for small charge) carries almost thirty cultivars and selections.

Like other members of the family Ericaceae, mountain-laurel needs acid soil and excellent drainage. Though it grows naturally in sites ranging from dry, rocky slopes to moist stream banks, these locations are always well-drained. Pine bark is a good soil amendment and can also be used for a mulch to keep the shallow roots slightly moist and cool. Plants will grow in shade, but flowering will be better with at least three or four hours of sun.

Under cultivation, mountain-laurel stays around six to ten feet tall and is an excellent broadleaf evergreen for both formal and naturalistic settings. Several plants can be massed to provide a dense hedge or screen. Single plants are attractive accents in shrub borders, or it can be mixed with ferns and wildflowers in woodland gardens. Mountain-laurel is a fine low-maintenance plant for a naturalistic garden where it can grow unchecked into the picturesque form associated with plants in the wild. In formal or structured gardens, it can be kept compact with light pruning after flowering. Plants that have become tall and leggy can be severely pruned to stimulate dense new growth. Remove dead blossoms before seed forms for better flowering the following year.

**Other information.** Because of the poisonous properties, no part of the plant should be used for internal medicinal purposes nor should the leaves or stems be chewed. The powdered leaves mixed with lard have historically been used to treat skin rashes and infections.

Plants are not easily transplanted and should not be dug from the wild, but obtained from readily available nursery stock.

**Where it grows.** Its range extends throughout the East, from Southeastern Maine south along the coastal plain and in the mountains to Florida, Louisiana and Mississippi.

**Where to see it in Virginia.** You'll find mountain-laurel blooming in uplands throughout most of Virginia from May well into June along trails, roadsides, at the edges of fields and pastures, and all along power lines and railroad rights-of-way. According to the *Atlas of the Virginia Flora* (1992), mountain-laurel may be found in the Commonwealth in all but a few counties of the lower Piedmont.

**Caution to gardeners!** Gardeners should be aware that wild-collected mountain-laurel is still showing up in nurseries. Plants are usually balled and burlapped with trunks that have been sawed off to stimulate new growth. Don't buy them! Inform the nurseryman that these plants have been illegally collected and encourage him to stock nursery-propagated plants.

Text from 1994 Virginia Wildflower of the Year brochure  
Catharine Tucker and Nancy Arrington, Authors  
Edited for the Web by Stanwyn G. Shetler, Dec. 15, 1997



Mountain Laurel  
*Kalmia latifolia*

Commemorating the 300th anniversary of the birth of Linnaeus, 1707-2007 is a new book, *The Travels of Peter Kalm, Finnish-Swedish Naturalist Through Colonial North America, 1748-1751*, by Paula Ivaska Robbins, Preface by James L. Reveal. Purple Mountain Press, 2007. 213 pages, paper, \$19.00. The book may be ordered online at <http://www.catskill.net/purple/order.html>.



Illustration: *The North American sylvia; or, A description of the forest trees of the United States, Canada, and Nova Scotia, considered particularly with respect to their use in the arts, and their introduction into commerce; to which is added a description of the most useful of the European trees ...* Tr. from the French of F. Andrew Michaux ... (published 1841-49), New York Public Library Digital Gallery Image id 1263400

**PRINCE WILLIAM WILDFLOWER SOCIETY**  
A Chapter of the Virginia Native Plant Society  
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LOUIS COMFORT TIFFANY

exp. 10/08

Nancy Arrington  
8388 Briarmont Lane  
Manassas, VA 20112-2755

21,  
NEXT MEETING: MONDAY, JANUARY 17, PWWS MEMBER SLIDESHOW  
BETHEL LUTHERAN CHURCH, MANASSAS, 7:30 p.m.