



WILD NEWS

Prince William Wildflower Society

A Chapter of the Virginia Native Plant Society

Number 2010-01

January-February 2010

MONDAY, JANUARY 18, 2010

Annual Prince William Wildflower Society Member Slideshow

7:30 p.m. Fellowship Hall, Bethel Lutheran Church, Manassas

Join fellow PWWS members and guests in viewing diverse, beautiful slides featuring plants, animals, and scenery from both near and far. We have some skilled photographers in our chapter, so the evening is sure to be a visual delight. Refreshments will be served; all are welcome. If you would like to present a slideshow, please contact PWWS President Helen Walter at 703-330-9614 or at helenwalt43@verizon.net.

Presenters: please limit your slideshow to about 15 minutes to allow time for discussion. A projector and laptop will be available, as will an actual slide projector if we need it. Please contact Helen for details or if you need a ride to the meeting.

As of this date, Plant Sale Co-chair and Garden Tour Chair **Nancy Vehrs** will share scenic slides of her last summer's trip to Nova Scotia and Cape Breton Highlands National Park, *Wild News* editor **Deanna High** will show seasonal shots of 2009 from her yard and Prince William County, former PWWS President Charles Smith will show some of his Silver Lake and PWC snaps from the past year, and PWWS Botany Chair and NOVA biology professor **Marion Lobstein** will share some of her sure-to-be-fabulous pics from her trip out West last year.

FROM THE PRESIDENT

Happy New Year, everybody!

For me, the biggest excitement of the holidays wasn't plants, it was birds, red headed woodpeckers to be exact. We've lived in this house since the mid-nineties and red headed woodpeckers are the only woodpeckers we haven't seen here, so it was a real thrill to see one at the suet feeder on Christmas Eve. When somebody at the Prince William Conservation Alliance party asked me about my Christmas, I said that my best present was seeing the red headed woodpecker and that's when I learned that people all over the county are seeing them in their yards too, plus they were seen at every site at the Christmas bird count. There was also a report of a sighting of juveniles earlier, so they must be here all year, not just in the winter. With all the bad news about species in decline, this is extra good news.

Once the pre-Christmas snow had melted enough for me to go out and collect all the dead branches that blew down in the blizzard, I noticed the tips of daffodils starting to break ground and buds swelling on the deciduous trees and shrubs, signs that spring will come eventually no matter



how much snow we get this winter. Meanwhile, I take my kettle full of hot water out every day to provide the birds with fresh water. If I don't, they peck at the ice on the birdbath under the kitchen window and reproach me. The snow does have some benefits. The outside Christmas decorations looked much prettier with a background of snow, instead of the usual drab brown of winter here, and made it easier to see my way when I walked the dog at night.

At our next meeting on January 18 our members will be sharing pictures of their year's adventures and the plants they've seen. Our annual picture show is always a special meeting as we catch up with each other after the holidays and share stories of the past year. Hope to see you all then.

--Helen Walter

[Red headed woodpecker photo: Judy Howle, accessed at http://www.birdsource.org/gbbc/gallery/2007/rehwoo_howle-j_ms.jpg/view]

Monday, November 16, 2009

Prince William Wildflower Society Meeting Minutes

President Helen Walter called the meeting to order at 7:40 pm. She thanked **Joann Krumviede** for her past work as Refreshments Chairman. Joann is retiring from the position, and she will be missed. Joan often brought truly delicious homemade desserts that were very much appreciated by those at the meetings. Betty Truax has been assisting Joann, and Betty will continue to furnish refreshments. A very sincere "Thank You" to Joann for doing such a good job of making sure we had desserts and drinks at the meetings.

Bull Run Mountains Conservancy (BRMC) Executive Director Michael Kieffer was introduced, and he spoke of the history and work of the Conservancy. Michael is a veteran naturalist, biologist, and educator who spent five years at the Piedmont Environmental Center in High Point, N.C. He has been with the BRMC for 10 years.

When Disney wanted to develop a theme park near Haymarket, a need to open preserved land for public use was realized. The Bull Run Mountains Conservancy was begun; its task was to protect the Bull Run Mountains through education, research, and stewardship while maintaining public access on 800 acres of 2,500 acres that Virginia Outdoors Foundation owns in the mountains.

Michael showed slides of the trees, bushes, and wildflowers from the table mountain pine communities high in the mountains to seepage swamps in the lowest areas on the mountains. He explained the geological history to explain why those plants grow there. There were also charming pictures of some local animals. The Bull Run Mountains are one of the most botanized landscapes in Virginia, and BRMC is currently conducting baseline studies of animals to complement the vegetation studies that have occurred over 80 years. A baseline study of insect species, specifically beetles and moths, will provide invaluable information for future management decisions as insects are useful biological indicators of the ecological health of the landscape.

The "tour" through the ecological communities from the top down gave us an insight into this natural area, and we appreciate Michael's presentation and the slides of the flora and fauna. It's such an important task to protect this land, and thank goodness, there are no Mickey Mouse souvenirs in sight!

Popular educational programs are presented at the BRMC headquarters near Broad Run, and the public is encouraged to hike on nearby trails. The studies and the educational programs are all conducted with the goal of preserving a beautiful land for all of us to enjoy in the future. Thank you to Michael and the work of the BRMC.

A brief business meeting followed. Marion Lobstein gave an update on the Flora of Virginia. Karen Waltman asked any members who had not received a 25th Anniversary PWWS pin to please get one from her after the meeting.

Those present: Speaker Michael Kieffer, Brian McDougal, Joann Krumviede, Harry Glasgow, Jeanne Fowler, William Hendrickson, Tiana Camfiord, Amy Mortensen, Marion Lobstein, Katy Segal, Helen Rawls, Mary Sherman, Helen Walter, Frances Lauer, Phil Lauer, Tim Andrew, Joyce Andrew, Diane Flaherty, Karen Waltman.

Respectively submitted,
Karen Waltman, Secretary, PWWS

WELCOME, NEW PWWS MEMBERS

Judy Becelia, Gainesville; Kathleen Hurst, Woodbridge; Freda Mhetar, Bristow; Cindy Patterson, Southbridge; Margaret Stewart, Dumfries; Kathy Vergano, Gainesville.

PRINCE WILLIAM WILDFLOWER SOCIETY
P.O. Box 83, Manassas, Virginia 20108-0083
Chartered January 10, 1983
Logo: *Mertensia virginica* (Virginia Bluebells)

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UPCOMING EVENTS

Upcoming PW Conservation Alliance Programs - First Thursday Nature Tales Series held at 7:30 p.m. at Bull Run Unitarian Church in Old Town Manassas. More information: Nancy Vehrs, 703-368-2898, or www.pwconserve.org.

February 4: The Gaia Theory: a scientific way to view the Earth as a single living system. It is taught as Earth System Science in many universities, but dismissed as New Age religion by some. Join Martin Ogle of the Northern Virginia Regional Park Authority to learn about this tantalizing idea as he explains, in layman's terms, the science, history and societal implications of Gaia Theory. How do oxygen and methane persist in stable concentrations in the atmosphere of the Earth? How have Carl Sagan, William Golding, and Vaclav Havel all contributed to the theory's development and use? How does Gaia Theory speak to global challenges ranging from climate change to energy use? And WHAT does it have to do with PrinceWilliam County??

MARK YOUR 2010 CALENDARS!
Prince William Wildflower Society
SPRING EVENTS
Garden tour: Sunday, April 25
Annual Plant Sale: Saturday, May 8

March 4: Hui Newcomb of Potomac Farms will discuss the benefits of local foods and sustainable agriculture.

Saturday, March 6, VNPS Annual Workshop, "At Water's Edge, Virginia's Wetland Habitats."

The Virginia Native Plant Society's Annual Workshop will take place at the University of Richmond on March 6, 2010. This year's focus is on the fascinating variety of wetland plant habitats found along the coastal plain.

We have a great line-up of speakers: Dorothy Fields of Virginia's Natural Heritage Program will discuss plants of the coastal plain and give an overview of the nine State Natural Area Preserves on the Eastern Shore that she manages; Joe Scalf of the Nature Conservancy is the program coordinator for the Living Shoreline Project and will talk about the initiative to replace seawalls with plant communities; the other two speakers are Dr. Randy Chambers and Dr. James Perry, both professors at the College of William and Mary. Dr. Chambers will discuss the ecology of wetland environments and the spread of Phragmites. Our keynote speaker, Dr. Perry, will address the potential impact of climate change on wetland plant communities in his talk entitled, "Rising Tides."

Registration brochures will be sent out to all VNPS members in January. Space is limited so mark your calendars and plan to register early.

Classes and Workshops from Virginia's Cooperative Extension, Prince William Unit

Monday, February 22, 7 pm. Vernal Pools: More Than Just a Puddle in the Woods. Chinn Park Regional Library, 13083 Chinn Park Dr., Prince William, 22192. Did you know that those small puddles in the woods are important parts of our ecosystem? Master Gardener Al Albourn will present an overview of vernal pools and the creatures that depend on them. He will also discuss volunteer opportunities for Master Gardeners and Master Naturalists to participate in this research. Registration is requested: 703-792-7747 or Horticulture Registration Form.

Friday, February 26, 10 am-12 pm. Stormwater Education Class, Sudley North Government Center, McCoy Conference Room, 8033 Ashton Avenue, Manassas, 20109. Workshop covers the basics of stormwater management from a business and non-profit organization's perspective. This class is mandatory to be eligible to receive an annual stormwater fee rebate. Property must be in Prince William County to qualify for rebate. Pre-registration is required by Wednesday, February 24. Call 703-792-6285 to register.

Thursday, March 11, 7-8:30 pm. Galapagos Islands by Dee Brown. Chinn Park Regional Library, 13083 Chinn Park Dr., Prince William, 22192. The flora of the Galapagos Islands has survived dramatic ecosystem changes over time. Master Gardener Dee Brown will introduce you to flora and some of the Islands' legendary animal life.

Saturday, March 20, 9-10:30 am. 10 Steps to a Greener lawn. St. Margaret's Anglican Church, 13900 Church Hill Dr., Woodbridge, 22191. Master Gardener John Miller will share 10 ways you can keep your grass green and the water clean. Topics to be covered: Lawn Care Calendar, Soil Testing, Amending Soil, Adjusting the pH, Proper Mowing, Weed Control, Disease & Insect Control, Aeration, Fertilization, Seeding & Lawn Repair.

Sustainable Vegetable Garden Series, with Master Gardener Paul Gibson and Master Gardener Cook's Garden Team (Registration is requested for all classes: 703-792-7747 or Horticulture Registration Form)

Thursday, February 4, 7-8:30 pm. Sustainable Vegetable Gardening - Part I. Chinn Park Regional Library, 13083 Chinn Park Drive, Prince William, 22192. This class will focus on preparing and improving your vegetable garden soil fertility and learning best practices for tilling and cultivation.

Thursday, February 18, 7-8:30 pm. Sustainable Vegetable Gardening - Part II. Central Library, 8601 Mathis Ave. Manassas, 20110. Plan your vegetable garden by the calendar and learn about principles of crop rotation and companion planting.

Tuesday, March 30, 7-8:30 pm. Sustainable Vegetable Gardening - Part III. Chinn Park Regional Library, 13083 Chinn Park Dr., Prince William, 22192. Learn about plant processes, propagation, seedling development, selection of a growing media & transplanting techniques.

Saturday in the Garden Series: Hands-On Vegetable Gardening. Saturday, April 10, 9:30am – noon.

Hands-On Vegetable Gardening - Part I. Teaching Garden at St. Benedict Monastery, 9535 Linton Hall Rd., Bristow, 20136. Get your hands dirty! Learn how to prepare and improve your vegetable garden soil and the recommended practices for a successful vegetable garden.

Saturday, May 15, 9:30am-noon. Hands on Vegetable Gardening - Part II. Teaching Garden at St. Benedict Monastery, 9535 Linton Hall Rd., Bristow, 20136. Learn alongside Master Gardeners how to plant and tend to new vegetable seedlings and which crops to sow directly into your garden.

Manassas Journal: "Twelfth Night"

Wednesday, January 6, 2010 Manassas, Virginia

Great thing about having a dog is that you must take it –and yourself – outside in the morning no matter what the weather throws at you. Given that this morning is still freezy-breezy, with a few desolate, dry flurries of snow and a leaden gray sky, and that there remains on the shady side of the road several inches of pockmarked snow, it seems to be a good time to try to propitiate the gods of cold, ice and snow – one hesitates to say “celebrate” winter – with some wintry minded poems by American poets. Perhaps, when we have a new Web site, we can do it with song, too.

–Deanna High



Winter Trees

All the complicated details
of the attiring and
the disattiring are completed!
A liquid moon
moves gently among
the long branches.
Thus having prepared their buds
against a sure winter
the wise trees
stand sleeping in the cold.

--William Carlos Williams

An Old Man's Winter Night

All out of doors looked darkly in at him
Through the thin frost, almost in separate stars,
That gathers on the pane in empty rooms.
What kept his eyes from giving back the gaze
Was the lamp tilted near them in his hand.
What kept him from remembering what it was
That brought him to that creaking room was age.
He stood with barrels round him -- at a loss.

And having scared the cellar under him
In clomping there, he scared it once again
In clomping off; -- and scared the outer night,
Which has its sounds, familiar, like the roar

Of trees and crack of branches, common things,
But nothing so like beating on a box.
A light he was to no one but himself
Where now he sat, concerned with he knew what,
A quiet light, and then not even that.
He consigned to the moon, such as she was,
So late-arising, to the broken moon
As better than the sun in any case
For such a charge, his snow upon the roof,
His icicles along the wall to keep;
And slept. The log that shifted with a jolt
Once in the stove, disturbed him and he shifted,
And eased his heavy breathing, but still slept.
One aged man -- one man -- can't keep a house,
A farm, a countryside, or if he can,
It's thus he does it of a winter night.

--Robert Frost

Photo: Trees on Stormy Day, Deanna LaValle High, Manassas

[New Dogwood Cultivars: Drawing: USDA-NRCS PLANTS Database/Britton, N.L., and A. Brown. 1913, Illustrated flora of the northern states and Canada 2: 664. Sources: <http://plantclinic.cornell.edu/FactSheets/dogwoodanthracnose>; www.paghat.com/dogwoodpink.html; <http://eppserver.ag.utk.edu/personnel/WindhamM/windhamm.htm>.]

Lines For Winter

Tell yourself
as it gets cold and gray falls from the air
that you will go on
walking, hearing
the same tune no matter where
you find yourself --
inside the dome of dark
or under the cracking white
of the moon's gaze in a valley of snow.
Tonight as it gets cold
tell yourself
what you know which is nothing
but the tune your bones play
as you keep going. And you will be able
for once to lie down under the small fire
of winter stars.
And if it happens that you cannot
go on or turn back and you find yourself
where you will be at the end,
tell yourself
in that final flowing of cold through your limbs
that you love what you are.

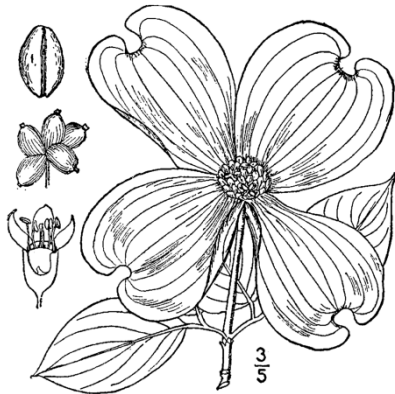
--Mark Strand



New Dogwood Cultivars Resistant to Anthracnose and Powdery Mildew

When we moved to Prince William County in 1997, we were mesmerized by dogwood bloom on our wooded five acres. White waves of blossoms circled magically around us, lighting up the woods. Twelve years later, perhaps a third or less of the trees are left, and many are still dying off. None of our home efforts to halt or slow down the process have helped. But if you are planting dogwoods, you

may want to consider the newer disease-resistant -- to powdery mildew and anthracnose -- *Cornus florida* cultivars.



For powdery mildew, the University of Tennessee Institute of Agriculture has trialed and tested for nearly five years *Cornus Florida* 'Karen's Appalachian Blush' (PPAF), which is now available at retail nurseries. The original specimen was found growing in Decherd, Tennessee in 1995. The name derives from a blush of pink around the large white bracts. Wayside Gardens has it for sale online, as I'm sure do other retail nurseries.

Anthracnose (*Discula destructiva*) has plagued the eastern dogwood populations since the 1970s. After the massive die-off of dogwoods in Catoctin Mountain Park in Maryland (the forest lost 90 percent of its dogwoods by 1980 due to anthracnose), one lone tree was unaffected, resulting in the cultivar 'Appalachian Spring,' also developed by University of Tennessee scientists. Their work with 'Appalachian Spring' underpins the creation of other strains of resistant *Cornus florida*, work that has high degree of commercial interest. 'Appalachian Spring' itself cannot be patented, as it was found in the wild, but it has been trademarked as a prefix for a series of dogwood cultivars from the Tennessee Agricultural Experiment Station. In a casual online search for retail suppliers, using the VNPS native nurseries list for retail and googling some of the big local nurseries, I found only one local retailer-- Native by Design in Alexandria -- that lists 'Appalachian Spring' for sale, but there are most likely many others.

--Deanna High

The Bradford Pear: How Could Such A Nice Tree Turn Out So Wrong?

For a formal landscape, the Bradford pear was the perfect tree. It is beautiful in the spring, bursting into small white flowers just as the weather begins to turn, heralding the new season. It is beautiful in summer, with its trim, conical shape. It is beautiful in the fall, when the leaves turn bronze and purple. It is remarkably resistant to disease and pests; it isn't messy; it grows well in a wide variety of soils and climates, including the disturbed area around new home developments; and its fruit were sterile, so it didn't show up where it wasn't supposed to. What more could you ask for?



The Bradford pear does have one small problem: Its branches grow nearly upright, close to the main trunk, and as the tree ages, they tend to break off. This problem is the seed of its downfall.

Wet snow, high winds, and ice storms break the branches of Bradford pear at the crotch. After a couple of episodes of bad weather, the tree loses its lovely conical shape. Worse, the broken tree often sends up dense packs of root sprouts, making the tree look bushy; and some of the sprouts grow large thorns.

The Bradford pear is a cultivar of the Callery pear (*Pyrus calleryana*), a native of Korea and China. The cultivar was developed by the United State Department of Agriculture and first released in Maryland in the mid 1900s. A quarter century later, when breeders saw how the Bradford pear tended to break apart, new cultivars of the Callery pear were developed and released in the marketplace.

As it happens, however, the fruit of these new hybrids interbreed with the Bradford pear to produce large quantities of fertile seed. Starlings and other birds eat the fruit and plant hybrid pear trees in places people never intended them to grow. It is particularly noticeable in the spring: today there are pear trees blooming along roadsides, in parks, in woodlots, and along stream beds. They crowd out native vegetation that is adapted to the landscape and that provides food and shelter to less-generalist species of birds.

To make matters worse, the volunteer trees that grow from the seeds of the Bradford pear and its new cousins do not breed "true." This generation of trees has characteristics of the ancestral Callery pear that are not desirable in landscapes, like its thorns and its tendency to form suckers. And, when cut, the tree regrows from the roots, making it difficult to eradicate.



Nobody today should plant a Bradford pear. If you are looking for a small tree for a formal setting, we recommend these native alternatives: black haw (*Viburnum prunifolium*), serviceberry (*Amelanchier canadensis*), redbud (*Cercis canadensis*), fringetree (*Chionanthus virginicus*), and southern arrowwood (*Viburnum dentatum*). Although we strongly prefer that people plant natives, there are also cultivated apple, cherry, and plum trees that produce lovely spring blooms, stay small, and are non-invasive. Choose an alternative to the Bradford pear and your neighbors will thank you for years to come.



--Cathy Mayes, Treasurer, VNPS

[This article was first published in *The Leaflet*, Summer 2009, newsletter of the Piedmont Chapter, VNPS. Images: Flowering invasive Bradford pear in landscape, David J. Moorhead, University of Georgia, Bugwood.org Image #5345064, accessed at www.invasives.org; Bradford pear Foliage, Chuck Barger, University of Georgia, Bugwood.org, Image #2308098, accessed at www.invasives.org. Redbud photo: Albert F.W. Vick, NPIN Image ID 8608, accessed at www.wildflower.org.]

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NEXT MEETING: Monday, January 18, 7:30 pm
Prince William Wildflower Society's Annual Member Slideshow