



WILD NEWS

Prince William Wildflower Society

A Chapter of the Virginia Native Plant Society

Number 2010-03

May-June 2010

PRINCE WILLIAM WILDFLOWER SOCIETY

Membership Meeting

May 17, 2010, 7:30 p.m.

Bethel Lutheran Church, Manassas, Virginia

HONEYBEES LIVE!

Karen Waltman, current PWWS secretary and longtime honey bee expert, will reveal how bees live and work, explain the biology of the hive, and show us how honey is made. Karen will display in her presentation a glass demonstration beehive from which we can observe firsthand the three kinds of bees at work: queens, drones, and workers. (She will return the frame of bees to their hive the morning after the demonstration.) Be sure to join us for this fascinating program on the seriously diminishing world of the honeybee. Special "honey-based" refreshments will be served at the meeting. All are welcome. If you need a ride to the meeting, please email PWWS President Helen Walter at Helenwalt43@verizon.net or call (703) 330-9614. (Bethel Lutheran Church is located at 8712 Plantation Lane at the corner of Sudley Road and Plantation Lane across from Prince William Hospital.)



Life imitating art? (Najjum garden)

From the President

We're almost at the end of the busiest time of the year for PWWS, starting with the Bluebell Festival at Merrimac Farm on April 11, then our spring garden tour two weeks later, followed by the annual attack on invasives the first Saturday in May, and concluding with our native plant sale the Saturday before Mothers' Day. After all that, I'll be ready to kick back and enjoy Mothers' Day with the grandkids.

Other than an unseasonable early heat wave, the weather was perfect for going out and enjoying our local spring wildflowers, and since most of them bloomed at least a week or two early, the bluebells were in their full glory at Merrimac Farm on April 11. I went to the Bull Run Regional Park to see the bluebells there the next week and they were already starting to fade and set seed. The theme for the garden tour seemed to be dogs and wildlife. Both gardens were backyard

wildlife habitats and the owners were dog lovers so around the edges of the gardens I noticed memorials for the ones that had already crossed the Rainbow Bridge like what I have in my own yard, kindred souls. The Najjum garden had a wonderful pond, deep enough to keep the herons from eating their koi, and a resident frog that never moved from its rock while I was there. The Brown-Macdonald garden had a new beaver lodge in back, so now I know what's happened to the Occoquan Forest beavers. I'd noticed their work when I walk the dog along the river. As for the dog, he woke us up at 4:00am with a pinched nerve

in his neck the day of the garlic mustard pull at Merrimac Farm, so I spent that morning at the vet instead of pulling up invasives. But I managed to dig and pot two carloads of plants for the sale and take them to Nancy Vehrs, and Rover is on the mend. I hope this gorgeous weather lasts a while longer so I can work in my own yard after the plant sale. We're still cleaning up and repairing the damage from the blizzards.

I wondered how my box turtles were faring under three feet of snow and was overjoyed to find the oldest and most venerated of the half dozen that live in our yard under the deck last week looking no more dilapidated than in previous years. The frogs made it through the winter too, singing their pure joy at being alive another year. During that freak hot spell in early April we saw dozens of frogs playing leapfrog at the edge of the Occoquan, not a good location for laying eggs, so it must have been a party. I haven't seen Sheeba the black snake yet, but I expect she'll turn up too. The red shouldered hawks that really rule the cul-de-sac have been courting again this spring and they are such magnificent birds that I have to forgive them the occasional exploded songbird at the feeders. Since this is the wildflower society, I really should mention how the plants are doing. Other than the toppled Virginia pines and red cedars, the native plants in our habitat survived the winter storms just fine.

Next up is *Karen Waltman's* program on beekeeping on May 17. With all the problems besetting honeybees in recent years and their impact on our food crops, this should be interesting. Plus, rumor has it that the refreshments will feature lots of honey, so you don't want to miss this one.

See you there,
Helen Walter, President, PWWS

PWWS SPRING EVENTS ROUNDUP

Prince William Wildflower Society 28th Annual Native Plant Sale a Clear Success



Plants ready for sale

Last Saturday morning (May 8) a host of PWWS members and friends lent their helping hands for the staging of PWWS's 28th annual native plant sale—our only fundraising event for the year. Even though the opening of the sale was threatened by a few drops of rain, everyone proved water-resistant, we had a good turnout, and the clouds moved quickly on and left us with a gloriously sunny, breezy morning.

Total results of the sale exceeded those of the past three years:

Gross proceeds: \$3,512.50

Plant proceeds: \$3,192.50

Number of plants: 757

Number of tickets: 97

Highest plant ticket amount: \$114.30 with 27 plants

Membership proceeds: \$320

Two new members and five lapsed members (one from three years ago)

Thanks to all who helped! A whopping big thank you goes to plant sale co-chairs *Nancy Arrington*, who contributed over 300 plants and tirelessly shepherded us through the sale, and *Nancy Vehrs*, who took care of hundreds of details, pot donations, labels, plant holding tank, as well as contributing many plants and serving as head cashier! Nancy and Nancy make a great team; PWWS couldn't do it without them!



Charles opens the sale

Many other PWWS members and friends contributed time, transportation, muscle, plants, and helped out at the sale. They include: *Brian McDougal, Jeanne and Hans Endrikat, Jeanne Fowler, Deanna High, Joyce Andrew, Charlotte Cochard, Karen Waltman, Janet Wheatcraft, Bill Holbrook, Cindy Patterson, Brenda Hallam, Tiana Camfiord, Betty Truax, Harry Glasgow, Paul Davis, Helen Walter, Charles Smith, Debbie*



Plant buyers line up

Hutton, Amy Hamilton, Satya Chase, Nancy Vehrs, Nancy Arrington, Dee Brown, Glen Macdonald, Frances and Phil Louer. PWWS thanks you very much, all, for your hard work and your contributions to making this year's sale a true success!

2010 Prince William Wildflower Society Garden Tour, April 17

Two very different gardens in Prince William County were featured on this year's 24th annual garden tour. PWWS extends a heartfelt thanks to the hosts, *Dee Brown* and *Glen Macdonald* of Manassas and *June Najjum* of Woodbridge, who kindly opened their gardens for all of us to enjoy.



Brown-Macdonald garden

The Brown-Macdonald garden featured a steeply sloped woodland garden that curved gently around the property to reveal views of the Occoquan River. Additional interest belonged to their house's site in the



Najjum garden

landscape, as it is a passive solar house tucked into and seeming to emerge from the hill. An enormous, very old tulip poplar was just one of many beautiful native trees threading the woodland paths that connected the whole landscape.

The Najjum garden was a unique take on creating a backyard suburban oasis, centering on a deep pond and waterfall with large koi, frogs, and other wildlife. Turns in the garden revealed many whimsical garden ornaments as well as a fine display of spring-blooming native shrubs and flowers.

Thanks, also, to the many PWWS members who acted as hosts for the gardens, donated refreshments, and

assisted the hosts in setting up the tours. And thank you, *Karen Waltman*, for organizing the tour volunteers. To our inspired, experienced, and hardworking Spring Wildflower Garden Tour Chair *Nancy Vehrs*, we can only say, once again, "Great job!"

Monday, March 15, 2010, 7:30 p.m., Prince William Wildflower Society Meeting Minutes

President Helen Walter introduced *Marion Lobstein*, PWWS member and NVCC biology professor. The title of her talk was "Along the Trail of Lewis and Clark: The Plants of the Corps of Discovery 200 + Years Later."

Marion has been fascinated by the role of Virginians—Thomas Jefferson, Meriwether Lewis, and William Clark—in the Journey of Discovery of the early 1800s. Lewis was President Jefferson's Secretary of State in Jefferson's early presidency, and in 1804 Jefferson gave Lewis and Clark the objective to follow the Missouri River and find a commercial route to the Pacific Ocean. They were to make maps and take notes about the natural wonders they observed; the 1762 *Flora of Virginia* was used by Lewis to identify plants along the way.

In July of last summer, Marion, along with husband George and Inky, the cat, started out on a three-week trip that wound up being 23 miles short of 7,000 miles. They crisscrossed the route of Lewis and Clark through the Dakotas, and visited Fort Mandan, North Dakota, where Lewis and Clark made preparations for their journey. The museum there shows how keel boats were packed with supplies—weapons, gifts for the tribes to be visited, tools, sewing items, clothes,

medicine, food, etc. As Lewis and Clark traveled westward, the Missouri River narrowed, and supplies were switched to smaller, canoe-like boats.

Marion and George saw elk, buffalo, and geothermal features at Yellowstone National Park, and the slides shown of wildlife and wildflowers reflect a trip with beautiful scenery, much of it observed and noted by Lewis and Clark over 200 years ago.

Just for fun, Marion and George also visited the Spam Museum in Austin, Minnesota, the Jolly Green Giant Statue and Museum in Blue Earth, Minnesota, as well as the Corn Palace in Mitchell, South Dakota.

Thanks, Marion for your insights into the Lewis and Clark journey and for fascinating pictures of the areas these adventurers passed through in search of a route to the west.

Announcements:

--The PWWS garden tour is April 25, from noon to 5 pm. Thank you to June Najjum and Dee Brown and Glen Macdonald, who will include their gardens on the tour.

--April 11 is the date for the Blue Bell Festival at Merrimac Farm, from 9 a.m. to 4 p.m.

--Marion Lobstein will lead wildflower walks at Great Falls Park, starting the third Sunday of March and

continuing on the third Sundays through October. The walks are free, but you have to pay to get into the Park. The walks begin at 10 a.m.

--Marion also reported on the continuing progress of the *Flora of Virginia*, due to be published in 2012. The book will be hard cover, and will cost about \$90. Fundraising is \$250,000 short now, but donations are ongoing. Marion showed prints of wildflowers being offered for large donations to the Flora project. Over the years, our chapter has donated \$12,000 to the Flora, so we are sponsors of three families of plants, at \$4,000 for each family.

--Cindy Patterson reported on a habitat enhancement at a parking lot expansion located at Route 1 and Route 234. She showed a poster diagram of the parking lot, and asked for volunteers to sign up to help. The work day will be May 1st. [This project since has been postponed until the fall.]

--Merrifield Gardens in Gainesville is offering a class on Landscaping with Native Plants on March 20.

--Cindy also reported that Sister Pat from Linton Hall Monastery will take any plants saved from land to be

developed, and Cindy knows of a developer who will allow volunteers to remove native plants from land to be developed near South Bridge. Volunteers will be needed for this project also.

--Helen adjourned the meeting at 9:20 p.m.

Attending: Marion Lobstein, PWWS member and speaker, Tom and Joyce Andrew, Harry Glasgow, Nancy Vehrs, June Najjum, Phyllis Putnam, Jeann Martin, Louise Sidley, Brenda Hallam, Sheryl Pollock, Kathleen Hurst, Debbie Hutton, Claudia Fetters, C.E. Burch, Kathy Burch, Leslie Paulson, Amy Hamilton, Ruth Johnston, Rose Breece, Janet Wheatcraft, Dee Brown, Glen Macdonald, Helen Walter, Cathy Sly, Scarlett Swan, Kathleen Whitman Marlies Bjork, Mary LaRoche, Theresa DeFluri, Kelley Shealy, Kate McTigue, Brian McDougal, Deanna High, Charles Smith, Trudy Harsh, Diane Hofstadter, John Pauswinski, Nancy Arrington, Cindy Patterson, Diane and Rick Flaherty, Shirley A. Portell, Jeanne Fowler, and Karen Waltman. (45-a very good turnout.)

Respectively submitted, **Karen Waltman**, Secretary, Prince William Wildflower Society

PRINCE WILLIAM WILDFLOWER SOCIETY

P.O. Box 83, Manassas, Virginia 20108-0083

Chartered January 10, 1983

Logo: *Mertensia virginia* (Virginia Bluebells)

President & Programs: Helen Walter, helenwalt43@verizon.net (Tel: 703-330-9614)

Vice-President: Betty Truax, emtruax@comcast.net (Tel: 703-794-8272)

Secretary: Karen Waltman, geraldwaltman@hotmail.com (Tel: 703-830-5710)

Treasurer: Diane Flaherty, talltrees@verizon.net or dflaherty@tnc.org (Tel: 703-330-9862 or 703-247-3732)

Botany: Marion Lobstein, mblobstein@earthlink.net (Tel: 703-536-7150 or 703-257-6643)

Conservation & Education: Charles Smith, chrissmith@msn.com (Tel: 703-361-5125 or 703-324-8555)

Membership Chair & Plant Sale Co-chair: Nancy Vehrs, nvehrs1@yahoo.com or nancy.vehrs@fairfaxcounty.gov (Tel: 703-368-2898 or 703-324-2351)

Editor, *Wild News*: Deanna High, deannahigh@gmail.com (Tel: 703-392-3505 or 703-606-9988)

Plant Sale Co-Chair: Nancy Arrington, narrington1@verizon.net (Tel: 703-368-8431 or 703-368-9711 or 703-408-7446)

Advisor and VNPS 1st VP: Nicky Staunton, nstaunton@earthlink.net (Tel: 540-547-2813)

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O, DEAR, DEER! Trillium Varieties and Deer By Diane Flaherty

I love trilliums. Every spring, my father would take my brother and me for a walk in the woods near our home in Western New York. We would often come upon large patches of trilliums. So lovely, but they

were rather smelly (*Trillium erectum* is, after all, sometimes called "Stinking-Benjamin.")

This spring I thought about planting some trilliums in my garden. After all, they are smelly and deer shy away from such plants (and don't like fuzzy ones either). Since deer damage is always an issue for me, I searched the Internet just to be sure the flowers were not on their menu. I was surprised to learn that these native wildflowers are one of the favored meals for deer, but in varying degrees.

Bill Sharpe, professor of forest hydrology at Penn State's College of Agricultural Sciences, carried out a research project to learn if deer were eradicating wildflowers in Pennsylvania or

if acidifying soils from decades of acid rain were the problem. He selected three species of trillium to study—purple (*Trillium erectum*), white (*Trillium grandiflorum*), and painted (*Trillium undulatum*).

While acid rain or deer browsing were not proven to be individual causes of wildflower degradation, Sharpe was able to establish a few certainties. White trilliums love soil with high calcium and pH levels, but painted trilliums are not as much affected by increased acidity. He also learned that deer have trillium preferences. White trilliums appeared to be the favorite, painted trilliums to a lesser degree and purple trilliums the least browsed.

So what does this tell me? If I want trilliums, I better start with the purple species. And stock up on deer repellants. --*Diane*
[For the original article by Bill Sharpe, see http://www.northamericanwhitetail.com/deermanagement/dm_0604wildflowers/index.html].

UPCOMING EVENTS

Monday, May 17 at 7:30 p.m. “Honeybees Live!” with Karen Waltman. PWWS, Bethel Lutheran Church, 8712 Plantation Lane, Manassas, Va. 20110

Monday, May 17, 7:00 p.m. Prince William Conservation Alliance, “Land Conservation in Northern Virginia.” McCoart Government Center, Board Chambers, Prince William County, Va. For more information, contact PWCA at (703) 499-4954, alliance@pwconserve.org

June 2-5, 2010. Native Plants in the Landscape Conference and Plant Sale at Millersville University. For a complete brochure of activities and speakers and registration online, go to www.millersvillenativeplants.org.

June 12, 2010, 9:30 am to Noon “Saturday in the Garden”
Virginia Cooperative Extension, Teaching Garden at St. Benedict Monastery, 9535 Linton Hall Road, Bristow, Va. 20136

--**Fern Identification** Learn fern identification and selection for your shady areas.

--**Learn to Compost** Composting is good for your yard, garden and environment.

--**Container Gardening** Design, plant selection strategies, and best practices for healthy, beautiful container gardens.

--**Companion Planting with Herbs** Plant herbs among your vegetables & ornamentals to add beauty, save

space and provide natural control of insects.

--**Children’s Program – Making Scents** Come make sense out of scents of herbs. (Please register for the Children’s Program separately.)

--**Contact the Extension Horticulture Help Desk to register or for more info: (703) 792-7747 or master_gardener@pwvcgov.org**

Monday, July 19 at 7:30 p.m. “Nicky’s Nature: Favorite Images of Prince William and Beyond,” with Nicky Staunton. PWWS, Bethel Lutheran Church, 8712 Plantation Lane, Manassas, Va. 20110

VIRGINIA NATIVE PLANT SOCIETY UPCOMING SUMMER EVENTS

Sunday, June 13 at 1:00 p.m. Easy walk on the Limerlost loop trail (3377 ft elevation) near Skyland in the Shenandoah National Park. To RSVP and for more details, please contact *Carrie Blair* at (540) 364-1232.

Saturday, June 26 (rain date June 27) 10:00 a.m. –1:00 p.m. Smithsonian Conservation Biology Institute, Front Royal, Va. (formerly Smithsonian Conservation Research Center). *Norm Bourg*, Plant Ecologist and Ecological Research Programs Manager, will give a highlights tour of the center. We will visit a 25 ha plot that is being used to study carbon sequestration. Within this plot is a 4 ha deer enclosure where you can see the effects of limiting deer herbivory on sapling growth, native wildflowers and invasive plants. Also visit an American chestnut orchard and, if time permits, look at a pasture restoration site. Bring a picnic lunch, as we will end the trip at a high hill with great views. Bring water and a hat, and be prepared for the usual insects and ticks. **Register by June 14. Cost is \$10. To register call the VNPS office at (540) 837-1600.**

Sunday, July 11 at 1:00 p.m. Join *Kristin Zimet* as she explores the scenic Dark Hollow Falls trail (1400 ft elevation) on Skyline Drive at the 50.7 mile post. The walk is moderate. To RSVP and for directions, please contact Kristin at 540-869-0046 or email kristinzimet@yahoo.com.

Sunday, August 8 at 1:00 p.m. Join VNPS President *Sally Anderson* for a leisure walk through the 30 acre meadow at the State Arboretum of Virginia near Boyce. Bring friends and family and a picnic. The walk will follow the picnic. To RSVP and for more details, please contact Sally at rccsca@comcast.net. **FREE.**

GRASSES

A Most Unappreciated Family of Flowering Plants

By Marion Lobstein

Professor of Biology, Northern Virginia Community College

N.B. As you may recall, the Prince William Wildflower Society chose **Poaceae** (True Grasses) for its third plant family sponsorship in support of the new "Flora of Virginia," adding to its earlier sponsorship of the **Apocynaceae** (Dogbane) and the **Boraginaceae** (Borage or Forget-Me-Not) families. —Deanna High

The grass family (*Poaceae* or *Graminae*) is one of the largest flowering plant families with over 10,000 species in over 600 genera worldwide. In terms of economic importance as human food crop species, it is the most important flowering plant family. In Virginia, we have almost 270 species in over 80 genera, with just under 150 of these species in 50 genera found in Northern Virginia. Recognizing grasses as flowering plants is not very obvious to most people. Once you understand grass flower structure, however, grasses are a really interesting and beautiful family to recognize and enjoy.



Sorghastrum nutans

The other two families that are often confused with grasses are the sedges (*Cyperaceae*) and rushes (*Juncacaii*). The sedges generally have triangular edges (sedges have edges) and rushes are round with solid pith in the stem. Grasses have round stems, but the

stems are hollow between the points of the leaves attaching. In grasses, unlike rushes, the leaf base forms a sheath surrounding the stem before the blade of the leaf expands into the structure easily recognizable as a leaf. The stem of a grass plant that forms the flowers is called a **culm**. Roots of grass plants are fibrous, with particular species being either annuals or perennials. Grasses are herbaceous except for the bamboos, the only woody members of this family.

Sorghastrum nutans: Fruits, achenes, caryopsides



The flowers of grasses are wind pollinated and therefore do not

have petals or sepals. The basic flower has three stamens and an ovary with two styles that can be quite showy. At the base of the ovary are two small structures called the **lodicules** that are modified **perianth** (combined petal and sepal) tissue. There are also other modifications that make grass flowers a bit different. Enclosing each flower is a pair of modified leaves or bracts called the **lemma** and **palea** (the lemma is closer to the flower than the palea). This combination of a flower enclosed by the lemma and palea is called a **floret**. The florets are further arranged in structures called **spikelets**. A spikelet consists of one or more florets with two modified leaves called the first and second **glumes** beneath the floret or florets. The spikelets are then arranged in inflorescences of spikes, or racemes, or panicles. Once you can visualize these modified structures of spikelets and florets, identifying the grasses becomes possible.



Schizachyrium scoparium

Additionally, the veins in the lemmas and glumes may be elongated to form bristle-like structures called **awns**, which are important in identification. The fruit of grasses is the **caryopsis** or **grain**.

Many taxonomists divide grass genera into tribes. The *Flora of West Virginia* has good diagrams of the structure of grasses and good identification keys to tribes, genera, and species of grasses. It places grasses into eleven tribes with a separate identification key to these tribes, then another key to the genera within each tribe, and then each genus will have a key to species. *Grasses: An Identification Guide*, by Lauren Brown, is another good book with which to begin to enjoy the grasses.

The grasses, as mentioned before, are the most important family economically to humans, with major grain crops such as corn, wheat, rice, barley, rye, oats, sorghum, and millet. Countless other animals rely on grasses for their food sources. Bamboo is used as building material in many parts of the world. More and more grasses are being used for ornamental purposes. Of course, we are all familiar with the use of grasses for lawns.

Our native grasses are especially beautiful in the late summer and fall. Deep Cut and other sites in Manassas National Battlefield Park are particularly good sites for Indian grass (*Sorghastrum nutans*) and the little blue stem (*Andropogon scoparius* [editor's note: syn. *Schizachyrium scoparium*]) in the fall. (This article by Marion Lobstein first appeared in the Jan-Feb 1996 edition of Wild News). [*Sorghastrum nutans*: Fruits, achenes, caryopsides (with awns attached): Bruce Leander, Native Seed Imaging Project, NPIN Image #27161, (2010); *Schizachyrium scoparium*: David McDermott, NPIN Image #86 (1986); Sally and Andy Wasowski, NPIN Image #25420 (1986-2010); Sally and Andy Wasowski, NPIN Image #25423, (2000-01). Accessed at <http://www.wildflower.org>.]



Schizachyrium scoparium

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**NEXT MEETING: Monday, May 17, 7:30 p.m. Bethel Lutheran Church,
Manassas, Virginia. Karen Waltman presents "Honeybees Live!"**