

MONDAY, JANUARY 17, 2011

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 Dee Brown at dj44brown@yahoo.com or Helen Walter, program chair, at helenwalt43@verizon.net or (703)330-9614. Presenters: please limit your slideshow to 15-20 minutes to allow time for discussion. A projector and laptop will be available, as will an actual slide projector if we need it.

At the time of writing, Plant Sale Co-chair and Garden Tour Chair Nancy Vehrs will share photos from trips to Cape May, New Jersey in October and some from Dolly Sods in August. Marion Lobstein, PWWS botany chair, will have some slides from a trip this past summer to the Bruce Peninsula in Canada, and Treasurer Diane Flaherty and PWWs member Rick Flaherty will share pictures from their trip to Alaska last July. Diane says that the trip took them to Fairbanks, Denali National Park, Anchorage, Sitka, and Juneau, and covered habitats at sea level on up the mountains to patches of alpine flowers and plants.

Join us for this relaxed and sure to be fun program and delicious refreshments! Prince William Wildflower Society meetings are open and all are welcome.

PRESIDENT'S CORNER

I believe birds have the right idea about winter. It's best to just leave for a warm, sunny place and not return until Mother Nature decides to play nice again. Unfortunately, most of us have jobs, obligations, or bank accounts that prevent it. January-February has always been my least favorite time. All the fun of the holidays is gone and spring is a long way off with weeks of cold, dark days to endure. Each January, I try to psych myself up to convince myself that these two months actually have socially redeeming value. My attempts always come out sounding like the old chestnut about the kid beating his head against the wall while yelling "ouch." When asked why he did it, he said because it felt so good when he stopped. For example, without the awful cold, ice, and darkness, spring would not be so beautiful and special. Even a lovely blanket of new snow ultimately means shoveling the drive and hoping you don't wind up at the chiropractor, taking your auto to the car wash to get all the crud off, etc. Most of nature treats January-February with the contempt it deserves by dying, leaving until it's over, or burying itself and refusing to come out until spring. Even Thoreau, an avid nature lover, was not thrilled by winter. He said, "the snow...surrounded me suddenly with winter. I withdrew yet further into my shell and endeavored to keep a fire bright both within my house and within my heart."

As we withdraw indoors the next couple of months reflecting, reading, cleaning out old files, etc., the end of summer and September seem a long way off. For PWWS, however, it isn't that far away. Our chapter is hosting all of Virginia for the annual meeting this coming September. We want to provide a wonderful and memorable time for our fellow nature lovers. To host in September, we must get the information out to everyone in the summer for registration. To mail it in mid-summer, it must go to the printers in June. Meaning all tours, hikes, and speakers must be contacted, confirmed, scheduled, and in place by late spring. Your help is vital in achieving this. If you have attended a talk by an inspiring speaker, taken a walk with a knowledgeable leader, or know of a nice natural area in Prince William County, please pass that information along ASAP to one of the PWWS officers (see phone and e-mail contact info below).

For these two upcoming months a final thought from Thoreau: "In the long winter...men are by nature and necessity charitable and liberal to all creatures. In the course of winter I threw out...sweet corn...and was amused by watching the motions of the various animals which were baited by it." We can't do much with native plants in the winter but we can care for our native animals—yes, even squirrels. Remember water too. Our river has been frozen over for weeks and all the other water freezes up quickly too. My Christmas gift to my husband was an electric bird bath that won't freeze during the cold nights. From the frequency we have to refill it, I think numerous animals are using it.



Things like this help keep the fire in my heart going until March.

--Dee Brown

Monday, November 15, 2010 Prince William Wildflower Society Meeting

Newly elected PWWS president Dee Brown opened the meeting at 7:35 p.m.

Refreshment Committee Chairman Needed: Dee asked for volunteers for the Refreshment Committee Chairman, and until a chairman is found, Betty Truax and Karen Waltman said they would call members and ask for donations of refreshments for each meeting.

America the Beautiful Project: Dee asked for volunteers to help sort seed packets at Ft. Belvoir, Va. for the America the Beautiful projects. Betty and Karen agreed to help Dee; a date would be decided later. [Dee, Betty and Karen drove to Ft. Belvoir on November 29 and sorted seed packages into herbs, flowers and vegetables. Garden centers from America and Canada send seed packets that were not purchased to the America the Beautiful warehouse on Ft. Belvoir, and these packets are distributed for free to schools, scout groups or other non-profit organizations that want to beautify their surroundings or grow gardens. We were allowed to take packets of native wildflowers to give out at the Bluebell Festival and other events at which PWWS is represented. The warehouse is not heated, so we will return during warmer weather and help again with the sorting. Join us! One advantage-you can keep a few seed packets for yourself too. With a seed packet of basil that I took home, I'm going to try to grow basil this winter in some potting soil in the sunny spot on my clothes dryer.]

The American Chestnut Story: Dee introduced speaker Cathy Mayes-president of the Virginia Chapter of the American Chestnut Foundation. Cathy narrated a power point presentation on how a blight of the early 1900s

wiped out the chestnut tree in American forests, and how efforts are being conducted to restore the tree to its former glory.

An environmental disaster: The blight was first identified in 1904 in New York City. The fungus enters the bark and infects the cambium, not the root. By the 1950s, the entire range of the American chestnut was affected. The valuable, strong, rot-resistant lumber was not the only loss; the nuts were eaten by people and forest



animals, and the larvae of 5 micro moths fed on the leaves and are now extinct. For Appalachian farmers the chestnuts had become their most important cash crop. Cathy said the blight was the greatest ecological disaster, but it is also now a story of hope. How to Help: Find an American chestnut tree growing in the wild and report it to the American Chestnut Foundation at (540) 364-1922, or send notice to 8266 East Main Street, Marshall, Virginia, 20115. For more information, the web site is www.vatacf.org. There are still American chestnut trees to be found, but they do not live long enough to become the 80-foot trees of the past. American chestnuts found now on high ridges are taller than others in lower areas, so it has been found that the blight is not as devastating in high, sunny, dry areas. There are also introduced Chinese chestnut trees which are blight resistant, but they only grow 40 to 60 feet tall. They don't like shady areas in a forest, so they get bigger in open pastures or fields.

How to Identify: Cathy said the American chestnut leaf looks like a canoe (with a matte finish), and the Chinese chestnut leaf

looks like a shoe (with a waxy finish). The American twig looks like a tootsie roll with tiny bumps, and the Chinese twig has big bumps, or leaf buds.

Cross-breeding: Cathy explained the process of cross-breeding American chestnut and Chinese chestnut trees in an attempt to make the American chestnut blight resistant. [It was complicated, and I got a D in genetics, so I won't try to explain.] But it involves a large number of crosses and selection of the best resistant over a period of many years. If you find an American chestnut tree growing in the wild, please report it, and if it is accessible, it can be used for the cross-breeding project. It is hoped this project will help bring back the majestic American chestnut tree to our forests.

We thank Cathy for her very interesting presentation on the sad story of the American chestnut tree, but with research and projects as outlined in her presentation, we may well see the tree growing successfully in the future.

Announcements-Our PWWS newsletter editor, Deanna High asked for articles from PWWS members for the W*ild News* newsletter. Her phone number and email are found in the list of board members in the newsletter. Contact her if you have questions or comments. Contact Helen Walter with program ideas.

PWWS will host VNPS annual meeting-Our PWWS chapter will host the Virginia Native Plant Society annual meeting Sept. 16, 17, and 18. We will need ideas for speakers and field trip leaders, so please contact a board member if you have some suggestions. Meetings will be held at the Four Points Hotel in Manassas, at Routes I-66 and 234.

"Flora of Virginia:" Marion Lobstein reported that drawings for the "Flora" should be completed by December or January, and the 2012 publication is on track. We adjourned at 9:08 p.m.

In attendance: Cathy Mayes, Helen Walter, Phil and Frances Louer, Betty Truax, Janet Wheatcraft, Diane and Rick Flaherty, Brian McDougal, Brian Smith (TACF), Mary Sherman, Marion Lobstein, Glen Macdonald, Charles Smith, Jeanne Endrikat, Deanna High, Nancy Vehrs, Dee Brown, June Najjum, Karen Waltman.

-- Respectively submitted, Karen Waltman, PWWS secretary

UPCOMING EVENTS

Sundays, 1:30–3pm in January, February and March, Harry Allen Winter Lecture Series, Green Spring Gardens Park, 4603 Green Spring Road, Alexandria, Virginia 22312. Green Spring Gardens Winter Lecture Series is an annual series of presentations by authors, garden designers, scientists, and other garden enthusiasts on the cutting edge of horticulture. After the lecture, meet the speakers and enjoy refreshments. \$10 fee. Limited seating. Register online at http://www.fairfaxcounty.gov/parks or call (703) 642-5173.

Sunday, January 16, at 1:30 p.m. "Then and Now at Green Spring Gardens" Learn the story of Green Spring Gardens through fascinating photo archives that span 120 years. Green Spring historian **Debbie Waugh** shows how the landscape evolved and how the gardens were laid out to create a unique and inspiring—and still changing—public garden.

Sunday, January 23, at 1:30 p.m. "Tree Essentials" What you always wanted to know about trees, but were afraid to ask. **Richard Murray**, arborist and author, aided by samples presents a fresh look at trees. Learn why trees have been so successful and how we can help preserve them.

Sunday, January 30, at 1:30 p.m. "Cheery Cherry Trees" Ever wonder why the Japanese flowering cherry trees came to Washington DC? Are you curious about the many varieties of trees and how to care for them? Join National Park Service staff at Green Spring Gardens to learn about the culture and natural history of these beautiful trees.

Sunday, February 6, at 1:30 p.m. "The Witch Hazel Family" Join Scott Arboretum curator **Andrew Bunting** for an in-depth look at *Hamamelidaceae*, the witch hazel family. Through classroom discussion and exploration get a close look at this diverse and beautiful family. Participants receive thorough fact sheets on each plant covered in the class. Take time afterwards to look for witch hazels in the Green Spring collection.

Sunday, February 13, at 1:30 p.m. "Creating Garden Habitats, Big and Small" Wildlife habitats are lost to urban development at an alarming rate. Sustainable landscaper, Catherine Zimmerman, shows how you can help solve this problem by creating beautiful and sustainable habitats in your own garden. Book sale and signing to follow.

Sunday, February 20, at 1:30 p.m. "Smithsonian Gardens: A Hidden Treasure" Where are the Smithsonian Gardens? Much like the question, 'Where is the Smithsonian,' that you hear from so many tourists...the gardens are everywhere on the National Mall. Cindy Brown, Smithsonian Gardens, Education and Collections Manager, takes you on a treasure hunt through this tapestry of gardens and its collections.

Sunday, February 27, "Going Green in the Garden" Entomologist **Dr. Mike Raupp** from the University of Maryland teaches us how to deal with pests effectively and reveals which products are safe and effective, neutral, or good for the environment. Book sale and signing to follow.

Sunday, March 6, "Energy Wise Landscape Design" Learn how to design your landscape to save energy and contribute to a healthier environment. Our landscapes are full of opportunities to reduce our energy consumption. Most of them involve little or no cost, some will actually save you money. Come find out how from Sue Reed, a landscape architect with years of ecological design experience. Book sale and signing to follow. Sunday, March 13, "The King's Gardener" History comes alive as you meet America's first botanist, John Bartram, a traveler, collector and father of the nursery industry in the original thirteen colonies. Kirk Brown, as John Bartram, takes us back to a time when the new field of plant discovery and identification lead to the development of America's first public gardens.

Thursday, February 10, 2011, 8:45 AM - 5:00 PM, the Piedmont Landscape Association is sponsoring the 28th Annual Central Virginia Landscape Management Seminar at the Paramount Theatre, 215 East Main Street, Charlottesville, Va. The program includes: Douglas Tallamy, Professor of Entomology and Wildlife Ecology, University of Delaware, speaking on "Bringing Nature Home;" Michael Dirr, Professor of Horticulture, University of Georgia, speaking "In Praise of Noble Trees" and on "New Shrubs: Breeding, Marketing, and Introduction;" and Mark Weathington, Assistant Curator, JC Raulston Arboretum, speaking on "Going Global in Search of Plants." For registration information, please see www.piedmont-landscape.org. The event is co-sponsored by the Jefferson Chapter of the VNPS.

Saturday, February 12, at 7:00 p.m. "Our Natural World—PechaKucha Night," Tall Oaks Community Center, 12298 Cotton Mill Drive,

Woodbridge. Join the Prince William Conservation Alliance and Lake Ridge Parks & Recreation Association for a fun evening of people sharing their passions about nature, wildlife and the world around us. Everyone's presentation will be in the PechaKucha PowerPoint slideshow format of 20 images/20 seconds per image. Open to the public and free of charge. There will be refreshments for sale, and all proceeds benefit the PechaKucha for Haiti Fund. For more information or to participate as a presenter, call Shirley Couteau, LRPRA, (703)491-2154 or Kim Hosen, PWCA, (703)499-4954.



Sunday, February 13, 2:00 p.m. "Second Sunday Walk," Piedmont Chapter of VNPS. Bull Run Mountains Conservancy Director Michael Kieffer will lead us along the trails of the 800 acres of the Conservancy, located where Broad Run, I66, VA55 and the railroad split the mountain at the Thorofare Gap along the border of Fauquier and Prince William Counties. An indoor program will be offered in case of bad weather. Contact Carrie Blair at (540) 364-1232 for information or check the Conservancy website, *brmconservancy.org*.

Saturday, March 5, VNPS Annual Workshop, University of Richmond, Richmond, Virginia. Save the date and watch for your VNPS *Bulletin* in the mail for topic and other details on the Workshop.

Saturday, March 26, 235th Annual Lahr Native Plant Symposium and Plant Sale, 8:30 a.m. to 3:00 p.m. Beltsville Agricultural Research Center. Save the date for the 25th anniversary of this renowned native plant event. Speakers include Allan Armitage, Cole Burrell, Scott LaFleur, Sylvan Kaufman, Carole Ottesen, and Jeremy West. Registration information will be available February 1, 2011 at www.usna.usda.gov.



IS IT TIME...TO RENEW YOUR PWWS MEMBERSHIP?

Turn this newsletter over and check your mailing label: The two numbers in the upper right hand corner of the label have the month and year your current membership expires (Membership expires at the end of the month). If yours is due or past due, please consider renewing now. Fill out and clip the form below and send it to VNPS with your check or credit card information, OR go to www.vnps.org, click on "Contact Us" and "Join Us" for the

membership renewal form. Remember to list Prince William Wildflower Society as your primary chapter. All but \$5 of your annual membership dues are tax-deductible.

Prince William Wi	ldflower Society		
Virginia Native Plant Society No	ew/Renewal Members	hip Form	
Name(s)	Organization		
Address	City	State	Zip
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GOT THE WINTER BLUES? Take a break from trying to decide whether or not to buy a snowblower this year, and instead, test your wildflower and native plant identification prowess with the "Wildflower Quiz" at http://www.wildflower.org/collections/quiz.php. You can choose beginner, intermediate (regional), or advanced (state specific) levels—or all three. Plus the tests change, so you can go back and i.d. additional flowers and plants. A fun app from the National Wildflower Center! (At left, one I missed: *Anemone berlandieri* [Tenpetal Thimbleweed]. Photo: Joseph A. Marcus, 2003, NPIN Image Gallery, Image id #12537, *www.wildflower.org.)

PRINCE WILLIAM WILDFLOWER SOCIETY

P.O. Box 83, Manassas, Virginia 20108-0083 Chartered January 10, 1983 Logo: *Mertensia virginia* (Virginia Bluebells)

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

Refreshments: VACANT Registry: VACANT

Wild News is published bimonthly; deadline for submissions for the March-April issue is March 1, 2011.

Please send submissions to Deanna High, editor, Wild News, deannahigh@gmail.com.

Native Plant Profile: *Ilex Opaca* Aiton (American Holly; Christmas Holly)

Family: Aquifoliaceae

A flurry of activity a few days ago at the birdfeeder prompted me to look up from my reading to see what was going on. The commotion was not at the feeder, however, but right next to it, in a stand of three or four American holly trees, where a cloud of robins were swirling around, dipping in and out to feast on a still abundant crop of red berries. They swooped for a minute or two, then suddenly left altogether, then came back pretty quickly. This quick leaving and returning happened again, and then they left for good—or at least, until another day.



Having taken the large stands of American Holly on our property pretty much for granted all these years, we were dismayed when last winter's blizzard ravaged them, wiping out the tops of many fine, old trees. There are several "holly groves" occurring in drifts and connecting the property, and there is nothing comparable naturally occurring. As the only broad-leaved evergreen native to the place, they serve as backdrop to so many other trees and woody plants, pulling the eye into the corners of the woods, attracting and protecting birds, and displaying their lovely bark summer and winter. And, they are generous, most years, in yielding lots of free and beautiful decorative greens for Christmas and Thanksgiving, especially. Yes, one does walk carefully around them, and nothing hurts quite as much as stepping barefoot on a holly leaf, but in terms of pain in the world, the price is definitely worth it.

Description

Leaves: "Alternate, simple, evergreen, elliptic to ellipticlanceolate, 1 ½ -3 ½ in. long, half to three-quarters as wide, with large, remote spiny teeth. Dull to dark green above, occasionally lustrous, yellowish green beneath, glabrous: petiole is ¼ to ½" long, grooved, minutely downy" Leaves remain on tree 3 years. Bark: "roughened by little warts, greenish or grayish, but not furrowed or scaly." Twigs: "at first rusty-downy but soon hairless and pale brown." Flowers: "in short clusters from the axils of young leaves, on slender stalks, the male clusters 3- to 9flowered, but the female only 1- or rarely, 2-flowered, blooming in midspring, small and greenish." Fruit: a shiny red [or orange-red] berry (actually drupes: each seed within the fruit is encased in a stone-like covering) Wood: "nearly white, very hard, strong, tough, finetextured, medium heavy (40 pounds to the cubic foot, dry weight.)"

Size: Usually a small tree, slow growing, in the deep south (or over a very long time) it can reach 40-50 feet in height or more, with a spread of 18 to 40 feet. Dirr reports that 15 to 30 feet in height is more usual in normal landscape conditions.

Range: American holly is found in mesic forests in the southeastern U.S. and is very shade tolerant. It occurs naturally in southeastern North America from Massachusetts to Florida and west to eastern Texas and southeastern Missouri. It often grows with magnolia (Magnolia grandiflora), red oak (Quercus rubra), hackberry (Celtis occidentalis), red maple (Acer rubrum) and sweetgum (Liquidambar styraciflua) in rich bottomland forests or on wooded hillsides above creeks. Culture: American holly does best in acidic, well-drained soils with plenty of organic matter. It needs no pruning and is pest-free except for occasional holly leaf miners which do little harm. They are sometimes prone

Light: Sun or partial shade

Moisture: American holly is tolerant of drought.

to leaf-spot and mildew, especially in our area.

Hardiness: USDA Zones 5 - 9.

Propagation: The species can be propagated by seeds, but they require extensive pre-treatment to bring them out of dormancy, with germination taking from 16 months to 3 years. It is easier to take cuttings. With over 1,000 cultivars, many of which are very beautiful, it is recommended that you use an *Ilex opaca* cultivar when purchasing or planting for the landscape. Hollies are dioecious, so it is necessary to plant male and female trees together to get berries. A ratio of one male plant to three females is usually recommended. Dirr recommends the U.S. National Arboretum's *The International Checklist of Cultivated Ilex* as a reference for those interested in researching cultivars.

Wildlife: In addition to my voracious robins, the berries of American holly are eaten by more than 20 species of songbirds and are a significant source of food for wintering cedar waxwings, robins, catbirds, and mockingbirds.

Uses: Holly wood is traditionally a valuable cabinet wood, in the heavy to medium class weight. Its value lies in its uniform texture (because it's a sapwood tree) and its adaptability to dyes. According to Peattie, "practically all of the white and black inlaid lines in musical instruments and furniture and much of the colored wood in marquetry are Holly." Peattie also claims that Holly is unexcelled for taking enamel finishes, and its hardness renders it to "turnery," such as found in knife handles,

and dyed black, in substitute ebony for black piano keys. Medicinally, Cherokee are said to have used a decoction of holly bark as a wash for sore eyes, infusions of leaves for measles, and chewed berries for colic and as a gastrointestinal aid. History Notes: There are some ancient hollies in the Virginia and the District. George Washington was apparently devoted to the tree, and there are still some existing trees at Mount Vernon. The one I remember best is at the bottom of the garden at Tudor Place (in Georgetown, just across the road from Dumbarton Oaks). It was so huge that it took a minute or two to identify it as a Holly. The co-national champion American

Holly in Buckingham County, Virginia, which measured 55 by 51 feet, as cited by my 1998 edition of Dirr, is, alas, no more, having been struck by lightning in 1999. There is reported another huge *Ilex opaca* growing in the U.S. National Cemetery at Hampton University and measuring a circumference of 129 inches, height of 61 feet, and average crown spread of 52 feet, but I have not seen it. Pictured above is the trunk (or multiple trunks) of an old Holly in Arlington, submitted as a possible champion tree on the "Remarkable Trees of Virginia Project" Web site,

www.cnr.vt.edu/4h/remarkabletree/index.cfm. Also



mentioned on the site is the fabulous Holly at James Madison's estate, Montpelier, in Orange. It would be fun to make a tree pilgrimage to see these fabulous trees.

Caution: Although our *Ilex Opaca* is not threatened, the species is listed as "Exploitedly Vulnerable" in New York and as "Threatened" in Pennsylvania, speculatively due to years of over-harvesting and poaching for ornamental use as Christmas decorations. –*Deanna LaValle High* Sources: USDA Plants database, with

references, http://plants.usda.gov; Floridata,#587 Ilex opaca, by Steve Christman, accessed at www.floridata.com; NPIN Native Plant Database, www.wildflower.org; Manual of Woody Landscape Plants, by Michael Dirr (Chicago: Stipes Publishing LLC, 1975, rev. 1998); A Natural History of Trees of Eastern and Central North America by Donald Culross Peattie (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1964); "Remarkable Trees of Virginia Project," accessed at www.cnr.vt.edu/4h/remarkabletree/; Holly photo, Paul Cox, NPIN Images Database, Image id#10008, 1988, accessed at www.wildflower.org; Virginia range map of Ilex opaca, Digital Atlas of the Virginia Flora, http://www.biol.vt.edu/digital_atlas/;



PRINCE WILLIAM WILDFLOWER SOCIETY A Chapter of the Virginia Native Plant Society P.O. Box 83, Manassas, Virginia, 20108-0083

Next Meeting: "ANNUAL PWWS MEMBER SLIDESHOW" Monday, January 17, 7:30 p.m., Bethel Lutheran Church, Manassas, Virginia