



WILD NEWS

Prince William Wildflower Society

A Chapter of the Virginia Native Plant Society

Web site: [www. http://vnps.org/pwws](http://vnps.org/pwws)

Number 2012-02

March-April 2012

PRINCE WILLIAM WILDFLOWER SOCIETY

Membership Meeting
Monday, March 19, 7:30
p.m.

Bethel Lutheran Church
Fellowship Hall
8712 Plantation Lane,
Manassas, Va. 20110

**"The Flora of Virginia:
Worth the 250-Year
Wait!" with Marion**

Lobstein, PWWs Botany
Chair and retired Professor
of Biology, NOVA
(Manassas Campus).



It has been 250 years since the last update of a Flora of Virginia was published in Holland, based largely on Colonial Virginia botanist John Clayton's description of New World plants. Finally, this coming November, a long-awaited new edition of the "Flora of Virginia" will be published. The new Flora will use updated scientific names that may be different than those we are used to. **Marion Lobstein**, who has been involved with the Flora project since its inception, will highlight some of these changes and the reasons for the changes. Please join us for this fascinating look at the past and the future of Virginia's native plants. The program is free and open to the public. Refreshments will be served. If you need a ride to the meeting, please contact PWWs President Nancy Vehrs at (703) 368-2898 or nvehrs1@yahoo.com.

[Image: *Claytonia virginica*, Laura Call Gastinger, used as logo for the Flora of Virginia Project. Source: www.floraofvirginia.org.]

President's Corner

Where was our winter? As I write this in early March, spring has already arrived, and we never experienced any prolonged cold weather or snow for the winter season. In celebration of my recent retirement, Harry and I took a February trip to Costa Rica—ostensibly to escape to warm weather, but it seems that we could have stayed home for that. However, I certainly could not have witnessed such magnificent flora and fauna from home. What sensory overload! Tropical birds sport vivid colors and exotic songs and calls to match. The jungles exude lush, thick vegetation—imagine forests without

overabundant, voracious deer. And the flowers are magnificent. Colorful

heliconias and epiphytic bromeliads and orchids served as eye candy for me. **Forty percent** of Costa Rica is under conservation protection! The citizens of that peaceful country learned some years ago that the secret to its success lie not in ravaging the land for agriculture and other commercial pursuits, but to preserve and restore its natural beauty for tourist dollars. I highly recommend a visit there for anyone who loves nature.

With spring upon us, our busy season is here and it is hard to find the time to participate in everything we would like to do. Our meeting this month features our own botanist extraordinaire Marion Lobstein on the *Flora of Virginia*. We have waited a long time for a comprehensive Flora for our commonwealth, but it will be a reality this fall. Without Marion's vision, perseverance, and leadership, this huge undertaking would never have happened.

April is full of activities. Marion will be leading some wildflower walks, including one to see the magnificent bluebells at the Stone Bridge at the Battlefield on April 14. And speaking of bluebells, our chapter logo flower, you don't want to miss the annual Bluebell Festival at Merrimac Farm Wildlife Management Area on Sunday, April 15. PWWS will have a booth and there will be exhibits and activities for all ages. Volunteers are needed!



Everyone looks forward to our annual spring garden tour. The date is set for the afternoon of Sunday, April 29. The annual plant sale is always the Saturday before Mother's Day, and this year is no exception with the date set for May 12. As your native plants emerge in your garden, think about dividing and sharing for the sale. Or, if you're looking to increase the number of natives in your garden, our sale is a good place to find reasonable prices for hardy plants and trees. We also need volunteers to make both of these annual events a success.

We have other volunteer opportunities too. Consider lending a hand with the conservation landscape plan at Merrimac Farm, or help with the control of invasive exotic plants at Rippon Lodge. Details are elsewhere in this newsletter.

On May 17, we are coordinating a special trip to Mt. Cuba Center, a non-profit horticultural institution in northern Delaware located on nearly 600 acres. It is "dedicated to the study, conservation, and appreciation of plants native to the Appalachian Piedmont Region through garden display, education, and research." I had the opportunity to visit back in the 1990s and it was a special treat. While in the area, we also plan to visit some other local gardens and focus on their native plants. We need a minimum of 12 participants to qualify for a tour. Please let me know if you are interested.

Spring is fleeting. Enjoy its special gift of bright, cheerful flowers. ~Nancy

**Prince William Wildflower Society
Membership Meeting
January 16, 2012 7:30 p.m. Bethel Lutheran
Church, Manassas, Virginia**

President Nancy Vehrs welcomed new member Andrea Kinder, and she reminded everyone to get a ticket for the drawing that would be later.

Annual Members' Slide Show: Nancy Vehrs and Harry Glasgow's slide show began with a map of the Brandywine River Valley area of Delaware and Pennsylvania. They had visited Longwood Gardens in Pennsylvania and

Winterthur in Delaware in August 2011, and they showed pictures of native plants from those gardens. Longwood has a large native plant meadow as well as native plants in woodland settings. Nearby Winterthur, another duPont property, is primarily a decorative arts museum, but it has extensive gardens as well.

Nancy is planning a field trip for PWWS to Mt. Cuba Center in Hockessin, Delaware, with side trips perhaps to Longwood Gardens and Winterthur on May 17 and 18. (See above under EVENTS/MAY for more information).

Brian Shermeyer presented slides of showy wildflowers and some animals found along the Bull Run-Occoquan Trail. Brian provided a link to a web site that can tell you about hiking locations and how to get to them.
<http://www.hikingupward.com>

Diane and Rick Flaherty traveled to Iceland in August 2011 and showed us pictures of arctic poppy, coltsfoot, cotton grass, lady's smock, lady's bedstraw, and wild pansy, as well as flocks of puffins.

Deanna High showed photos taken from a trip to Kenilworth Gardens National Park in Washington, D.C. in late July 2011. Her slides included American water lily and many waterside showy native blooms

Charles Smith was in the George Washington National Forest in October of 2011 just west of Woodstock and showed slides of fall wildflowers, such as a 1-inch, light purple aster, as well as witch hazel, rhododendron and others. He reported the "views are fantastic."

Thank you to those who shared their pictures of wildflowers, scenic views and interesting places to visit. We appreciate your time and photography talent.

Announcements

~The Bluebell Festival at Merrimac Farm in Nokesville will be Sunday, April 15, 2012

~Nancy Hugo, author of the new book *Seeing Trees*, will be at Green Spring Gardens Park in January. She was a co-author of the book *Remarkable Trees of Virginia*.

~The PWWS Garden Tours will be Sunday, April 29.

~The PWWS Plant Sale will be Saturday, May 12.

~**Harry Glasgow** reported that the American Chestnut Foundation is sponsoring plantings of 100% American chestnut tree seeds, gathered from Sugarloaf Mountain. Let Harry know if you are interested in helping the Foundation plant seeds at Bull Run Mountain. Harry's phone number is 571-212-2163.

~Anyone visiting Thompson Wildlife Management Area or Merrimac Farm is required to have an access permit, and you must apply online. A fishing license also covers the requirement, and you can apply for one at Walmart or you can purchase a special permit that does not involve fishing or hunting.

~**Jeanne Fowler** won the doorprize, Peterson's *Guide to Wildflowers*.

~The next members' meeting will be March 19, 2012.

~Thank you to Deanna High and Helen Walter for bringing refreshments.

Those in attendance: Charles Smith, Effie Smith, Jeanne Endrikat, Nancy Arrington, Dee Brown, Deanna High, Christine Drazdowsky, Brian Shermeyer, Jeanne and Stan Fowler, Diane and Rick Flaherty, Mike and Joyce Wenger, Glen Macdonald, William Hendrickson, Lea Wolf, Harry Glasgow, Nancy Vehrs, Helen Walter, Carol Thompson, Amy Hamilton, Audrea Kinder, Karen Waltman.

~ Respectively submitted,
Karen Waltman, PWWS Secretary

[Bluebell photo: Courtesy of Nicky Staunton]

Seed Buying 101: A Seed Gardener's Glossary

Even though many native plants are difficult to propagate from seed (see Betty Truax's article on Bloodroot, for example; another is Partridgeberry, the VNPS Wildflower of the Year 2012, which is nearly impossible to start from seed), the gardeners amongst us are likely to try a hand in starting at least some native or nonnative perennials, annuals, or vegetables from seed. The following partial list of terms from the Home Garden Seed Association (www.ezfromseed.org) is a "plain-language" go-to resource for clarifying often confusing terms.

Cultivar: The word itself derives from the term "cultivated variety." [Editor's note: a similar adaptation for cultivars of native plants I've been hearing more and more often is "Nativar."] A cultivar name is often presented as the "variety name" with the genus and species in home garden seed catalogs. Described by the International Code of Nomenclature as an "assemblage of cultivated plants clearly distinguished by one or more characteristics, which, when reproduced, retains it

distinguishing characteristics." A seed-grown cultivar can be either a hybrid or open-pollinated variety.

GE (Genetically Engineered): The terms GE and GMO are frequently used interchangeably, but they do not mean the same thing. It is modern Genetic Engineering that is the subject of much discussion. Genetic Engineering describes the high-tech methods used in recent decades to incorporate genes directly into an organism. The only way scientists can transfer genes between organisms that are not sexually compatible is to use recombinant DNA techniques. Plants that result do not occur in nature; they are "genetically engineered" by human intervention and manipulation. Examples of GE crops currently grown by agribusiness include corn modified with a naturally occurring soil bacterium for protection from corn borer damage (Bt-corn) and herbicide-resistant ("Roundup Ready") soybeans, corn, cotton, canola, and alfalfa. All of these are larger acreage, commercial crops. None of these are available to home gardeners at the present time.

GMO (Genetically Modified Organism): The USDA defines a GMO as an organism produced through *any* type of genetic modification, whether by high-tech modern genetic engineering, or traditional plant breeding methods. GE and GMO have different meanings. For hundreds of years, genes have been manipulated empirically by plant breeders who monitor their effects on specific characteristics or traits of the organism to improve productivity, quality, or performance. When plant breeders, working with conventional or organically produced varieties, select for traits like uniformity or disease resistance in an open-pollinated variety or create a hybrid cross between two cultivars, they are making the same kind of selections that can also occur in nature; in other words, they are genetically modifying organisms and this is where the term GMO applies. Examples of 20th century breeding work include familiar vegetables and fruits such as seedless watermelons and modern broccoli.

Open-Pollinated (OP): Open-pollinated seed varieties are those that result from pollination by insects, wind, self-pollination (when both male and female flowers occur on the same plant) or other natural forms of pollination. If you save seeds from open-pollinated varieties and grow them in following years, they will "come true," meaning that the plants will produce new plants with characteristics or traits like the parent plant from which the seeds were harvested. Keep in mind, however, that both the wind and insects will pollinate different open-pollinated varieties that are planted close together. Because of this, with some common home garden plants, notably squash and pumpkins, saving seed can be a gamble, because unless different varieties are separated by specified distances, they may exchange pollen or "cross pollinate" each other.

Hybrid (F-1): An “F-1,” or first-generation hybrid occurs when a breeder selects two pure lines (plants that produce identical offspring when self-pollinated) and cross-pollinates them to produce a seed that combines desirable characteristics or traits from both parents. Common traits breeders work to increase in hybrids might include, for example, disease resistance, uniformity, earliness, high nutrition or color. Hybrid seed is often more expensive than non-hybrid seed, due to production methods—the pure lines must be consistently maintained so that F-1 seed can be produced each year and the process of cross-pollinating is often done by hand. Seeds can be saved and planted from F-1 hybrids, however, plants grown from that seed “will not come true,” and may lack the desirable characteristics of the parents, which were crossed specifically to incorporate them. Examples of popular home garden hybrids include Premium Crop broccoli and Better Boy, Celebrity, and Sungold tomatoes.

Heirloom: Heirlooms can be generally defined as open-pollinated varieties that have resulted from natural selection rather than a controlled hybridization process. Some sources use 50 years as an arbitrary age marker to define what constitutes an heirloom variety. Others classify any cultivated variety as an heirloom if it was developed prior to the 1940s and 50s (starting in the 1960s, plant breeders began producing and selling many modern hybrid varieties.) Like any other open-pollinated variety, seed saved from an heirloom produces plants with the same characteristics as the parent plants. Seed saving organizations have played an important role in preserving many noncommercial heirloom varieties. Examples of popular home garden heirlooms offered by many packet seed companies include Brandywine and Black Krim tomatoes and Kentucky Wonder beans.

Organic: When you see the word “Certified Organic” on a seed packet, it has distinct legal meaning. It can only be used for seed by growers who are in compliance with all the detailed rules and regulations specified by the USDA’s National Organic Program. While other countries have their own organic systems, in the U.S., organic regulations specify that the land in which crops are grown cannot have had prohibited substances applied for three years prior to harvest, and the operation must be managed

according to an Organic System Plan that is approved and regularly inspected by a USDA accredited certifier. Organic seeds are grown strictly without the use of synthetic fertilizers and pesticides; the use of sewage sludge, irradiation, and genetic engineering also is prohibited.

Pelleted: Pelleted seeds are enclosed in a round pellet made from simple clay or another inert material to bulk them up. The process makes very small seeds such as lettuce, carrots, and onions easier to sow and is a way to make expensive tiny flower seeds easier to see and handle. Pelleted seeds may also be “primed.” Priming is a hydration treatment bringing seeds to the brink of germination, then they are dried for storage and distribution. Primed seeds break dormancy and germinate quickly when sown, but should be used the same season they are purchased, as priming can decrease storage life.

Treated/Untreated: Seeds labeled “Treated” are generally coated with a fungicide—check the packaging for specifics about the treatment. Treated seed is available primarily for commercial crops because farmers want to protect germinating seed in the field from pathogens when planted in cold or wet soil. Packet seed companies that sell to home gardeners generally specify if any of the seed they are offering is treated. Current rules for USDA certified organic production prohibit the use of treated seed. This might change in the future as biological seed treatments are approved for organic production and become available.

Safe Seed Pledge: The safe seed pledge arose as a response to the release of the first genetically engineered plants in the mid-1990s. Signers pledge not to buy or sell genetically engineered seeds. A list of companies that have signed the pledge is maintained by the Council for Responsible Genetics (www.councilforresponsiblegenetics.org), a non-profit with a stated mission of educating the public about and advocating for socially responsible use of new genetic technologies.

~Deanna LaValle High





Prince William Wildflower Society SPRING 2012 EVENTS

MARCH

Saturday, March 24 and Saturday March 31, Prince William Forest Park, 10:00 a.m. Join Ranger Cecilia every Saturday in March (except March 17th) for Historic Orienteering, leaving from Parking Lot G at 10am. Use a map and compass to find your way to historic sites that are off the beaten path. Please wear sturdy hiking shoes. Map and compass provided. Fun for all ages!

Sunday, March 18, 10 a.m. to 12:30 p.m. Wildflower walk with Marion Lobstein. Great Falls National Park.

Monday, March 19, 7:30 p.m. "The Flora of Virginia—Worth the 250-Year Wait!" Presentation by Botany Chair Marion Lobstein, Prince William Wildflower Society Membership Meeting, Bethel Lutheran Church, Manassas, Va. [See page 1 of this newsletter for more on this program.]

Tuesday, March 20, 2:00 to 4:00 p.m. Blandy Experimental Farm Spring Tour of Blandy. Spring arrives today! Join us for a walking tour of Blandy and appreciate the flowers, birds, butterflies, and whatever else we find. Wear comfortable shoes and dress for the weather. *FOSA members \$8; nonmembers \$10*

Saturday, March 24, 9:00 a.m. to Noon. Conservation Landscape at Merrimac Farm. The Prince William Conservation Alliance seeks volunteers with its conservation landscape plan at the Merrimac Farm stone house (<http://www.pwconserve.org>). This demonstration project will create and enhance habitats for wildlife. The formal workday is Saturday, March 24, but persons or groups willing to "adopt a patch" are also needed and will be formally recognized with a sign. PWWS has supported this endeavor with a financial contribution and several members have donated plants and manual labor. For more information, call (703) 499-4954 or email alliance@pwconserve.org.

Sunday, March 25, 8:00 a.m., Sunday Bird Walk, Merrimac Farm, Stone House Visitor Center, 15020 Deepwood Lane, Nokesville. We'll look for birds and other wildlife, especially butterflies and dragonflies, as we travel through the uplands to the edge of the floodplain, covering a variety of habitats, including open fields and woodland edges. Everyone is welcome. Dress for the weather, bring binoculars and cameras. More info and RSVP (not required) to PWCA, (703) 499-4954 or [alliance\(at\)pwconserve.org](mailto:alliance(at)pwconserve.org).

Sunday, March 25, 1:00 p.m. to 4:00 p.m. "One Stream at a Time Tour, the first program of Community Stream Stewards, with Clay Morris. (See alliance@pwconserve.org for more information on the Community Stream Stewards project.) Meet at Hylbrook Park, 2440 Prince William Pkwy, Woodbridge. Following opening remarks from Supervisor Mike May, this field trip highlights two streams in developed areas, both high priority restoration candidates, and considers restoration needs associated with the Chesapeake Bay clean up.

Saturday, March 31, 10 a.m. to Noon, "Planning a Memorial Garden," Carrie Whitacre, Blandy Blue Ridge Hospice Counselors. Learn how a memorial garden can be used to honor memories of loved ones and help us deal with our grief. Bring basic ideas for your garden (size, sun exposure) and leave with a plan. *Program is free but registration required Call by March 16, 2012.*

APRIL

Sunday, April 1, Noon to 4:00 p.m. Prince William Forest Park Announces Fee-Free Day and Hosts Event to Celebrate the Month of the Military Child. Prince William Forest Park is proud to partner with the Sierra Club: Mission Outdoors Military Family and Veterans Initiative to host 'Celebration of the Military Child Outdoors' on April 1st from 12-4pm. Activities offered in Prince William Forest Park's Pine Grove Picnic Area include ranger-led hikes, table-top activities, learn how to pitch a tent, guest speakers and more! Those family

members interested in attending the event can register at <http://www.regonline.com/register/checkin.aspx?eventid=1067103>. Prince William Forest Park Superintendent Vidal Martinez has waived the \$5/vehicle park entrance fee on April 1st to kick off the Month of the Military Child. The entrance fee will be waived for all visitors for one day only on Sunday, April 1st.

Prince William Forest Park is located 35 miles south of Washington, D.C. at I-95, Exit 150b. For more information, visit our website at www.nps.gov/prwi or contact Laura Cohen at (703) 221-4706.

Thursday, April 5, 7:30 to 9:00 p.m. Bull Run Unitarian Church, 9350 Main Street, Manassas, "Intermittent Stream Ecology" with Jake Hosen. Presentation is part of the Stream Stewards Project. An overview of the ecology, hydrology, and social importance of non-perennial streams, which are streams that do not flow year-round. (See alliance@pwconserve.org for more information on the Community Stream Stewards project.) This presentation pairs with the following field trip.

Friday, April 6, 7:30-9 p.m. Full Moon Hike, with *Blandy Staff and Volunteers*. Explore the Arboretum under a full moon. Bring a flashlight, wear comfortable shoes, and join us as we explore the natural world at dusk and after dark. Perfect for the whole family. *FOSA members \$8; nonmembers \$10 or bring the whole family for \$20. Reservations Required—Space is Limited*

Saturday, April 7, 9:00 a.m. to Noon. Intermittent Stream Tour with Jake Hosen. Meet at Merrimac Farm, 15020 Deepwood Lane, Nokesville. Extending information presented on April 5, this field tour focuses on the ecology, hydrology, and social importance of non-perennial streams, which are streams that do not flow year-round. We'll check streams for organisms generally found in non-perennial streams and discuss the unique adaptations that they use to survive in streams that routinely go dry. (See alliance@pwconserve.org for more information on the Community Stream Stewards project.)

Saturday, April 14, 9:00 a.m. to Noon. PWWS is seeking members to help with an invasives removal workday at Rippon Lodge Historic Site in Woodbridge. Invasive plants there include Chinese wisteria, English ivy, garlic mustard, Japanese honeysuckle. To volunteer, please contact Nancy Vehrs at nvehrs1@yahoo.com or site manager Becky Super at (703) 499-9812.

Saturday, April 14, 10 a.m. to 11:30 a.m. Wildflower Walk with **Marion Lobstein**, Stone Bridge at Manassas National Battlefield Park.

Sunday, April 15, 10 a.m. to 12:30 p.m. Wildflower Walk with **Marion Lobstein**, Great Falls National Park.



Sunday, April 15, 10: a.m. to 4:00 p.m.

Bluebell Festival at Merrimac Farm

Bring your family and friends to Merrimac Farm on Sunday, April 15, beginning at 10:00 am, to welcome spring and view the *spectacular display of Virginia Bluebells* that carpet the floodplain along Cedar Run for nearly a mile. In the words of one visitor, it's like walking through Oz. See <http://www.pwconserve.org> for more information.

Saturday, April 28, 10:00 am to Noon, "Neighborhood Streams Tour," with Cliff Fairweather, Cloverdale Park, 15150 Cloverdale Road, Dale City. Presentation is part of Stream Stewards Project. Streams and the land around them provide vital habitat for a wide variety of life – from tiny aquatic insects to large floodplain trees. (See alliance@pwconserve.org for more information on the Community Stream Stewards project.)

Sunday, April 29, Noon-5 p.m. PWWS Annual Spring Garden Tour

This year's garden tour is scheduled for the afternoon of Sunday, April 29, from Noon to 5:00 p.m.

One of the featured gardens is that of *Jane and Bill Lehman* and is located in Manassas off Davis Ford Road. It features a lovely woodland setting and delightful waterfall in the back. Extensive hardscaping lends structure to native plants and shrubs planted around the property.

Another garden on the tour is owned by *Mary and Brian Shermeyer*. Located on a small city lot in a neighborhood with a strong homeowners association, this garden demonstrates what you can do to "go native" in a tight space.

The third garden on tour is well-known to many of us "old 'uns" at PWWS, but has not been featured on the tour for quite some time. *Tiana Camfiord's* Compton Road garden is a salute to the diversity of native species, encompassing spring ephemerals, woodland rambles, mature shrubs and trees, and showy native perennials for both shady and sunny areas.

We need volunteers to make this tour a success. If you can donate baked goods to offer as refreshments or can serve as a host at one of the gardens, please contact Nancy Vehrs at nvehrs1@yahoo.com or (703) 368-2898.

MAY

Thursday, May 3, 9:00 a.m. to 12:30 p.m.

Blandy Experimental Farm with Marion

Lobstein, VNPS. Take a trip to one of the state's most spectacular wildflower displays, featuring a sea of trilliums. Meet in the Blandy library; we will carpool to the site. Wear shoes for walking 1-2 miles along a dirt road. FOSA members \$8; nonmembers \$10 Permits are now required and are available for \$4 at:

www.dgif.virginia.gov. For a complete schedule of programs or to register by mail, go to www.virginia.edu/blandy/blandy_web/all_blandy/2012publicprograms.pdf or call (540) 837-1758 ext. 0.

Sunday, May 6, 10 a.m. to 2 p.m. Earth Sangha Wild

Plant Nursery's Spring Sale. To get an idea of what is likely to be on offer, or to check on volunteer opportunities, please see www.earthsangha.org.

Wednesday, May 9, 7-8:30 p.m. Blandy Experimental Farm, "Salamanders: Hidden Jewels of Appalachia," with Kim Terrell, *Smithsonian Conservation Biology Institute*. The Appalachian region includes the greatest diversity of salamanders *in the world*, but populations are declining at an alarming rate. Learn about the work being done to protect these animals from extinction. *FOSA members \$8; nonmembers \$10 or bring the family: \$20*

Saturday, May 12, 9:00 a.m. to Noon, PWWS Annual Native Plant Sale, Grounds of Bethel Lutheran Church, 8712 Plantation Lane, Manassas. Sun- and shade-loving native wildflowers, shrubs, and trees; great prices, lots of variety! Bethel Lutheran Church, 8712 Plantation Lane, Manassas.

We need your plants! It's time to start potting- up for the plant sale; call or email plant sale co-chairs Nancy

Bloodroot – a Native Favorite

Sanguinaria canadensis is a member of the poppy family (Papaveraceae). This native plant is endangered in some areas. In 2003 the U.S. Park Service started monitoring bloodroot populations as well as other threatened species such as ginseng and black cohosh because of the reduction in population due to poaching. Poaching is illegal in all national parks.

Luckily, bloodroot can be shared if you know someone who is growing it in the garden. It spreads both by rhizomes and by seed. Wait until the leaves have turned yellow to divide it. The first couple of times I tried to grow it, I was unsuccessful. Then in one year I had two different friends share plants from their gardens and I planted them in two separate places and both survived. In



Arrington (703) 368-8431, narrington1@verizon.net or Nancy Vehrs (703) 368-2898; nvehrs1@yahoo.com for more information about plants needed and what you can do to help make PWWS' sole fundraising activity a success. Watch for details on the Plant Sale in the mail and on our Web site at vnps.org/wp/pwvs or on our Facebook page.

Saturday May 12 and Sunday May 13,

Mothers Day Weekend. Garden Fair 2012 at Blandy Farm. Select vendors with perennials, small trees, and fine items for garden & home. Also, children's activities, gardening information, food, and more. *Parking fee.*

Wednesday, May 16, 3-5 p.m. "America's Old-Growth Forests," with Joan Maloof, *Salisbury University*. Join us for a program about old-growth forests and efforts to identify and protect one such forest in each appropriate U.S. county. *FOSA members \$8; nonmembers \$10*

Friday and Saturday, May 17-18, Trip to Mt. Cuba Center

PWWS has arranged for a special guided tour of the Mt. Cuba Center (www.mtcubacenter.org) in Delaware on Thursday, May 17 in the afternoon. This non-profit horticultural center is renowned for its woodland wildflower gardens and its work with native plants of the Piedmont. Located in the famed Brandywine River Valley area that is also the home to such places as Longwood Gardens and Winterthur, it is well worth the visit. PWWS President Nancy Vehrs is coordinating the trip and will arrange carpools to the site. A minimum of 12 participants is needed. Depending on the interest, members can spend the night and visit other area horticultural attractions as well. Contact Nancy for details, nvehrs1@yahoo.com or (703) 368-2898.

both cases, the plants appeared to die immediately but lo and behold the following year I was rewarded with charming white blooms and amazing leaves. I was so excited, I actually screamed the first time I noticed they had emerged.

Bloodroot gets its common name from the reddish sap that will pour from its stalk and rhizomes. In fact, it will even clot like blood. I suggest wearing gloves whenever handling this plant. I found some information that stated the sap could harm skin cells.

EXTREMELY TOXIC "can be fatal"

There is plenty of information on the web about the medical uses of bloodroot that explains its benefits and dangers. Although I am not an herbalist, I advise you to do your research very well. Also, consider pets and children before planting bloodroot in your landscape. As beautiful as this plant is, it is not worth risking loved ones health or possibly even lives.

I am not at all surprised to find out that Bloodroot was named the 2005 Virginia Wildflower of the Year by the Virginia Native Plant Society. Although only 6 inches tall when in bloom, it is a real charmer.

In early spring, stalks with single buds are completely encompassed within a rolled leaf. During the day when the sun is out the leaves unfurl and then at night they curl up again. The flower itself doesn't last very long, because it drops its petals within one to two days of being pollinated. The lovely 1 ½ to 2-inch wide bright, white flowers (sometimes, but rarely, double) are a real joy to behold when little else is in bloom. Bloodroot has a sweet fragrance that it uses to attract pollinators such as various bees, flies, and beetles. Ants that are attracted to the flesh around the seeds often disperse them.

The leaves themselves are palmate with 5 to 9 lobes. They are very unique and once you've seen them, you will always be able to recognize them. They continue to grow after the flowers are gone. They don't disappear until sometime in summer. Rarely do animals or diseases



bother bloodroot. It grows into colonies if left alone. This plant needs sunlight in very early spring; so don't plant it under evergreens.

No matter which of its common names you use: Bloodroot, Red Puccoon, Coon Root, Snakebite, Sweet Slumber, Red Root, Corn Root, Termeric, or Tetterwort, *Sanguinaria canadensis* will capture your heart!

Native Americans used Bloodroot for various purposes: When a man wanted to marry a woman, the man would apply bloodroot onto his palms and shake hands with the woman he is interested in; within a week the woman would agree to marry him.

It was used to dye clothing and baskets (in fact, it was also used as a dye by American and French people as well). Mixed with animal fat, it was also used as face paint.
~ Betty Truax



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