



# WILD NEWS

## Prince William Wildflower Society

A Chapter of the Virginia Native Plant Society

Number 2014-02

March-April 2014

### PWWS March

#### Membership Meeting

March 17, 2014, 7:30 p.m.

Bethel Lutheran Church,  
Manassas

**"Forest Communities in  
the Potomac River  
Coastal Plains"**

**Charles Smith** will present Rod Simmons' work on "Forest Communities in the Potomac River Coastal Plains." Rod Simmons is Natural Resources Specialist for the city of Alexandria; Charles is a project manager for the Stormwater

Management Division of the Department of Public Works and Environmental Services of Fairfax County, and currently serves as conservation and education chair of PWWS. Please join us for this fascinating look at local forest communities. The meeting is free and open to the public, so bring a friend or two. Refreshments will be served and door prizes awarded.

### President's Column, March 2014

What a tremendous turnout we had for Doug Tallamy's inspiring presentation on February 17! And how fortunate we were that the weather cooperated with us! Making the connection between native plants, native insects, and our birds and butterflies is such an important concept. On the heels of that successful program, the momentum continues with "Plant NoVA Natives," a native plant marketing initiative for our area that debuts this spring. Coordinated by the Northern Virginia Regional Commission, with funding through a grant from the Coastal Zone



Management Program, this initiative is designed to increase both the supply of and demand for local native plants for gardening. The initiative is seeking volunteers to serve as community leaders by performing community outreach to teach others about the benefits of native plants in the garden. A training session will be held at the old Manassas Courthouse on March 26 at 7 p.m. To register, email Ms. Corey Miles at [cmiles@novaregion.org](mailto:cmiles@novaregion.org).

Our frigid winter has made us long for spring, and nothing heralds the season better than our glorious Virginia bluebells. We celebrate their season with the annual Bluebell Festival at Merrimac Farm Wildlife Management Area in Nokesville on Sunday, April 13. PWWS will have a booth as will other environmental non-profit organizations and governmental agencies. Specialized tours are scheduled, and there will be plenty of activities for the kids. The host organization, the Prince William Conservation Alliance, will sell baked goods, local artists and photographers will sell their wares, and food truck vendor "Good Grubbin" will keep you hydrated and nourished. Please plan to attend! For more information, go to <http://pwconserve.org/merrimacfarm/bluebellfestival/index.html>.

We're very fortunate to have Marion Lobstein, botanist extraordinaire, in our chapter. This spring she will again offer some short courses on using the *Flora of Virginia* to key out plant IDs. In an effort to accommodate busy people,

she will present both a week day and a weekend date. Check elsewhere in this newsletter for details.

Because of an unexpected scheduling conflict, Rod Simmons is unable to present his program at our March 17 meeting. Not to worry! Our own Charles Smith will be stepping in to present Rod's PowerPoint program on forest communities in the Potomac River coastal plains. He and Rod are natural resource colleagues for neighboring localities and regular collaborators, so the program won't miss a beat. We expect everyone to be wearing the green for this St. Paddy's Day meeting and prepared for fun and knowledge. ♣ ~Nancy

### **"Bringing Nature Home: A Case for Native Gardening"**

**By Charles Smith**

It is rare that a scientist also happens to be a good communicator. Professor Douglas Tallamy is one of those rare scientists. His book, *Bringing Nature Home: A Case for Native Gardening* presents a compelling argument that our native plants aren't just attractive, they are essential to support insects, birds, and the rest of our native species.

On February 16 Dr. Tallamy delivered his unique message to a packed room of native plant enthusiasts, master gardeners, and master naturalists in the banquet hall of the City of Manassas Park Community Center. The event was co-sponsored by the Prince William Wildflower Society and the Prince William Cooperative Extension in coordination with Prince William Master Gardeners. Approximately 180 people attended.

Hearing Doug Tallamy's message changes your perspective. The majority of the surface of the earth has been altered by humans. Many of our native species and the communities they make up are significantly reduced, in peril or, in some cases, have gone extinct. In order to

support our native species for now and the future, we need to provide habitat, and local native plants are the foundation of that habitat.



Native animals gain their nutrition from native plants. The foundation of animal interactions with plants is through insects, which in turn are eaten by a host of other animals. Few of our native insects and other herbivores can eat non-native plant species. When you plant non-native plants, they are like

furniture in your yard, taking up space but not supporting other life. So to provide habitat and restore our ecology, we need to plant native plants.

The focus then becomes native species gardening—providing the plants that are the foundation of the ecosystem and in turn support everything else. Native species gardening not only helps our native flora and fauna, but enriches our lives and provides us with valuable ecological services like clean air and water. That is the power of Doug Tallamy's message. We can all pitch in, enrich our own lives, and provide ecological restoration—one yard at a time.

*Bringing Nature Home* is a good read, and contains a wealth of information. You can also learn more about Dr. Tallamy's work on his website at <http://bringingnaturehome.net/>. -- Charles



PWWS mourns the loss of former PWWS president and VNPS member Alden "Brad" Bradford. He was president from 1988 to 1990 and maintained a secondary membership in PWWS when he and wife Jenifer retired and moved from Nokesville to Staunton. Our condolences to Jeni and family. Brad's obituary can be found at <http://www.henryfuneralhome.net/sitemaker/sites/HENRYF1/obit.cgi?user=1247715BRADFORD>.

[Coastal plain forest photo: Va. Natural Heritage Forest Communities, accessed at [http://www.dcr.virginia.gov/natural\\_heritage/natural\\_communities/images/TIIB\\_photo2\\_500.jpg](http://www.dcr.virginia.gov/natural_heritage/natural_communities/images/TIIB_photo2_500.jpg)]

# Prince William Wildflower Society

## SPRING 2013 EVENTS



### MARCH

**Saturday, March 15, 10 a.m., Volunteer Tree Planting Work Day at Prince William Dog Park,** Minnieville Road and Colby Drive. Sponsored by the Prince William Conservation Alliance. Please join us for an early spring clean up at the buffer by Prince William dog park! We need help spreading compost and mulch to improve the soil, keep weeds out and water in the soil. Bring a smile and a shovel! This project helps slow the flow of stormwater runoff and improves the appearance of our community. RSVP appreciated to [alliance@pwconserve.org](mailto:alliance@pwconserve.org) or (703) 490-5200.

**Monday, March 17, 7:30 p.m., Bethel Lutheran Church, PWWS Membership Meeting.** See the first item in this newsletter for details on the program.

**Saturday, March 29, 10 a.m. to 2 p.m., "Spring Fling: A Celebration of Earth Day and All Things Green"** at Tackett's Mill Shopping Center in Lake Ridge. Join us on the lower level at the lakeside near the old mill. There will be special tours on trees, water protection, and purple martins, plus a native plant planting. Enjoy educational displays, games, crafts and meet local organizations working to improve our community and how you can help. Questions? Call PWC Public Works at (703) 792-6819 or contact PWCA at (703) 490-5200, [alliance@pwconserve.org](mailto:alliance@pwconserve.org).



### APRIL

**Thursday, April 3, 7:30 p.m., 1<sup>st</sup> Thursday Talk, "Virginia Scenic Byways: Creating a Sense of Place,"** Bull Run Universalist Unitarian Church, 9250 Main Street, Manassas, Va. Welcome remarks by Supervisor Peter Candland, Gainesville District and speakers:

- Lynn Crump, RLA, environmental programs planner, Va. Dept. of Conservation and Recreation
- Fulton deLamorton, local assistance, Va. Dept. of Transportation

Scenic Byways tie landscapes together and connect people to the culture, history and natural resources of a particular place. As such, the presentation of the Virginia Byways program will cover: why

byways are important, what qualifies for a byway and how to get a road designated as a byway.

**Saturday, April 13, 10 a.m. to 4 p.m., Bluebell Festival at Merrimac Farm.** Please join us 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." For the complete schedule of events and sponsors, visit <http://www.pwconserve.org>. There will be tours, booths, and activities for kids. Tours last about 90 minutes and take an easy one-mile walk through the floodplain. Each tour has a special focus, although leaders will cover other interesting sights you see along the way. Bring binoculars, cameras and the kids!

**Sunday, April 19, 9 a.m. to 3 p.m., Flora of Virginia Workshop with Marion Lobstein,** Manassas National Battlefield Park Stuart's Hill Center (Park HQ) Training Room. See below for details.

**Tuesday, April 22, 9 a.m. to 3 p.m., Flora of Virginia Workshop with Marion Lobstein,** Manassas National Battlefield Park Stuart's Hill Center (Park HQ) Training room. See below for details.

### **Sunday, April 27, Noon to 5 p.m., Prince William Wildflower Society's Annual Spring Native Garden Tour.**

The event everyone looks forward to! This year's tour will feature local gardens that showcase native plants in creative and lovely ways. Please join us for this annual outing! One of the gardens on the tour is new to the tour: Tamea Boone's informal woodland garden features a man-made meandering stream and pond. A gazebo overlooking the stream is great for watching birds bathe and drink. Stone walkways wind through the shady garden, where you will see Red columbine, Solomon seal, Foamflower, Hepatica, Bloodroot, Woodland phlox, Trillium, Epimedium, Mayapple, and Anemone. Native ferns, Redbud, Mapleleaf viburnum, Dogwood, and American holly grow naturally in the garden. Seventeen years ago the yard was sodded with shade grass—today it is mostly moss and ferns.

We need volunteers to make the tour a success. If you can donate baked goods or other snacks to offer as refreshments or can serve as a host at one of the gardens, please contact Nancy Vehrs at [nvehrs1@yahoo.com](mailto:nvehrs1@yahoo.com) or (703) 368-2898. There will be a signup sheet at our March 17 meeting. Or, if you would like to showcase your garden on this year's tour, please contact Nancy as soon as possible!



MAY

## FLORA of VIRGINIA SPRING WORKSHOPS

This spring Marion Lobstein will be offering several workshops on using the *Flora of Virginia* to identify plants.

Prince William Wildflower Society is sponsoring two one-day workshops: "A Beginner's Introduction to Using the *Flora of Virginia*." In each workshop, Marion will overview the layout of the *Flora* and give tips on recognizing plant families and using dichotomous (identification) keys in the *Flora*. This workshop is an easy way to begin to know and use your *Flora*.

The workshop will be held on **Saturday, April 19 from 9 a.m. to 3 p.m. and on Tues, April 22, from 9 a.m. to 3 p.m., at Manassas National Battlefield Park Stuart's Hill Center (Park HQ) Training Room.** If you have a copy of the *Flora of Virginia*, please bring it but participants can also share copies. Oculars or magnifiers will be available to borrow or purchase at a reasonable cost. The cost of the workshop is free for VNPS members or the cost of a membership for non-members. Registration is encouraged. To register or for more details, please call Marion Lobstein at (703) 622-0676 or email her at [mblobstein@earthlink.net](mailto:mblobstein@earthlink.net).

A two-session workshop at Blandy Experimental Farm: lecture/lab and field sessions covering use of the new *Flora of Virginia* and its keys; recognizing plant families; and recent changes in taxonomy will be held on consecutive Fridays, April 18 and 25 from 9 a.m. to 3 p.m. The cost is FOA (Foundation of the State Arboretum) members \$30; nonmembers \$35. Please register online at [http://blandy.virginia.edu/our-foundation/online\\_payments](http://blandy.virginia.edu/our-foundation/online_payments) or you may call (540) 837-1758 ext. 224.

Please contact Marion Lobstein for more details or questions about the workshops: [mblobstein@earthlink.net](mailto:mblobstein@earthlink.net) or call (703) 622-0676. For any of these workshops, you may use the first printing of the *Flora of Virginia* or the 2<sup>nd</sup> printing with corrections. The 2<sup>nd</sup> printing is slightly less thick and a bit lighter than the first printing, but has the same information and page numbers. It may be ordered from BRIT Press or visit the *Flora of Virginia* website [Floraofvirginia.org](http://Floraofvirginia.org) for a direct link and ordering information.

**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 and planning for our May 12 plant sale. Think about what natives you can contribute as your plants begin emerging this spring. I have compiled some suggestions and instructions for potting, which I will have at the March membership meeting or I can email them to you. We have labels and pots for you if you need them to pot up your plants. Let me know if you have any questions. Thanks in advance for helping with the sale. Even if you don't have plants to contribute, there are many ways you can help out and we need all the help we can get! Let me know if you'll be available: (703) 408-7446 or [narrington1@verizon.net](mailto:narrington1@verizon.net). —Nancy Arrington

**Monday, May 19, 7:30 p.m., PWWS**  
**Membership Meeting with Dennis**  
**Whigham,** Orchid Ecologist and Senior Botanist, Smithsonian Environmental Research Center. Please plan to join us for this special program!

## Prince William Wildflower Society January 20, 2014 Membership Meeting

President Nancy Vehrs opened the meeting, thanked Dee Brown and Rose Breece for refreshments, and introduced a guest, Susan Must.

**Announcements:** Nancy told of a legislative alert by the Virginia Native Plant Society to urge members to contact their state legislators and urge them to support a budget amendment to increase funding for the Natural Heritage Division. Legislation to require Virginia Tech to permanently conserve its Stadium Woods was not successful.

Doug Tallamy will speak at the Manassas Park Community Center on Feb.16 at 2 p.m. Call in (number is on invitations) to register. It is sponsored by PWWS and Prince William Master Gardeners.

The March 17 PWWS meeting will be presented by Rod Simmons. The topic is "Forest Communities in the Potomac River Coastal Plains."



Nancy announced Tamie Boone has agreed to have her garden on the PWWS Garden Tour on Sunday, April 27. Two more gardens are needed; call Nancy Vehrs if you can volunteer. (703-368-2898)

The PWWS Plant Sale will be Saturday, May 10.

The Bluebell Festival is Sunday, April 13 at 10 a.m. at Merrimac Farm in Nokesville. PWWS will be represented with a booth, and if you can volunteer to help, please call Nancy V. at above number, or there will be a sign-up sheet at the March 17 meeting.

**Program:** Slideshow of animals, plants, wildflowers and travels, presented by PWWS members: **Tamie Boone** showed us beautiful flowers and views from Scotland, Ireland, and Mt. Ranier, Washington; **Rick and Diane Flaherty** shared some exotic scenes and birds from a September 2013 trip to Kenya. Included was a photo of the male lilac-breasted roller bird who rolls over to show off his colorful feathers to the ladies; **Nancy Vehrs and Harry Glasgow** shared photos of the Great Smoky Mountains, Manassas National Battlefield Park, G. Richard Thompson Wildlife Management Area, Huntley Meadows Park, VNPS field trip in West Virginia, Blandy Experimental Farm, Merrimac Farm in Nokesville, Portland, Oregon coastline, Mt. St. Helens, Cape Cod, and the Outer Banks. **Charles Smith** treated us to photos of Poverty Oats and other grasses in Virginia, South Carolina's Congaree National Park in May, Huntley Meadows Park, Coastal Plain Depression Swamp Forest, and Massanutten Mtn. **Thank you to the members above for sharing their pictures-very enjoyable!**

**Doorprizes:** Karen Waltman, *Native Plants for Wildlife Habitat and Conservation Landscaping*; Diane Flaherty, local soaps; Suzy Stasulis, PWWS baseball hat; Beverly Houston, calendar; Jeanne Endrikat, *Native Plants of the Northern Neck*; Joyce Wenger, small gift bag from Williamsburg.

Before the close of the meeting Mary Sherman asked if members could be provided a directory, and Nancy said that we could provide a draft at the next meeting which members can review before publicizing. Also, the new website should have this capability in the months ahead.

Nancy V. reminded all to sign up soon if they wanted to attend the VNPS Climate Change workshop in Richmond on March 1.

**Present:** Amy Hamilton, Rose Breece, Carol Thompson, Brenda Hallam, Beverly Houston, Susan Must, Glen Macdonald, Dee Brown, Nell Benton, Jack and Deanna High, Jeanne and Stan Fowler, Mary Sherman, Diane and Rick Flaherty, Jeanne Endrikat, Suzy Stasulis, Tamie Boone, Charles Smith, Harry Glasgow, Elaine Haug, Elena Meyer, Mike and Joyce Wenger, Nancy Vehrs, Karen Waltman.

--Respectively submitted, Karen Waltman, PWWS Secretary

## Virginia Bluebells and Virginia Waterleaf: Together Again... in Boraginaceae

By **Marion Lobstein**, botany chair, Prince William Wildflower Society and professor emeritus, Northern Virginia Community College

*Mertensia virginica* (Virginia Bluebells) is included in the Boraginaceae or Borage or Forget-me-not family. European borage (*Borago officinalis*) has been recognized as a



medicinal plant since ancient times by Pliny, the Roman historian, and by Dioscorides, Greek physician of the first century A.D. Later herbalists, such as John Gerard in the 1500s and John Evelyn in the 1600s, recognized borage as a special, medicinal plant.

*Mertensia virginica*, the scientific name of Virginia Bluebells, has undergone many permutations. Based on a specimen sent to him by Peter Kalm, Linnaeus in his 1753 *Species Plantarum* assigned the binomium *Pulmonaria virginica* based on the resemblance of the flower shape and color to that of the European lungwort, *Pulmonaria officinalis*. In the 1762 *Flora Virginica*, Virginia Bluebells is described as a *Pulmonaria* for the genus and was given the common name of Mountain cowslip. (In 1764, John Hill questioned the placement of *Mertensia virginica* in the genus *Pulmonaria* and proposed the genus *Pneumaria*). Albrecht Roth in 1797 renamed Virginia Bluebells *Mertensia pulmonariodes*—*Mertensia* to honor the German botanist Franz Carl Mertens. Johann Heinrich

Friedrich Link (1767-1851) proposed the binomium *Mertensia virginica* using the species epithet *virginica* from Linnaeus. In the new *Flora of Virginia*, the authority is given as “(Linnaeus) Persoon ex Link.” This gives credit to Linnaeus for the species epithet, and “Persoon ex Link” recognizes the work of Link and Christiaan Persoon (1761-1836).

It is interesting to note that *Mertensia* has been used also as the genus of a group of red algae and as a genus of ferns. *Mertensia* is a synonym for the algal genus *Champia* (Little Fat Sausage Weeds) and for the fern genus *Dicranopteris* (Fork or Net Fern)—but these are not modern recognized genera. The Arctic Comb Jelly (*Mertensia ovum*)—also known as a Sea Nut—is placed in the genus *Mertensia*. This is still a valid scientific name since is acceptable to use the genus name for both a botanical species and an animal species. In the case of the red algal genus, *Mertensia* was applied to honor Karl Heinrich Mertens, the son of Franz Carl Mertens.

As noted earlier, Virginia bluebells is in the Boraginaceae, the Borage or Forget-me-not family. Based on modern DNA research and the work of the Angiosperm Phylogeny Group III, the *Flora of Virginia*, and other modern taxonomic treatments, Boraginaceae now includes species of Hydrophyllaceae, the Waterleaf Family, and Heliotropiaceae, the Heliotrope Family. Of the total 13 genera described in Boraginaceae in the *Flora*, there are four genera—*Ellisia* (Waterpods), *Hydrophyllum* (Waterleaves), *Nemophila* (Baby-blue-eyes), and *Phacelia* (Miami-mists), which was formerly placed in Hydrophyllaceae; and one genus, *Heliotropium* (Heliotrope), from Heliotropiaceae. The eight other genera traditionally placed in Boraginaceae and still included in the *Flora* treatment of this family are: *Buglossoides* (Corn Gromwell, formerly in *Lithospermum*); *Cynoglossum* (Comfrey); *Echium* (Viper’s Bugloss); *Hackelia* (Stickseed); *Lithospermum* (Puccoons); *Mertensia* (Virginia Bluebells); *Myosotis* (Forget-me-nots); and *Symphytum* (Comfrey).

Boraginaceae was first described by A.L. de Jussieu in 1789: Genera of the Hydrophyllaceae, the Waterleaf Family, such as *Hydrophyllum* (Waterleaf), *Ellisia* (Waterpod), and *Phacelia* (Miami-mist) were included in Boraginaceae. De Jussieu also placed

*Hydrolea* and *Nama* (Fiddleheads) (another former genus of the Hydrophyllaceae) in Convolvulaceae, the Morning Glory Family. Hydrophyllaceae was proposed by Robert Brown in 1810, when he moved all of these genera into Hydrophyllaceae.

*Heliotropium* (Heliotrope), now in the Boraginaceae, was once placed in its own family, Heliotropiaceae, by Fredrich Berchtold & J. S. Presl in 1820.

As with many of the **name or** taxonomic changes at the family level, as well as genus and species levels, changes in the Boraginaceae and Hydrophyllaceae have gone full circle from de Jussieu to current nomenclature. The genus and species of *Mertensia virginica* has had fewer changes, but it is still fascinating to review the history of the naming and classification of this beautiful native species.

## VIRGINIA BLUEBELLS

By Marion Lobstein, botany chair, Prince William Wildflower Society and professor emeritus, Northern Virginia Community College

The blue and pink haze of flowers and flower buds of Virginia bluebells (*Mertensia virginica*) is one of the most beautiful sights of spring. This perennial member of the

Boraginaceae (the Borage or Forget-me-not family) is a true spring ephemeral, as the vegetative parts appear, along with flower buds, in early to mid-April. By the end of May, the leaves and stems have yellowed and soon no trace of these plants can be seen above ground. During the brief time one has to enjoy this lovely spring wildflower, the leaves and stems are photosynthesizing, and energy is being stored underground in rhizomes (underground stems) for next spring’s spectacular show of color.

Virginia bluebells is usually found on flood plains or in rich damp woods. Their range is from Ontario and Quebec Provinces in Canada west to Michigan and Kansas and south to Alabama and Georgia. According to the *Digital Atlas of the Virginia Flora*, Virginia bluebells is found in most counties of the piedmont and mountain geographical provinces of Virginia, but only in a handful of coastal plain counties.

Linnaeus first described *Mertenisa virginica*, assigning the binomium *Pulmonaria virginica*. The genus name *Mertensia* originated with Albrecht Roth in the late 1700s. The genus *Mertensia* was in



honor of Franz Karl Mertens, a botanist of the eighteenth century, and the species name *virginica* for the colony of Virginia. (Additional information is covered in the taxonomy article on this species and changes in the Borage family). Other common names for this plant are Virginia cowslip, Mountain cowslip, Lungwort, Roanoke bells, Oyster leaf, and Mr. Jefferson's Blue funnel flowers. Thomas Jefferson planted Virginia bluebells on the grounds of Monticello.

In the 1600s, Rev. John Bannister introduced seeds of this lovely species to Europe, but the plants did not survive. In the 1730s, John Custis of Williamsburg sent rhizomes of Virginia bluebells to John Collinson in England, resulting in the establishment of the species in Europe. Peter Kalm collected the specimen that Linnaeus based his description on as *Pulmonaria virginica*.

The trumpet-shaped flowers of Virginia bluebells are about one inch long and vary in color from pink to bright blue to white. The buds are usually pink, with the most common color of the mature flower blue, with a return to pink following pollination. This color change in bluebell flowers from pink to blue back to pink is based on pH (acidity vs. alkalinity) affecting anthocyanin pigments within the cells of the flower. Color variation of all white or all pink flowers in individual plants is probably due to genetic variation. Like most other members of the borage family, the inflorescence of Virginia bluebells is that of a coiled raceme or helicoid cyme with up to a dozen flowers gracefully arranged on one side of the pedicle or flowering stem.

Each flower has five sepals fused together to form a green calyx; five fused petals that form a longer tube with a shorter bell-shaped limb; five stamens, which are inserted inside the corolla near the summit; and a pistil with an elongate, slender style. The flowers in mass are fragrant and pollination is accomplished primarily by bees, bumblebees, butterflies, moths, and even hummingbirds. The fruit that forms following fertilization is a schizocarp which splits to release four nutlets

approximately 1/8 inch long with a roughened surface. These nutlets, which contain the seeds, resemble mouse feces, which may serve as a protective adaptation to make the seed less visible or obvious to seed predators. Like many other spring ephemerals, seeds are ant-dispersed.



Virginia bluebells' alternate basal leaves are up to seven or eight inches long and are elliptic to oval in shape. Smaller leaves on the one- to two-foot tall stems are two to five inches long and are oval to oblong. The somewhat succulent leaves and stems are glabrous (smooth) but may be glaucous (having

a thin coat of bluish-white waxy covering). The underground storage structure of this spring ephemeral is its russet-colored rhizomes with numerous fibrous roots. These rhizomes are significant in size (perhaps up to a foot or more long) in mature plants. The rhizomes store energy for the next spring's burst of photosynthetic activity in the above ground plant parts, as well as anchor the plant in the ground to survive periodic spring floods. Spring flooding might be seen as a negative, but flood waters bring in nutrients, such as nitrogen and phosphorus, which are taken in by and stored in the rhizomes of the plant. These rhizomes can produce new plants and can be divided to asexually propagate new plants for the garden.



Human uses of this beautiful plant have been limited compared to that of many other spring wildflowers. The Cherokees, however, used it to treat whooping cough, consumption, and even venereal diseases. The rhizomes also have been used as an astringent. Leaves and flowers are considered edible by some, but is probably unwise to eat them, as their plant tissues may contain liver toxins known as pyrrolizidines.

Virginia bluebells is the logo flower of our own Prince William Wildflower Society. In the Northern Virginia area, there are excellent, large stands of



flowers along Bull Run below Stone Bridge in the Manassas National Battlefield Park, Bull Run Regional Park, Riverbend Park, and Great Falls Park. Wherever you enjoy the beauty of these special wildflowers, they will bring you much pleasure. The distinctive blue of bluebells is very difficult to capture on camera, but your eyes instead can feast on the "real thing." [Images: Bluebells emerging, rhizome, and bloom all courtesy of Marion Lobstein; Bluebells growing in stone walkway and blooming at Broad Run, courtesy of Deanna High; botanical art, *Mertensia pulmonarioides* Roth as *Pulmonaria virginica* L., Virginia bluebell, Virginia cowslip, Trew, C.J., Ehret, G.D., *Plantae selectae*, vol. 5: t. 42 (1755), accessed at [http://plantillustrations.org/illustration.php?id\\_illustration=5854](http://plantillustrations.org/illustration.php?id_illustration=5854)]

## AM I BLUE?

Carrying the weight on the end of a limb  
You're just waiting for somebody to pick  
you up again  
Shaded by a tree, can't live up to a rose  
All you ever wanted was a sunny place to  
grow

Pretty little thing, sometimes you gotta  
look up  
And let the world see all the beauty that  
you're made of  
'Cause the way you hang your head  
nobody can tell  
You're my Virginia Bluebell, my Virginia Bluebell

Even through the stone a flower can bloom  
You just need a little push, spring is coming soon  
Umbrella in the rain, let it roll off your back  
Weather what you can, realize what you have



Pretty little thing, sometimes you gotta look  
up  
And let the world see all the beauty that  
you're made of  
'Cause the way you hang your head nobody  
can tell  
You're my Virginia Bluebell

Put a little light in the darkest places  
Put a little smile on the saddest faces

Pretty little thing, sometimes you gotta look up  
And let the world see all the beauty that you're made of  
'Cause the way you hang your head nobody can tell  
You're my Virginia Bluebell, my Virginia Bluebell

[Songwriters: Miranda Lambert, Natalie Hemby, and Jennifer Kennard;  
published by Lyrics © Sony/ATV Music Publishing LLC; accessed at  
[www.metrolyrics.com/virginia-bluebell-lyrics-miranda-lambert.html](http://www.metrolyrics.com/virginia-bluebell-lyrics-miranda-lambert.html)].



## PRINCE WILLIAM WILDFLOWER SOCIETY

A Chapter of the Virginia Native Plant Society

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

*Next Meeting:* Monday, March 17, 2014, 7:30 p.m.

"Forest Communities of the Potomac River Coast Plains"

Bethel Lutheran Church, 8712 Plantation Lane, Manassas, Virginia 20110