



# WILD NEWS

## Prince William Wildflower Society

A Chapter of the Virginia Native Plant Society

Number 2014-04      May-June 2014

May 19, 2014, 7:30 p.m.  
PWWS Membership  
Meeting, Bethel Lutheran  
Church, Manassas, 20110

“Native Orchids: Models for Ecological Interactions, Conservation and Education,” with Dennis Whigham, Orchid Ecologist and Senior Botanist for the Smithsonian Environmental Research Center. Dr. Whigham, who will talk about our native orchids and their habitats, holds degrees from Wabash College (B.A., Biology, 1966) and the University of North Carolina, Chapel Hill (Ph.D., Plant Ecology, 1971). His active research interests include wetland ecology and management, forest ecology, and ecology of woodland herbs.

Bring a friend or two to enjoy this very special program! PWWS meetings are free and open to the public. Refreshments will be served and doorprizes awarded.

### President’s Column, May 2014

What a treat we have in store for you with this month’s program on native orchids by Dr. Dennis Whigham of the Smithsonian Institution. I had the pleasure of attending one of his programs last year before the Northern Neck Chapter, and it



was excellent. Exquisite photos and a highly knowledgeable speaker produce a formidable combination.

Hasn’t our spring been a welcome relief after a long, cold, and snowy winter! Our native wild plants have fared just fine, and our Virginia bluebells enjoyed a long blooming season beginning in mid-April.

We had sunny skies for both the Bluebell Festival at Merrimac Farm on April 13 and our annual garden tour on April 27.

Many thanks to our festival volunteers: Tamie Boone, Dee Brown, Harry Glasgow, Charles Smith, Carol Thompson, and Karen Waltman. We also thank our gardeners Tamie Boone and husband Mike and Dee Brown and Glen Macdonald for opening their lovely gardens to the public. We also appreciate the many volunteers who helped with the event and are recognized elsewhere in this newsletter.

With a long bloom time this year, I hope that many of you were able to enjoy our Virginia bluebells at one of their stunning locations, such as the Stone Bridge at Manassas Battlefield, Cedar Run at Merrimac Farm, or Bull Run Regional Park. Did many of you catch the *Washington Post* article on local blooming bluebells published April 21? It pictured a woman visiting from Milwaukee who had

picked a bouquet of bluebells at Manassas National Battlefield Park. Sharp-eyed Joyce Andrew saw it and brought it to the attention of the PWWS board.

With assistance from Marion Lobstein and Joyce, I sent a letter to the editor, published in the May 3 edition, noting that picking flowers is illegal in national parks and expressing the need to conserve native plants for their survival for generations to come.



Speaking of Marion, she very generously has given of her time to conduct two more *Flora* workshops for us. She is slowly and surely encouraging our use of this

wonderful tome, and certainly has made us more comfortable with it. Thank you, Marion! We were especially pleased that staff from both the Manassas Battlefield and Prince William Forest participated in the training. Earlier this year PWWS presented both national parks with copies of the *Flora of Virginia* for their staff.

Urban Forest Conservationist Jim McGlone of the Virginia Department of Forestry will be leading a walk at Conway Robinson Memorial State Forest on Thursday, May 15, at 10:00 a.m. Jim will show the results of recent harvests and explain how the forest is actively managed. He wrote an excellent article for our January-February 2014 issue of *Wild News* about Conway and this is our follow up field trip. You can view the article on our website. Both the pink and the yellow lady's slippers grow at Conway; with luck, we may find some in bloom.

~Nancy

## PWWS SPRING EVENTS

We experienced a fine, sunny day for our annual native garden tour and were thankful that the rain held off until noon (well, almost) for our just-completed (and successful!) annual native plant sale held at the Bethel Lutheran churchgrounds.

## GARDEN TOUR

PWWS extends a hearty thank you to all volunteers for both events and especially to the members who graciously allowed PWWS to showcase their gardens: **Tamie Boone and her husband Mike, and Dee Brown and husband Glen McDonald.** Both gardens were located on scenic bluffs overlooking the Occoquan River and Reservoir, and each offered different perspectives on that landscape.

The Brown-McDonald garden, located in the sheltered wooded enclave of Occoquan Forest, at first glance, looks like "all garden," as the 1982 passive solar house built into the hillside is barely visible. Hanging baskets lined the driveway leading down the slope. A spectacularly large, old tulip poplar dominated the landscape as you moved toward the river. Other native trees, such as beech, were plentiful and understory trees such as dogwood, redbud, and



holly were abundant. Woodchip paths wound around the gardens loaded with wildflowers, many occurring naturally. Small wooden bridges over an intermittent stream and stepping stones on the hill assisted the 70 or so visitors traversing the garden. An inviting bench overlooking the water provided a vantage point for the Occoquan River and a spread of native mountain laurels (and for some larking about, too.)

## 2014 ANNUAL NATIVE PLANT SALE

PWWS Treasurer Diane Flaherty reports that sales were good at our sale last Saturday, with revenues close to last year's record-breaker. Even better, we have ten new or renewing members at the sale (names listed below). PWWS most especially sends a super-sized thank you to Plant Sale Co Chair Nancy Arrington, native plantsperson extraordinaire, who has once again pulled off a terrific plant sale. Our customers seemed happy with their plants, and we were, too! Mucho thanks also to Nancy Vehrs, our president and plant sale co-chair for her enormous help with the setup of the sale. And whopper thanks to all of you who helped with digging, potting, and transporting plants to the sale, and to those of you who helped set up, tote, arrange, cashier, and clean up after Saturday's sale. A special shout-out to Paul Davis, who brought and set up an additional large canopy we needed in case it rained!

Just the facts (drumroll, please): Income from plants, \$4,020; from memberships, \$390; hats and shirts, \$27; total income, \$4, 437.

We couldn't do it without our terrific volunteers: Joyce Andrew, Nancy Arrington, Tamie Boone, Dee Brown, Glen Macdonald, Tiana Camfiord, Marie & Paul Davis, Jeanne & Hans Endrikat, Diane & Rick Flaherty, Jeanne Fowler, Bobbi Frye, Brenda Hallam, Amy Hamilton, Deanna High, Phil Louer, Brian McDougal, Charles Smith, Suzy Stasulis, Linda Stoltz, Christine Sundra, Carol Thompson, Nancy Vehrs & Harry Glasgow, Karen Waltman, Joyce & Mike Wenger, and Janet Wheatcraft. Thank you, all.

Refreshments were served at "Boone's Bluff," the property of Tamea Boone and husband Mike situated high above the Occoquan Reservoir. This intensely shady, woodland garden featured a meandering waterfall, stream, and pond. A gazebo overlooking the stream offered a great location for watching birds. Stone walkways lead visitors through garden areas underplanted with spring ephemerals such as red columbine, solomon's seal, foamflower, hepatica, bloodroot, woodland phlox, trillium, mayapple, anemone, and non-native epimedium. Native ferns, redbuds, maple-leaved viburnum, dogwood, and American holly grow naturally in the garden. An added bonus for visitors was a large mossy area close by the pond and waterfall. Seventeen years ago the yard was sodded with shade grass on completion of the building of the house, but the area has since naturalized with a delightful mixture of moss and ferns.

Many thanks to volunteers who served as hosts for the garden tour and provided refreshments and guidance: Joyce Andrew, Tiana Camfiord, Barbara Deegan, Jeanne Fowler, Bonnie Nahas, Charles Smith, Suzy Stasulis, Veronica Tangiri, Carol Thompson, Nancy Vehrs, Karen Waltman, and Joyce and Mike Wenger.



**Prince William Wildflower Society Membership Meeting Minutes, March 24, 2014 7:30 p.m., Bethel Lutheran Church**

President Nancy Vehrs opened the meeting with the announcement of the upcoming PWWS Garden Tour on Sunday, April 27. Tamie Boone's garden and the Dee Brown and Glen Macdonald garden will be open to tour, both gardens are off Davis Ford Road A sign-up sheet for volunteers was available.

Other announcements: Marion Lobstein's introductory classes on the *Flora of Virginia* will be Sat., April 19 at the headquarters of Manassas National Battlefield Park, and on Mon., April 21. There will also be 2 sessions, April 17 and 25, at Blandy Experimental Farm. Marion has order forms for the second printing of the *Flora of Virginia*. The *Flora* exhibit is at the Library of Virginia, and parking is under the building.

Nancy Vehrs has order forms for PWWS shirts, sweatshirts, and hats.

Nancy Arrington asked that members let her know what they are potting for the **Plant Sale** on May 10. Nancy V. and Nancy A. have pots if needed, and a sign-up sheet was available for plant sale helpers.

**PWWS Project** - Members were asked to let Nancy A. know if they can help at the workday on Sat. April 26 at the Manassas Park Elementary School. The Go Green Club's students and their parents will be improving the bioretention pond area, guided by Charles Smith. Also members can help with weeding the native gardens.

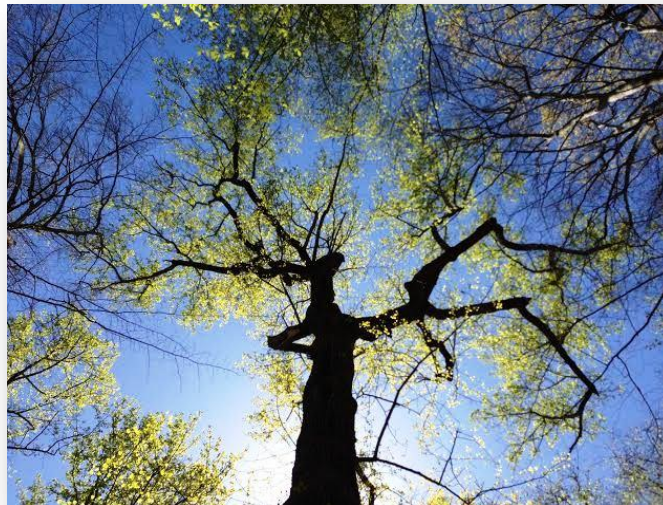
Sat., April 5 will be a talk by Marion Lobstein at Blandy. Registration is required.

Nancy V. introduced a guest, Michael Otaigbe, Coles District Supervisor.

**Program:** Rod Simmons was then introduced; his talk was entitled "Forest Communities in the Potomac River Coastal Plains."

Rod reported there were some pristine forest communities of thousands of acres near old towns, from north of Washington, D.C. to just around Fredericksburg, Va. He then took us on a photographic tour of some of these beautiful areas that will hopefully be preserved. In Charles County in southern Maryland, the forest of Chapman State Park is home to some rare birds, and a globally rare snail. Pine barrens and bogs were also described and discussed. We also learned that Pitch Pine is the signature characteristic dominate tree in a pine barren forest and that there are many different types of bogs locally, such as Historic bogs,

Magnolia bogs, Araby bog, Franconia Park bog, and Lorton bog, the last being only a couple of acres in size but incredibly rich in interest.



**Doorprizes:** Carrie Blair, a bluebell plant; Mike Wenger, PWWS ball cap; Amy Hamilton, PWWS ball cap; Veronica Tangiri, a book, *Classic Collection, Wonders of Life*.

**Those in attendance:** Carol Thompson, Amy Hamilton, Carrie Blair, Sheryl Pollock, Suzy Stasulis, Helen Rawls, Veronica Tangiri, Janet Wheatcraft, Rose Breece, Nancy Arrington, Jen Brown, Theresa Defluri, Mike Wenger, Joyce Wenger, Jack High and Deanna High, Pam Campbell, Bob Taylor, Brenda Hallam, Beverly Houston, Pidge Troha, Rod Simmons (speaker), Michael Otaigbe, Charles Smith, Mary Sherman, Dee Brown, Glen Macdonald, Joyce and Tom Andrew, Marion Lobstein, Harry Glasgow, Brian McDougal, Nancy Vehrs, Peggy and Pat Thiele, Helen Walter, Karen Waltman.

--Respectively submitted, Karen Waltman, Secretary

# EVENTS

## MAY

**Thursday, May 15, 10:00 a.m. to 1:00 p.m. Guided Walk at Conway Robinson Memorial State Forest with Jim McGlone of the Virginia Department of Forestry.** Location: Rt. 29/Lee Highway next to Manassas National Battlefield Park in Gainesville (at traffic signal with University Boulevard). We will meet at the Picnic Pavilion. Bring water, snacks, binoculars, magnifier, nature guidebooks, and wear sturdy waterproof shoes/boots and long pants. Discover spring wildflowers as you learn about the recent harvest and the forest's management plans. The walk is free, but please register with Nancy Vehrs at [nvehrs1@yahoo.com](mailto:nvehrs1@yahoo.com), or (703) 368-2898, c: (703) 434-0009.

**Thursday, May 15 at 3:00 p.m., Insect Survey at Merrimac Farm, Merrimac Farm, Stone House, 15020 Deepwood Lane, Nokesville.** We're taking a closer look at butterflies, dragonflies and other cool insects at Merrimac Farm. Please join us for a pleasant walk through upland areas to look for insects and help build our wildlife information for this great natural area! Everyone is welcome, no previous experience required. Wear sturdy shoes and long pants. Sponsored by the Prince William Conservation Alliance.

**Monday, May 19, 7:30 p.m., "Native Orchids: Models for Ecological Interactions, Conservation and Education," with Dennis Whigham,** Orchid Ecologist and Senior Botanist for the Smithsonian Environmental Research Center. PWWS Membership meeting.

**Sunday, May 25, 8:00 a.m., Bird Walks at Merrimac Farm,** Merrimac Farm, Stone House, 15020 Deepwood Lane, Nokesville. Walks are the last Sunday of each month. We'll look for birds 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. View the bird list for Merrimac Farm at [alliance@pwconserve.org](mailto:alliance@pwconserve.org). Dress for the weather, bring binoculars and cameras. More info and RSVP (appreciated not required) to PWCA (703) 499-4954 or [alliance@pwconserve.org](mailto:alliance@pwconserve.org).

## JUNE

**Thursday, June 5 at 7:30 p.m., The Potomac Riverkeeper with Sandy Burk,** Bull Run UU Church, 9250 Main Street, Manassas. The Potomac Riverkeeper works to protect water quality in the Potomac River, the source of drinking water for almost six million people. In addition to stewardship and education programs, Potomac Riverkeeper monitors polluters and pursues legal opportunities to address problems. The Potomac River is a wonderful asset to our community. Come find out how the Potomac Riverkeeper is fighting for our right to clean water. Learn what you can do to help fight pollution of the Potomac River. More info: PWCA (703) 499-4954 or [alliance@pwconserve.org](mailto:alliance@pwconserve.org)

## JULY

**Monday, July 21, 7:30 p.m. "Native Ground Covers," with Janet Davis** of Hill House Nursery. Janet will present the program for our PWWS July membership meeting. Janet is an expert on growing and landscaping with native plants.

### PWWS Bluebell Logo Items for Sale

Check out the order form on the PWWS website to order polo shirts, jackets, hats, and more! For more information, come to a meeting or contact Nancy Vehrs, [nvehrs1@yahoo.com](mailto:nvehrs1@yahoo.com), (703) 368-2898.

[Photos and images: Dennis Whigham, accessed at [http://www.serc.si.edu/labs/plant\\_ecology/people.aspx](http://www.serc.si.edu/labs/plant_ecology/people.aspx); *Aplectrum hyemale*, puttyroot, Helen Sharp, "Water-color sketches of New England flowering plants" (1899-1900), accessed at [www.plantillustrations.org](http://www.plantillustrations.org); Marion Lobstein, tulip poplar, garden tour and plant sale photos and collage, Deanna LaValle High; *Asarum canadense* L., Curtis's *Botanical Magazine*, v.54 [ser.2, v.1] (1827), collection of the Missouri Botanical Garden, accessed at [www.plantillustrations.org](http://www.plantillustrations.org); *Asarum canadense* in flower, Julie Makin, Wildflower Center Digital Library, NPIN Image ID32755, accessed at [www.wildflower.org](http://www.wildflower.org); *Asarum canadense* leaves, Doug Sherman, National Wildflower Center Image Library, NPIN Image ID 2820, accessed at [www.wildflower.org](http://www.wildflower.org); *Asarum canadense* drawing, *Addisonia*, v. 12: t. 398 (1927) [M.E. Eaton], accessed at [www.plantillustrations.org](http://www.plantillustrations.org).]



Deanna LaValle High

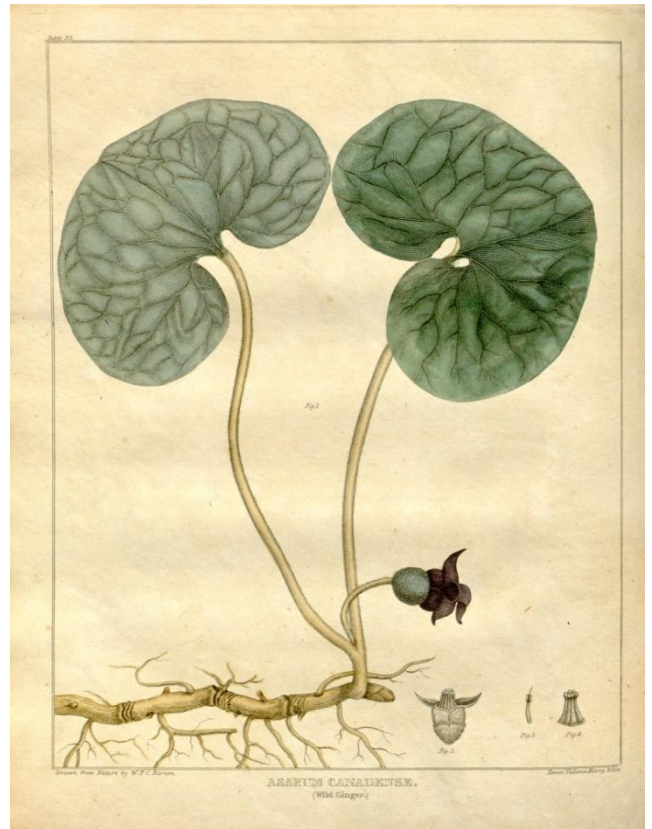
PWWS 2014 Plant Sale

## Wild Ginger (*Asarum canadense*)

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

The lovely three-cleft maroon and green flowers of wild ginger (*Asarum canadense*) that nestle at the base of two handsome, heart-shaped leaves provides a special joy to spring wildflower enthusiasts. These unusual flowers, resembling a miniature tricorner hat, are usually covered with oak or beech leaves that must be carefully brushed away to reveal their special beauty (watch out for snakes and do not injure the flower!)

*Asarum canadense* is a member of the Aristolochiaceae or birthwort family. The scientific and common family names are based on the ancient European practice of using tonics derived from members of this family to induce labor during childbirth. *Asarum* is a Greek name for some European members of this genus and *canadense* refers to Canada. The name was assigned by Linnaeus himself.



The popular common name for this species is wild ginger, which refers to the fragrance and taste of its rootstock—an elongated rhizome, a horizontal underground stem—resembling “true” ginger root. True ginger (*Zingiber officinale*) is a monocot species from the Orient. (Despite its flower parts being in threes, our wild ginger is a dicot.) Other common names for wild ginger are Indian ginger, coltsfoot (referring to the shape of the leaves), black snakeroot (referring possibly to its use at one time as a snakebite remedy), black snakeweed, Canada snakeroot, southern snakeroot, and colic root (for its use to treat colic).



Wild ginger can be found in cool, shaded, moist woods and on slopes from New England to Appalachia into Georgia. In our area it blooms from mid-April into May.

The solitary flower of wild ginger is found at the base of the fork of two leaf petioles. This unusual flower with three prominent points is purple or maroon-brown inside and pinkish-brown outside with a covering of silky white plant hairs. The three-cleft flower is made up of petaloid sepals only (no petals), twelve stamens, and a pistil with an inferior ovary at the base of a thick style with a six-sided stigma.

Among the reported pollinators of wild ginger are mushroom gnats (some people claim the flowers smell like mushrooms), various flies, and beetles. The pistil matures first, followed by the stamens, to ensure cross-pollination. Self-pollination has been reported in this species as well. The fruit forms a capsule that turns to a “mushy” texture, exposing the seeds for dispersal by ants. The chestnut-brown seeds have prominent, fleshy whitish appendages called elaiosomes, which attract ants who seize the seed by this appendage, chew off the elaiosome, and either eat its fat-rich body themselves or carry it into the nest to feed their larvae. This phenomenon is known as “myrmecochory.”



The softly hairy, heart-shaped leaves of wild ginger are 3 to 5 inches wide, stand 3 to 8 inches tall, and are usually found in pairs, with the solitary flower developing at the "crotch" at the base of the two leaf petioles.

Unlike many of woodland spring wildflowers, the leaves of wild ginger may persist until late fall. Wild ginger's rhizome system allows for asexual propagation of new plants and the storing of energy for the new leaves and flowers for the following spring.

Rhizomes of wild ginger were used by American Indians as well as early settlers to flavor foods and for medicinal purposes. Some Indian tribes considered the tonic derived from wild ginger rhizomes to be a panacea,

while other tribes and European settlers used it to treat specific problems, such as headache, gas, colic, digestive upset, colds, fever, female problems, and as an aid to inducing labor at birth. In more recent times, antibiotic substances have been isolated from wild ginger and other members of the genus. Perhaps the use of wild ginger to flavor foods by American Indians or early settlers inhibited growth of microbes in those foods.

Wild ginger is a humble species of early spring wildflower. You'll need to be on your knees to see the handsome and strange flowers, but it is well worth the effort to uncover them. Enjoy wild ginger flowers this spring and its handsome leaves until the late fall.

*Editor's note: Watch for a follow up article on wild ginger in the July-August 2014 issue of Wild News, in which Marion will address the taxonomic history of and recent changes in the Aristolochiaceae family.*



## PRINCE WILLIAM WILDFLOWER SOCIETY

A Chapter of the Virginia Native Plant Society

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

*Next Meeting: Monday, May 19, 2014, 7:30 p.m.*

*"Native Orchids: Models for Ecological Interactions, Conservation and Education,"*

*with Dennis Whigham*

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