

[View this email in your browser](#)



Native Plant Sale and Swap

Saturday, October 15 1pm

Bring native plants, cuttings, and seeds you'd like to share from your garden, and swap them for plants you'd like to add. Join us at Oakdale Park Shelter #3 in Bridgewater on October 15. And yes--you are welcome even if you don't have plants to swap!

*Little Bluestem Nursery will be there as well with items for sale!

Membership Meeting: 4pm to 5pm. Stay after the swap/sale for a short membership meeting from 4 – 5pm! We'll introduce you to our current projects and member benefits.

*Yes, this is a different vendor than we originally announced; Seven Bends was unable to join us this time around, but Little Bluestem graciously stepped in. Seven Bends plans to participate in a future event.

Reports from the State Annual Meeting

Several of our chapter's members—some new and some from the former chapter—attended the Annual Meeting of the state-wide organization Virginia Native Plant Society where we got to learn more about the larger organization's projects.

VNPS announced that they have awarded grants for grasslands research to Devin Floyd of the Center for Urban Habitats and to Mary Jane Epps (daughter of Mary Lee Epps whose articles you may have seen on the VNPS website); they are partnering to continue to study Piedmont grasslands in the coming year. Devin gave a fascinating presentation about how much one can learn by studying geology, soil striations, and historical land use patterns --along with plant surveys to determine which species are present.

His theory is that **forest succession is not the only kind of natural succession**; in fact, according to Devin Floyd, grasslands can develop their own alternative forms of natural succession when left unplowed for decades or centuries—with periodic fire and other natural factors that limit the growth of woody species. His team has found 700 sites across 17 Virginia counties with high-quality mixtures of special plant species such as butterfly milkweed, green milkweed, clasping milkweed, whorled milkweed, and purple milkweed, and much greater species richness and diversity compared with sites that have had a history of agriculture followed by restoration. These never-been-plowed remnant sites include mosses and lichens forming a ground-layer crust and support rare plant communities. By contrast, sites with recent agricultural practices usually include fewer and more common species like common milkweed, purpletop, and broom sedge. From Devin's fascinating presentation, we learned that the Monacan people had cultivated much of the region's floodplains for a thousand years before European settlements arrived, while the uplands tended to remain unfarmed. Once waves of immigrants settled in the Piedmont, they plowed most of the land but left small plots unchanged; those 700 remnant plots—each featuring centuries of natural ecological development—are the focus of Devin's and Mary Jane's study.

As another focus project in the coming year, VNPS has agreed to raise funds to help the Virginia Wilderness Committee purchase the mineral rights for portions of land included in the proposed **Shenandoah Mountain National Scenic Area**. As a chapter, we can think about what efforts we might like to contribute to that fundraising effort.

From **Katy Melton Simpson**—

I participated in a hike through the **Brushy Hills Preserve** just outside of Lexington, VA. This area was originally purchased by the city of Lexington to secure a source of clean drinking water for the city. While no longer used as a

Hills' volunteers have spent thousands of hours removing invasives and creating trails. The area is now stunningly invasive-free and hosts a plethora of native species including many locally rare plants. The walk was led by Mary Jane Epps and multiple Friends of Brushy Hills. Highlights of the walk included seeing multiple species of orchids, Jack in the Pulpit (*Arisaema triphyllum*) with seeds, bear corn (*Conopholis americana*), many tiny, bright mushrooms, and learning about beech blight aphids (*Grylloprociphilus imbricator*). The well-maintained trails are easy to access and open to the public for hiking and biking..

from **Lora Steiner**—

I went to [Goshen Pass Natural Area Preserve](#), Virginia's oldest state-managed natural area. Our group was led by Johnny Townsend, Senior Botanist with the Virginia Natural Heritage Program, and was the best kind of hike: we didn't get very far into the trails because we were stopping at least every 20 feet to identify plants and admire varieties we don't often see. My personal highlights were sampling (with permission!) *solidago odora*, or licorice goldenrod, which has long been foraged for tea, and seeing a new-to-me variety of native clematis. Not so much a highlight was crossing the swinging bridge that leads to the trails, but it's an interesting hike, particularly if you're interested in native river plants.



Hypoxia hirsuta, photo by Lora Steiner

from **Anna Maria**—

Chris Ludwig (co-author of the *Flora of Virginia*) and Garrie Rouse led a field trip to **Twin Ponds at Maple Flats (August County)**. He explained the special friendship between our organization, the Virginia Native Plant Society, and the

Natural Areas Act which created the DCR to protect special biological areas that deserved protections for research. Since the DCR Heritage Program began, thirty plant species new to science have been documented in Virginia!

We enjoyed finding many native plants including a lady slipper orchid in fruit (seed); flowering spurge (*Euphorbia corolata*); silver rod (*Solidago bicolor*), which is the only kind of goldenrod that has white flowers, lending it a silvery-white appearance, and more.

Late-season red dragonflies darted above the ponds as we examined three rare plants: *Baltonia montana*, a pale pink aster with the delightful common name Mountain Doll's-Eye Daisy; *Eriocaulon aquaticum*, also called Pipewort or Lady's Hatpins because it looks quite like a large pin with a round white head; and *Helenium virginicum* (Virginia Sneezeweed), which looks similar to common sneezeweed until you pay close attention to the discs and rays (the yellow petals).

Chris also demonstrated how we can use the Flora app to key out species. What a treat to learn from one of the top botanists in our state and to hear his passion and enthusiasm for Virginia's native plants!

Grant Announcement

The Clifton Institute is pleased to announce it has received a [Conservation Innovation Grant](#) from the USDA Natural Resources Conservation Service to fund a new program called The Virginia Native Seed Pilot Project. This project will launch the native seed industry in Virginia, which will make it possible to plant ecologically appropriate wildflower meadows.

We are delighted that our own **Isaac Matlock (Treasurer)** has been hired to coordinate this project. Stay tuned for opportunities to volunteer to collect native seeds in the coming year (most likely during spring, summer, and fall of 2023). We look forward to learning more about this project from Isaac during our member meeting on October 15.

Activity Interest Survey

Please take a few moments to complete this [survey](#) to help us understand what you would like this chapter to BE!

If you have anything you'd like to share in the next newsletter, please send it to Elaine Smith by November 10: [smithes at jmu.edu](mailto:smithes@jmu.edu)



Copyright (C) 2022 Shenandoah Chapter, Virginia Native Plant Society. All rights reserved.

Our mailing address is:

Want to change how you receive these emails?
You can [update your preferences](#) or [unsubscribe](#)

Grow your business with  **mailchimp**