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# Shenandoah Chapter VNPS

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Thanks to Rae Kasdan for the photos above of bluebirds eating red chokeberry seeds and a white throated sparrow eating golden rod seeds.

\*Send your native plant photos for possible inclusion in future newsletters to [shenandoahchapter@gmail.com](mailto:shenandoahchapter@gmail.com)

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## Meet the re-elected Chapter Board, with a welcome addition!



### **President**

Anna Maria Johnson remembers taking nature walks in rural Iowa with her nature-loving Grandma Alice, who introduced her to Jack-in-the-pulpit, wild mint, Dutchman's britches, and trees that smelled like root beer. Once they saw a mother turtle laying eggs at the edge of a pond—an image that has remained throughout her life. She studied nature writing at the Vermont College of Fine Arts and now teaches in the School of Writing, Rhetoric, and Technical Writing at James Madison University. She is married to local conservation photographer Steven David Johnson.



### **Treasurer and Plant Specialist**

Spending the majority of his life exploring the Rockies and Appalachian Mountains, Isaac Matlock finds true peace when in the wilderness. His admiration for the natural world has led him to a life dedicated to advocating for our native flora. For the past decade, he has led and participated in projects prioritizing restoring and conserving our Ridge and Valley plant communities. Isaac is currently prioritizing volunteer work with several groups including the Shenandoah Valley VNPS Chapter and will continue partnering with various entities that share his commitment to ecologically focused work.



### **Vice President**

Katy Melton Simpson started gardening with fruits and medicinal plants about 15 years ago while homesteading in Southern Virginia. Through learning about the vital role native plants play in ecosystem biodiversity, she fell in love and has been fervently planting natives ever since. Aside from gardening with natives, she enjoys horseback riding, beading, reading, hiking with her family, and most any other outdoor activity. Katy is an instructor of veterinary technology at Blue Ridge Community College and lives just outside of Harrisonburg with her husband, 2 kids, and multiple pets.



### **Vice President and Membership Coordinator**

Lora Steiner's route to native plants began with her interest in organic gardening, which led her to beneficial insects, which took her to native plants and how they support ecology. Her particular area of interest is identifying and removing invasive plant species. When she's not at her day job or ripping out privet, she enjoys long bike rides and cheese. Lora lives in Staunton with her compost worms.



### **Outreach and Conservation**

Ivy Makia's voyage into the world of plants started one day when she woke up 2.5 years deep into a pre-veterinary track at the University of Florida with no passion and an aching sense of hopelessness. Desperate to take a break from the rigor of her animal science major, Ivy signed up for a gardening class over the summer. It was then that she realized that her true calling was for plant science and the rest, as they say, was history. Since graduating in late 2019, Ivy has spent nearly 4 years

and environmental education. Hiking brings her more joy than sharing her love and passion for native plants with her friends, family, and community.



### **Secretary and Newsletter Coordinator**

Elaine Smith is a native Virginian, and other than almost ten years in NOVA, she has been growing happily in the Shenandoah Valley for decades. As a member of the original Shenandoah Chapter of the VNPS she handled the monthly newsletter and was briefly a member of the state board. Her efforts at staving off dementia are concentrated on learning/remembering botanical Latin names. She also enjoys hiking, kayaking and cross-country skiing. Elaine has worked at JMU for



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## Upcoming Events

We have a number of events coming up for you! Be sure to keep an eye on our [Chapter Events Page!](#)

Saturday December 16th, 10am, Native Plant Production, Storage and Propagation.

Join us, for a free, virtual workshop on collection, storage, and propagation of native plants:

Not sure where to start or if you're on the right track as you plan to grow your own native plants in the coming year? Get your notepad out as Isaac goes through everything he does in planning for native plant production. From seed collection in the fall to sowing seeds in the early spring, Isaac will walk through his seasonal agenda to ensure a success in growing native plants. The presentation will be followed by a question & answer session.

Isaac Matlock is a dedicated professional with a robust background in conservation horticulture and ecological restoration. Since graduating with a degree in biology from George Mason University, he has spent the majority of his time working to restore and conserve native plant communities here in Virginia. Currently, he serves as the Native Seed Project Coordinator at The Clifton Institute where he is responsible for overseeing the Virginia Native Seed Pilot Project, funded by the Natural Resources Conservation Service.

Attendance limited to the first 100 participants to log on. Event link can be found on our website here: <https://vnps.org/.../native-plant-production-collection.../>

This event will be recorded and available afterwards for those not able to attend synchronously.

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## Opportunities to Volunteer

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### **Monarch Waystations**

Linda Matkins is interested in organizing volunteers to support monarch butterflies and waystations. If you have ideas and time you would like to contribute to that effort, please contact Linda Matkins directly:

[linda.matkins@gmail.com](mailto:linda.matkins@gmail.com)

### **Leading a Walk, Talk, or Workshop**

If you are willing to lead a native plant identification walk or other type of activity sometime in the next several months, please reach out to Katy Melton Simpson who coordinates our chapter events: [katymeltonsimpson@gmail.com](mailto:katymeltonsimpson@gmail.com)

*Thank you to our volunteers!*

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## Plant Ridge and Valley Natives Campaign Update

Last Spring, we had 2000 copies of our regional guide book, *Plant Ridge & Valley Natives*, printed by Mid-Valley Press in Verona VA, and the response was amazing. We were thrilled to hear the accolades and to know that the book was guiding gardeners towards planting native plants in their home gardens and landscapes. We are planning now to revise this winter and to release a second edition in Spring 2024. We raised \$15,000 to support the first printing and will need about that much again to pay for the next printing. Sales have allowed us to raise some

publishing and another round of proof-reading and mark-up management. Barbara will manage the revision process in InDesign, and Barbara will organize the volunteers and distribution. We plan to use Mid-Valley Press again for the printing since they did a great job with our first edition. Isaac has volunteered to manage the photos as he did on the first printing.

The regional Plant Ridge & Valley Natives campaign covers not only the five counties included in the Shenandoah Chapter, but also six more. The Virginia Ridge & Valley (also called the “Mountain” region in state publications) includes Frederick, Clarke, Shenandoah, Warren, Page, Rockingham, Highland, Augusta, Bath, Rockbridge, and Alleghany counties.

Our campaign is part of a state-wide effort to promote native plants for home gardening and landscapes. This effort originated under the leadership of Virginia Witmer from the VA Department of Environmental Quality in the Coastal Zone as part of the Chesapeake Bay clean-up efforts and has spread state-wide due to its usefulness and popularity. To learn more, go to: [www.plantvirginianatives.org](http://www.plantvirginianatives.org)

This fall and throughout 2024, the state-wide native plants campaign is focusing on encouraging folks to plant more native trees and shrubs.

<https://www.plantvirginianatives.org/virginia-native-trees>

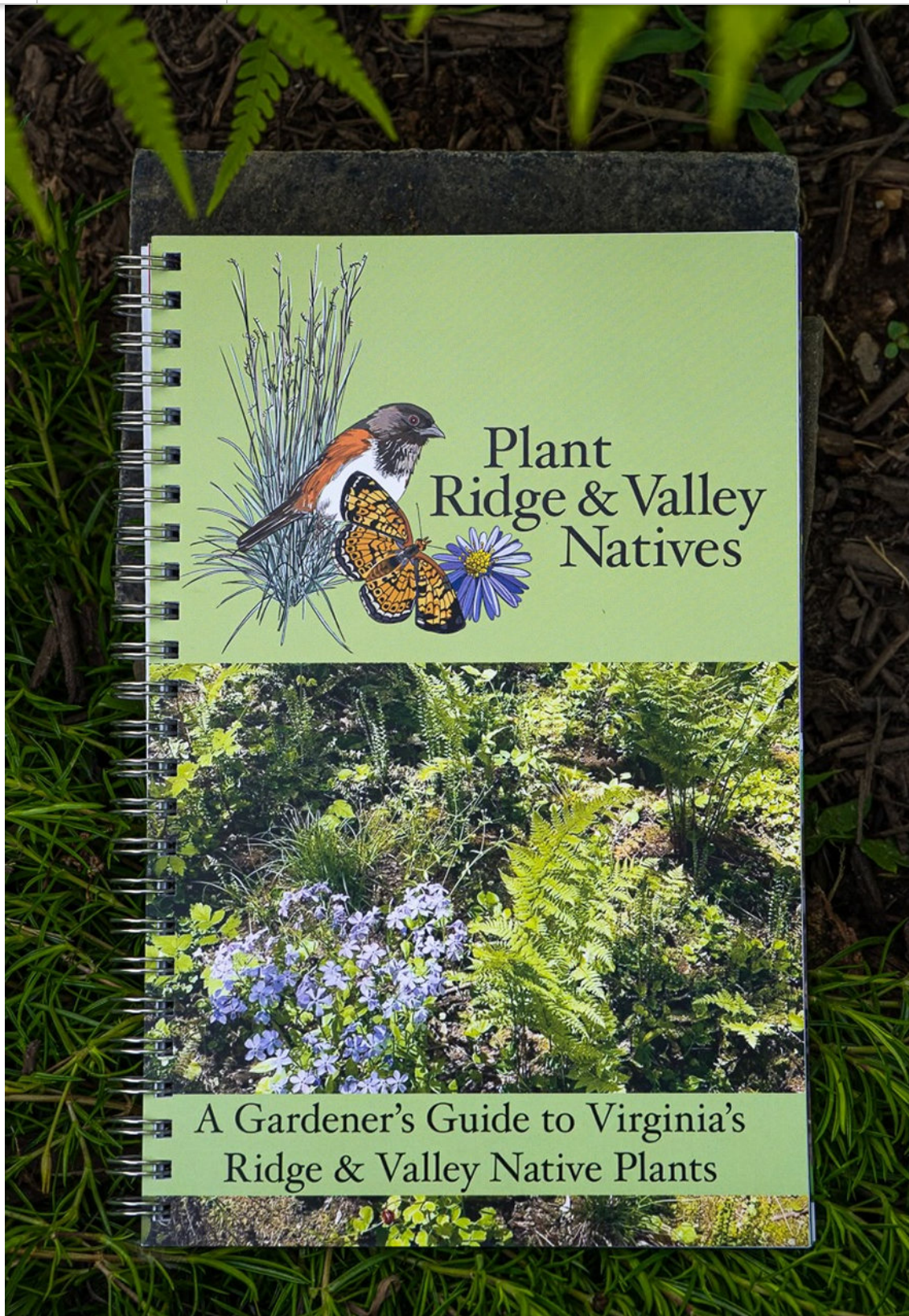
Besides the extensive work of publishing the guide, our campaign has also worked with appropriate retail outlets to offer the guides for sale. Those include the following garden centers in Augusta County who have also stocked native plants for sale: JMD Garden Center, Milmont Greenhouses, and Waynesboro Landscape and Garden Center. The Secret Garden in Staunton, Stone Soup Bookstore in Waynesboro, and the Edith Carrier Arboretum shop in Harrisonburg are also selling our guide book. Thanks to Eunice Sill, Kelly Mason, Susan Beachy, and others who have reached out individually to local garden centers. If you would be willing to help with the work of partnering with more garden centers, particularly in counties in other areas of our campaign region, to encourage them to carry more native plants, and to affirm them when they do, please contact Barbara. We plan to provide signage with the Ridge & Valley Natives logo to indicate regionally native species and want to have volunteers check periodically for accuracy in displays.

for your gardening needs. You can purchase at the retail prices mentioned above, or [order online for \\$15/copy](#) (including sales tax and shipping).

Another project of the R & V campaign that is in process is distributing the plant guides to all regional libraries, library branches and independent libraries in our 11-county region. This has been made possible through the generosity of one of our partners, the VA Department of Wildlife Resources, who is supplying the 32 books needed for this effort. We are also offering planting/design consultations to the 8 regional libraries if they are interested in planting a native plant garden on site. If you would like to help with any aspect of this project, please contact Barbara: [barbarabroth@gmail.com](mailto:barbarabroth@gmail.com) or by phone at 540-255-4032.

Follow this effort on the associated Facebook group and [page](#) – Plant Ridge and Valley Native Plants.

DONATE

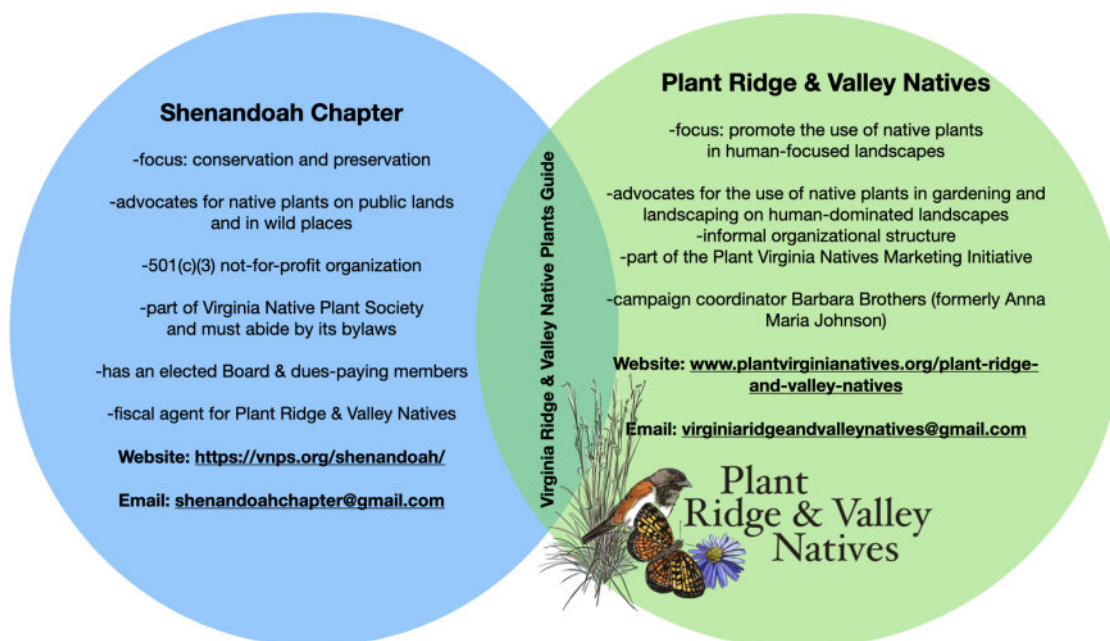


**Our Partners** (whose pre-order contributions supported the cost of our first printing)

Alliance of the Shenandoah Valley

- Blue Ridge Wildlife Center
- Central Valley Master Gardeners
- Edith J. Carrier Arboretum
- Friends of the Middle River
- Foundation of the State Arboretum of Virginia (State Farm at Blandy)
- Headwaters Master Naturalists
- John C. Myers Elementary School
- Plains Elementary School
- Rockbridge Area Master Gardeners
- Valley Conservation Council
- Virginia Department of Wildlife Resources
- Virginia Museum of Natural History Foundation
- Virginia Native Plant Society (VNPS)
- Piedmont Chapter, VNPS
- Shenandoah Chapter, VNPS

**In case you are wondering, “what’s the relationship between Shenandoah Chapter and Plant Ridge & Valley Natives?” — here is a visual aid.**



**Shenandoah Chapter** is part of the Virginia Native Plant Society and is a 501(c)(3) not-for-profit organization with an elected board and a set of bylaws. VNPS works on conserving wild flowers and wild places. Learn more about the Virginia Native Plant

Shenandoah Chapter serves as the fiscal agent for the **Plant Ridge & Valley Natives Marketing Initiative**. The Plant Ridge & Valley Natives marketing initiative is an informal partnership between public, private, and government agencies all working to promote native plants in gardens, public spaces, landscapes, garden centers, and elsewhere. Learn more about Virginia's regional native plants marketing initiative at <https://www.plantvirginiannatives.org/virginia-regional-native-plant-campaigns-guides>. During the past two years, Anna Maria has served as the coordinator for the Plant Ridge & Valley Natives marketing initiative, but now Barbara Brothers is taking on that role. Anna Maria will continue to help Barbara with the plant guide and other activities, but Barbara will be the lead contact person for garden-related activities. You can reach her at [barbarabroth@gmail.com](mailto:barbarabroth@gmail.com).

Please send [Elaine Smith](#) any items for the next newsletter!



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