



# *Shenandoah Chapter Virginia Native Plant Society March 2010*

## **Mission Statement:**

We are a conservation organization dedicated to conserve Virginia's native plants and their ecosystems through education, advocacy and activities that promote appreciation, stewardship and appropriate use.

## **Next Meeting:** March 11 at 7:30 at BRCC

Representatives from the area chapter of Sierra Club will be joining us for a discussion of common issues

## **Calendar 2010**

- ❖ Mar 25-2010 Wild and Scenic Environmental Film Festival, Visulite Theater, Staunton. 7Pm \$8
- ❖ Mar 31- Deep Run Ponds Garlic Mustard removal day 9:30AM contact Chris Bowlen for more information: 540-289-6801
- ❖ Apr 10 -Black's Run Clean-up, Harrisonburg
- ❖ Apr 18- Earth Day in Staunton 9 am-Noon Celebrate the 40<sup>th</sup> anniversary of Earth Day and help with the Shenandoah Chapter Plant sale. Details below
- ❖ Apr 24- Riverfest, Waynesboro 10an-4pm Shenandoah Chapter Plant sale
- ❖ Apr 24- Native plant sale sponsored by JMU Edith Carrier Arboretum, Harrisonburg
- ❖ May 1-2 Wildflower Weekend Webster County WV Camp Ceaser Visit Webster County WV website or contact Jay Shaner 540-886-5763 for additional information

## **Shenandoah Chapter Annual Plant sale**

Swelling buds on the trees and emerging shoots from the ground signal us that it is time to make plans for our annual plant sale. Mark your calendars for Saturday, April 17<sup>th</sup> when we will once again set up our booth at the Earth Day Festival in Staunton 9 am-Noon, across from Sunspots (near the Farmer's Market). Our second Saturday sale will be April 24 at the Waynesboro Farmer's Market for Riverfest. The potential for making this a big fundraiser is great if we can get enough plants and helpers.

We will need your help in two ways:

- (1) Bags of potting medium and pots will be available at the March and April meetings. Some of you may have already started plants from seed and as plants emerge from the ground please pot some of your "extras" to offer for sale. You can bring your plants to the April meeting or we can make arrangements to pick them up from you.
- (2) We will need volunteers to work the day of the sale. Please mark your calendars now and try to give an hour or two to help.

If you have any questions, please call Barbara McSweeney at (540) 363-1116 [barbmcs@newhopetel.net](mailto:barbmcs@newhopetel.net), or Anneli Tattersall (540) 248-0932 [annelitatt@yahoo.com](mailto:annelitatt@yahoo.com)

## **2010 Wild and Scenic Environmental Film Festival**

Wild Virginia is proud to be hosting the 2010 Wild and Scenic Environmental Film Festival "On Tour." The festival spans two evenings and two venues in two cities: Wednesday, March 24, at the Vinegar Hill Theater in Charlottesville, and Thursday, March 25, at the Visulite Cinema, in Staunton. Screenings will be

at 7pm. We will be showing 16 different films in all, with an entirely different slate of films at each venue. Wild and Scenic On Tour brings together a selection of films from the annual festival held in the second weekend of January in Nevada City, California. The films tell a story about our planet, our beautiful and precious wild lands, and the people of the communities who love and defend them. They open our eyes and hearts to fantastic experiences in remarkable places. They beckon us towards action, highlight issues, and provide solutions.

The Staunton show will feature *Rita*, winner of the 2008 Young Filmmakers Award at the Wild & Scenic Film Festival 2008 and Best Family Short from the Boulder Adventure Film Festival. *Rita* is a true story of a seven-year-old girl who, during one of her family's expeditions high in the Himalaya of Nepal, befriends a seven year-old Sherpa girl named Rita. Together they embark on a wild and touching adventure over an 18,000 ft. pass near the base of Mt. Everest. In addition to a variety of other short films, we will be showing *Division Street* which highlights a new generation of ecologists, engineers, city planners, and everyday citizens who are transforming the future of the American roads and landscape from pristine roadless areas to concrete jungles. The guest emcees for the Staunton evening will be Bruce Dorries and Steve Grande from Mary Baldwin College.

For information on the Wild and Scenic Film Festival for 2010, including the Charlottesville films, visit: [www.wildandscenicfilmfestival.org](http://www.wildandscenicfilmfestival.org)

### **Wind Energy Special Use Permit in Rockingham County**

This letter was submitted by Chapter member Mike Smith. To contact Mike about this issue: 540-298-1813

On Jan. 27, 2010 county staff gave the Rockingham County Board of Supervisors a draft of a new zoning ordinance, which if approved, would give a special use permit to two wind companies. The companies, Solaya, Inc. out of Massachusetts and Dominion Utility out of Richmond, want to put large wind turbines on a private mountain top near Criders.

There are a number of problems with wind energy it:

1. is not technically legitimate solution for our grid; it doesn't meaningfully reduce CO2.
2. is not a commercially viable source of energy on its own; without government subsidies and tax breaks funded by taxpayers, it couldn't be profitable
3. is not environmentally responsible; it leaves a large footprint on our pristine ridges; wind projects on forested Appalachian ridges have the highest bird and bat fatalities documented worldwide. An endangered plant, shale barren rockcress, would be harmed.
4. would cause loss of property values, but your taxes would not change.
5. would create few jobs locally, and no local benefits; what little electricity produced would go back to the grid; your bill would not decrease.
6. uses turbines that are dangerous to human health even one mile away; low frequency noise and audible noise have caused a number of health problems.
7. uses turbines that can be fire hazards; wind turbines have caught on fire and because of height, firetruck ladders can't reach, so they have to burn out by itself; in windy conditions, burning debris may be scattered over a wide area.

You have a company coming in with plans that have serious health consequences, will destroy our surroundings, decimate our property values and net worth and rob people of their future. Even though the value of your property will go down, you will pay top dollar in taxes.

I would encourage everyone to come out to the Rockingham County Board of Supervisors hearing in March to speak your mind and just say no to wind energy. I would recommend a height restriction ordinance on our mt. ridges similar to the one recently passed in Tazwell County effectively stopping a wind project down there.

Thanks, Mike Smith

### Native Plant Feature: Poison Ivy, Poison Oak, Poison Sumac

Spring is just around the corner and with it comes the usual annoyance from the *Toxicodendron* family. Easy to spot at this time of year, as a vine growing up fences and older trees with many arms reaching out to grab the unsuspecting, poison ivy and poison oak are some of the first plants people learn to identify. The rhyme 'Leaves of three leave it be' can be remembered from a young age. I picked up a very fun little book this past winter by Amy Stewart titled "Wicked Plants The Weed that Killed Lincoln's Mother & other Botanical Atrocities". Here is what she adds to our understanding of these native species.

Poison Ivy *Toxicodendron radicans*

Poison Oak *Toxicodendron diversilobum*, others

Poison Sumac *Toxicodendron vernix*



Poison Ivy is not, technically, an ivy. Poison oak is not an oak. Poison sumac has nothing to do with sumac trees. And by the way, none of them are poisonous.

The irritating oil they produce, urushiol, is not at all toxic, but it does happen to be an oil that most people are highly allergic to. Oddly enough, only humans are bothered by exposure to urushiol. No one knows why the plants have singled out people for their unique form of urushiol. Because urushiol creates an allergic reaction—which is nothing more than the immune system gone haywire, fighting some harmless substance, like Don Quixote charging at windmills—each subsequent exposure is worse than the one before. The immune response gets stronger, so that the reaction gets worse with each repeated exposure.

Roughly 15-25% of the population is not at all allergic to toxicodendrons and will never develop a reaction. Another small slice of the population could develop a rash but would need prolonged, intimate contact with the plant to bring it on. But unfortunately, about half of all people will break out if they brush up against the plant, and some of them are so allergic that they require hospitalization. They are called “exquisitely sensitive” by botanists and physicians.

Those sensitive to poison ivy, poison oak, or poison sumac will break into an oozing, unbearable rash. Since the oils can persist in sleeping bags, on clothing, and in the fur of adorable little dogs, you may not realize that you have been exposed until it is too late. It can take several days for the rash to appear. Once it does, reactions last two to three weeks. Oatmeal baths may be soothing, and the worst cases may require a shot of steroids. But most victims simply wait it out. Fortunately, reactions are not contagious. Those sores will probably get you banished to the couch, but they will not infect the rest of the family.

Even the most common poison ivies and poison oaks are difficult to recognize. Campers can use a simple trick to identify plants containing urushiol: carefully wrap a piece of white paper around the stem or leaf of the plant in question, crushing the plant without coming into contact with it. If the plant contains urushiol, a brown spot will appear quickly on the paper and turn black within a few hours.

If you've had an allergic reaction to poison ivy, oak, or sumac, you're much more likely to have a reaction to some of their relatives, including:

Cashew Tree *Anacardium occidentale*. The nuts are only safe to eat if they have been steamed open. The oils in the tree, including the fruit from which the nut dangles (called the cashew “apple”), can cause a breakout that looks just like a poison oak reaction.

Mango Tree *Mangifera indica*. Produces a volatile oil everywhere except inside the fruit. Someone who has experienced a severe poison ivy outbreak could be very sensitive to the rind of the fruit or other parts of the tree.

Lacquer Tree *Toxicodendron vernicifluum* Used for centuries to produce lacquer and varnish, but it is extremely difficult to work with and a real hazard to workers. Even lacquer found in ancient tombs has caused a rash.