



Shenandoah Chapter  
Virginia Native Plant Society  
September 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: Thursday Sept 9, 2010 Outing to Mueller Marsh 5:30**

Join us for an evening walk in Mueller Fen to possibly see Grass of Parnassus, *Parnassia asarifolia*, in bloom. Expect to get your feet wet so bring boots or other waterproof footwear. Bad weather will cancel this outing. An email will be sent out late afternoon if there are any cancellation issues or call Chris Bowlen 540-289-6801.

Mueller Marsh is a privately owned property supports several acres of marsh and calcareous fen. It is the location of one of only two communities of *Menyanthes trifoliata* (buckbean) in Virginia. This and other disjunct and rare species have led to recognition of this area by the Virginia Natural Heritage Program. It is now part of the State system of Natural Area Preserves and has been renamed Folly Mills Creek Fen Natural Area.

**Directions:** I- 81 to exit 220 onto Rt. 262. Follow signs to Rt. 11. At Rt. 11, turn left, go approximately 3 1/2 miles to Cochran's Mill Rd. (Rt. 871) Right on Cochran's Mill Rd where it merges with Old Greenville Rd. (which comes in on the right). Follow Old Greenville Rd. (Rt. 613) a short distance to Mill Creek Lane (Rt. 872). Right on Mill Creek Lane about 1 mile. Left on Stingy Hollow Road (Rt. 693) approximately 1/4 mile. There is room to park along the road. The house is on the right looking somewhat overgrown. There is a white trailer across the road from the house.

**Sapling Ridge/Laurel Fork Outing: Saturday Sept 18, 2010 Meet at 9:15 AM**

Join Jay Shaner for a day of botanizing in the spruce forests of Northwest Highland County. A 2 mile up grade walk leads to a pasture with 360 degree views. Two species of orchids, *Spiranthes okaloosa* and *S. lacera var. grasalis* might be blooming in abundance at that time. This outing is on private property with the owner's permission. A car shuttle will be available after a 1mile walk back down. Bring lunch, water and sturdy hiking shoes.

**Directions:** Travel 250 West through Monterey, VA and continue approximately 5 more miles to RT 262. Turn right and head north on Rt 262 to the intersection with Rt 220. Turn right and continue heading north to Forks of Water. Turn left and head west on Rt 625/642 to Blue Grass, VA. At the stop sign in Blue Grass go straight. About 1/4 mile on the right there is an old elementary school, now a Ruritan Hall. There is a big parking lot at the end of the building along the road. Meet at the Ruritan Hall promptly at 9:15 (travel time from Staunton is 1 hour 15 min). There is about a 20 minute drive from Blue Grass on a dirt road to the trailhead. Four wheel drive is not necessary. Contact Jay Shaner at 540-886-8654 to sign up for this outing. Bad weather will cancel this trip.

## **Thanks CSVMG!**

Every Saturday morning at the Harrisonburg Farmers Market, for the entire month of June, the Central Shenandoah Valley Master Gardeners (CSVMG) handed out info about VNPS and promoted the use of native plants in garden settings. Interest was high and handouts were snapped up. Many vendors at the Harrisonburg Farmer's Market routinely carry some local native plants for spring and fall planting seasons. If you are not already a regular visitor at the Market, check it out Saturday and Tuesday mornings and now Thursday evenings. Support the locals!

The CSVMG formed back in 2009 and is affiliated with Virginia Cooperative Extension's (VCE) Master Gardener program and serves residents of Augusta and Rockingham Counties. Applicants attend a formal one year training course consisting of at least 50 hours of instruction accompanied by a 50-hour internship. To remain an active member, 20 hours of volunteer service and 8 hours of re-certification are required. Currently, there are 50 members and trainees. For more information, contact VCE agent Amber Vallotton at [csvmga@gmail.com](mailto:csvmga@gmail.com).

## **Native Plant Feature: Wild Indigo, *Baptisia tinctoria*** From: 'Wild Roots' by Doug Elliot

Leguminosae (Pea Family) Other Common Names: Horse-fly weed, Indigo Weed, Rattle Bush, Yellow Broom, Clover Broom.



Wild indigo is found in dry, poor soils in open areas, from Maine to Minnesota south to Florida and Louisiana and grows two to three feet tall with clover-like leaves and brilliant yellow, pea-like blossoms, many people know it as horse-fly weed because of the custom of tying a bunch of it to the harness of a horse to repel flies. One of the most distinctive characteristics of the plant is that the foliage turns dark bluish-black upon drying. Wild indigo does contain a certain amount of blue pigment but to liberate it is a very complicated process involving fermentation and use of chemicals which neither the vegetable dyers that I know, or I, have been able to do. The information I have found all states that this pigment is an inferior grade of color anyway. As a medicinal root, however, our native Indigo has had considerable attention and use.

It was official in the US Pharmacopeia from 1831 to 1842, and in the National Formulary from 1916 to 1936, classed as an emetic cathartic, stimulant, astringent and antiseptic. A decoction of Indigo root was used as a remedy for scarlet fever, typhus and epidemic dysentery. It is a stimulant to the liver, intestinal tract and the nervous system and is also used to stimulate the elimination of accumulated wastes in the body, that manifest themselves in various forms of ulcerations and eruptions.

Caution is advised, since Wild Indigo root can be rather drastic in action and large doses have been known to be toxic. Externally, it has been used as an antiseptic for cuts and wounds. In combination with non-alcoholic witch hazel and calendula, it is used to heal cracked nipples of nursing mothers.

Wild Indigo has a shallow woody root that is best gathered in autumn.

## Remembering Jacob Kagey

Jacob Kagey was a member of our Chapter from the early days. Jacob passed away in July at age 88. His knowledge of local plants and where to find them was legendary among those who had the privilege of going exploring with him. He is remembered here by Lib Kyger, Anne Nielsen, Anne's son Eric and daughter Claire and Elaine Smith. He will be missed.

From Lib Kyger:

The first VNPS chapter field trip I attended was one that Jacob Kagey led. The date is long-forgotten, but the rousing success of that afternoon is still with me, and likely with others, too, for it was a rousing success with all of us – at least three cars full. We followed Jake from place to place along roadsides and into old fields and woodlands. A good scout and planner, he had spent many hours making a preliminary survey and each of us went home late that Sunday afternoon with a long list of species in our field notes. Soon Jake-led “flower tours”, as he sometimes called his field excursions, became very popular. At one early summer afternoon at Augusta Springs I counted 22 inspired and happy plant hunters!

Aside from his much-appreciated expertise, Jake was as a very kind person. I know this well because my husband, Ellsworth, and I were recipients of one of Jake’s very special kindnesses. There came time when we, because of Ellsworth’s increasing disability, could not take the rigors of hiking, but Jake, mindful of our interest, would call on Monday morning after a Sunday field trip and offer to take us on a modified tour saying that there were some special flowers he wanted us to see.

He was right. The flowers were special, but also special was Jake’s great desire to share his knowledge and his discoveries with one and all.

As I am, so many are grateful for this good man, who taught us so much.

From Anne Nielsen:

Just this morning, at his request, Lib and I strolled the BRCC Arboretum with John Kagey, Jacob's son. John is seeking new connections, as many of us do in times of grief, and he was interested in many trees there that Jacob found growing wild as saplings, or grew from seed. There are common things like cottonwood and mountain pine, and some less common ones like Hoptree and Hercules Club that are still growing there. It is amazing that this young forest is mostly surviving the summer we have had.

Jacob had the uncanny ability to tell you where you could find a seed tree of almost any kind needed--and take you there. He started butternuts and *Poncirus trifoliata* from fruits of his own growing. Jacob was not a botanist, but a naturalist of the best order; interested in everything in nature and paying close attention to details. He had begun photographing wild flowers, and had some lovely things in his collection. His own arboretum took advantage of variations in terrain and moisture levels, so he was successful in growing skunk cabbage and bald cypress WITH KNEES! Queen of the meadow flourished along the stream that divided the back garden.

And it must not be forgotten that for years, Jacob was our field trip chairman. When Jacob was leading, we were more than willing to follow, as he always discovered unusual or rare plants in the places we went. I experienced many "first sightings" on trips with Jacob: The tiny *Trillium*, whose species is still being argued, described by Norlyn Botkin, but discovered in the Flagpole Knob road by Jacob; the large round-leaved orchid, *Habenaria orbiculata* at the edge of mixed pine woods near Camp May Flather; the nice stand of yellow fringed orchid, *Habenaria ciliaris*, that once grew on road on the back side of Massanutten Mountain; the multicolored butterfly weed that he discovered somehow (it wasn't visible from the road) at or near exit 66? (60?) on the Blue Ridge Parkway. I always meant to go back and collect seed, as I'd never seen it in yellow and mahogany shades, as well as the beautiful but common orange. Jacob always scouted the areas where he

took us to be sure he knew the way, the plants, the hazards--except that he was not put off by poison ivy, as some of the rest of us have learned to be. Both of my children have been out with him, and loved him, and have loved searching for wildflowers as he did, ever since.

Jacob will be remembered, as his memorials stand among us everywhere.

From Eric Nielsen:

I think he is a big part of why I found myself doing fieldwork for years. He made looking for plants an adventure, and somehow showed by example that those little bits of overlooked/forgotten nature can connect us to ourselves and each other. His memorials really are all around. How about a VNPS trip sometime to see some of his highlights? I remember the butterflyweed in particular. Thanks Jacob.

From Claire Nielsen:

I am shedding a tear and finding the resolve I need to carry on with my planting project at the school, which I recently expanded to wildflowers and has hit some roadblocks. I think maybe I can keep going with his inspiration to follow.

From Elaine Smith:

In addition to his vast knowledge which he shared generously, I remember Jake's sweetness, his sense of humor, his humility *and* his immunity to poison ivy. I'm grateful to have known him, and to have had the privilege of hiking with him.

If you have announcements, articles or reviews for the newsletter (no matter how short), please contact Elaine Smith [antigone16@comcast.net](mailto:antigone16@comcast.net)