



Shenandoah Chapter  
Virginia Native Plant Society  
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March 2011  
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**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 10, 2011 7:30, Blue Ridge Community College, Plecker Center 126C**

Billy Flint is one of the world's leading experts on salamanders. His current research is on the Cow Knob salamander *Plethodon punctatus* and its ecology. The Cow Knob salamander is found only in the George Washington National Forest: on Shenandoah Mountain and the adjacent North and Great North Mountains - nowhere else in the world between 2400-4300 feet.

**Calendar of Events 2011**

- ❖ March 11, Deadline for Headwaters SWCD Tree Seedling sale (see Feb newsletter)
- ❖ March 27, 1pm Deep Run Ponds Garlic mustard removal
- ❖ April 9, Blacks Run Cleanup, Harrisonburg 8:30-Noon
- ❖ April 14, Wild Virginia Film Festival at Visualite Theater in Staunton
- ❖ April 15 and 16 Arbor Day Tree Sale & Native plant sale 9-3 at Edith Carrier Arboretum JMU.
- ❖ April 16, Earth Day, Staunton 9-Noon includes Shenandoah Chapter plant sale
- ❖ April 30, Riverfest Waynesboro The Year of the Bullfrog 10-2 includes Shenandoah Chapter plant sale
- ❖ April 30 JMU Arboretum Notable Wildflowers Field Trip: The Trillium Trail at G. Richard Thompson Wildlife Management Area. Contact the Arboretum offices 568-3194 or by e-mail at [turnbugl@jmu.edu](mailto:turnbugl@jmu.edu) for more information.
- ❖ May 13-15 Spring Wildflower Symposium The Wintergreen Nature Foundation, Wintergreen Resort, [www.twnf.org](http://www.twnf.org)

**Garlic Mustard Removal at Deep Run Ponds, Sunday March 27, 1 PM**

Shenandoah Chapter's stewardship of Deep Run Ponds Natural Area, Rockingham County, started in March 2002 with trash pick-up along Ore Bank Road. When a local family adopted the road and took over trash collection, we moved on to invasive plant control, specifically, garlic mustard (*Alliaria petiolata*). Garlic mustard removal near the Ponds started in 2005 and we have continued to do it each March since then.

The result of this determined effort is that the garlic mustard seed bank is nearly exhausted. We now spend very little time on mustard removal near the Ponds and quickly move on to a 3 acre homestead area. The natives have been able to continue flourishing and the garlic mustard has been contained. In this area, eradication is still a few years away. This year we get an extra dose of muscle power from a JMU Freshman Communications class. They are doing environmental community service projects and are helping us remove garlic mustard from Deep Run Ponds. If you would like to be part of this project, contact Chris Bowlen. 540-289-6801 or [bowlenchris@comcast.net](mailto:bowlenchris@comcast.net)

**Shenandoah Chapter Annual Plant Sale to Benefit Flora of Virginia Project**

The long awaited Flora of Virginia Project is moving into its final phases and is still slated to be released in 2012. It seemed a very long time to wait when this project began back in 2001 but here we are on the home stretch. Budget cuts have hampered timely publication. Color photos, wonderful drawings, hard copy and electronic versions of the Flora cover the 3500 species of VA native plants. With publication, we will have an opportunity to increase our appreciation and understanding of our rich natural heritage. All proceeds from our Chapter's annual plant sale will be

donated to the Flora Project. We are hoping to raise at least \$800. In the past, our Chapter members have been generous with donations of plant material and time. Please help us reach and exceed our goal for this year.

We need your extra native plants! If you need any help digging, potting, identifying or transporting your plants, contact Anneli or Barbara.

Mark your calendars for Saturday, April 16<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 30, 10 AM -2 PM at the Waynesboro Farmer's Market for Riverfest.

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)

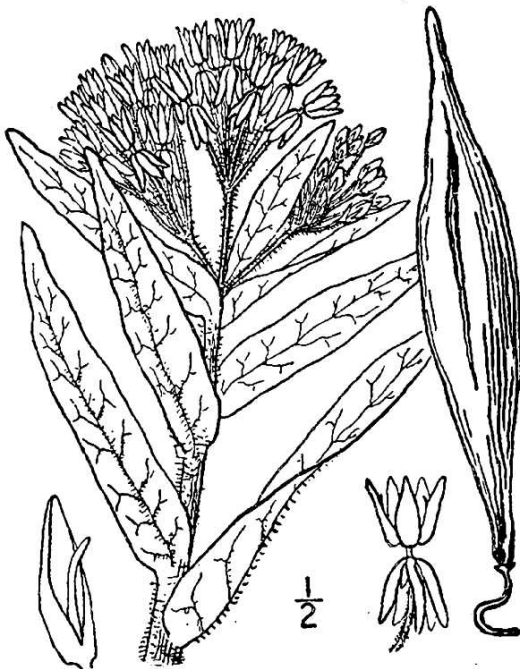
## HOW NATIVE PLANTS HELPED ME FIND MY WAY HOME

By Karl Shank

Have you ever wanted to feel more at home in the place you live, but a restlessness remains? Pretty big existential question perhaps. Yet in my work with my ecological landscaping business I've been thinking a lot about what it is that makes people feel at home and with some surprise I now realize that the native plants of Rockingham County have helped me find my place in the world and ultimately they've helped me discover my homeland.

I lived my first eighteen years in Ohio. It was here I created with my family a small subsistence farm where we raised animals and a large garden. Neighboring pastures, hidden fields and woodlands with cool crayfish streams provided a vast frontier to be explored. I got lost in the streams for whole days, building dams and catching minnows. I felt at

home in that wilderness and wished I were a Native American Indian. With my dad I learned the birds by song and flight. Our little farm produced goat's milk that made store milk taste like chalk-water and enough eggs and strawberries to sell at times. We ate our healthy chickens that would roam the pasture and garden to scratch for bugs. Blackberries were plentiful at the woodland edge behind the barn. The massive lawn, the blank canvass we transformed with hundreds of trees, shrubs, flowers, grapes, red raspberries, a huge strawberry patch and vegetable garden, became our Garden of Eden and my first idea of home.



My childhood playing in the woods and growing a farm into an oasis gave me an intuitive language that I would call on later when creating spaces for my clients to call home. But, finding a way for me to feel at home in Virginia first, after experiencing the magic of my upbringing, proved to be a challenge that lasted ten years. While its' endless hidden valleys, unfolding behind wooded ridges and hilltop meadows enticed me to explore, and its rugged landscape reminded me some of the wilds of Ohio, this new land with Red Cedars and limestone rocks nosing from steep hillsides, still felt foreign. As the years passed I began to wonder when and if I would ever feel at home.

Originally, I came to Virginia to attend Eastern Mennonite University so I could learn how to teach high school English in the Appalachian communities of West Virginia...a dream I actually

credit in part to Robin Williams's role in the movie *Dead Poet's Society*. But working within four walls was confining, and that dream of teaching English did not stick. And so, after college, when a friend asked me to build a set of stone steps for her, my classroom became the wide open out of doors, my tools the chisel and stone. Building dry-stack stone walls, stone walks and patios soon led to designing and creating entire gardens and landscapes for clients in Rockingham County.

This work awakened me like never before and I learned faster than during any of my years at school. I read everything I could find on landscaping, designing, horticulture, stonework, and starting your own business. I went to conferences and seminars, bought and studied my favorite landscape architectural firm's books, and drove long hours to D.C. to get experience installing their gardens. Before long I found I had started a real landscaping business. And while I was truly flying by the seat of my pants, it was my intuition from my childhood work of making home for plants and animals and people that was guiding me.

The intuitive language I learned in Ohio though hadn't quite prepared me for my work with clients. My naiveté about what grew in Virginia became painfully clear. And while designing outdoor spaces and working with stone came naturally to me, my desire to use native plants did not simplify a thing. I looked everywhere for native plant lists to guide my learning process and nurseries to purchase these plants, and after only emerging with a few general lists and nurseries that sold the usual non-native cultivars, I realized this discovery process was going to take much longer than I had hoped. I was determined though. These native plants had weighed anchor deep within me. It wasn't until many years later I would understand this love was all a part of my homing instinct.

The Shenandoah Valley has been mixing into my blood my whole life. Every year our family made the long trek from Ohio to visit Grandma Shank in the Rockingham County hills back off a long winding dirt road. I never did fully exhale the air. Her front yard always smelled strange when it was hot and muggy...scent of boxwood I later learned. It was the hedgerows though that smelled more exotic than anything I had known...the extravagance of honeysuckle. And when dusk settled across the fields beyond the dirt road, the bobwhite called from the pastures. This sound will remain one the most haunting and beautiful sounds I will ever know.

And so finally, after many years of developing native plant lists and finding the nurseries that sell these plants, my work is reintroducing me to what feels like a long lost family. I want to hear that bobwhite again and restore the Big and Little Bluestem meadows they need to raise their young.

Last year, we helped a client restore eleven acres of native wildflower meadow using many flowers and grasses native to Rockingham County. In July, just months after seeding the meadow, I witnessed a moment I won't forget as thousands of butterflies and moths and bees hovered about a sea of Tall Coreopsis, Butterfly Milkweed, and Black-Eyed Susan blooms.

It is clear to me now that my seventeen year long quest to use native plants is about discovering the landscape where my Shank family has been raising their large farm families ever since the late 1700's. And it is this grounding in my past that fuels and focuses my passion for helping my clients create a sense of place in this valley.

Now, when I go out walking in fields along a hedgerow, the scrappy Hackberry, Black Locust, Choke Cherry, and Red Cedar growing like weeds in the harshest of summer droughts, as if they couldn't be happier, I imagine my Shank ancestors plowing a field, looking above their team of draft horses to the distant hedgerow where these trees easily grew, as they still do. I want to ask my hard working Swiss German Mennonite ancestors to not work quite so hard and only plow half the field so I can see these hedgerow trees and Sumac growing in wild thickets amongst the wildflower meadows. But, I haven't learned to reach back through time like this and so instead I'm learning to restore savannas with prescribed burns, drill seeder and a growing vision of abundant bobwhite habitat that might someday be enough to even support the return of the native bison and elk that once roamed this great valley.

Karl Shank

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