



Newsletter

VIRGINIA NATIVE PLANT SOCIETY UPPER JAMES RIVER CHAPTER

*The counties of Allegheny, Amherst, Bath and Rockbridge
and the cities of Lexington and Buena Vista*

Spring – 2015

Additions, changes or corrections to the calendar will be sent to our email list, and phoned to members not on email.

Spring Wildflower Walks!

We will gather at 9:30 a.m. to start walking at 10:00. The walks will be a minimum of two hours; folks are welcome to return to their cars whenever they need to. Please dress for the weather that day (we'll go unless it is pouring rain) and bring water and snack for yourself. If you have questions, contact Peggy Dyson-Cobb at 464-3511 or Peggy Dyson-Cobb <cobbking@rockbridge.net>

April 11th - W&L/VMI cross-country trails. West Denny Circle, which is west of Lexington. Park at the lot near the indoor tennis courts.

April 18th - Brushy Hills. To reach Brushy Hills from Lexington, drive to the end of Ross Road (2.3 miles from city limits) and turn right on Union Run Road. Continue 0.6 miles to the Brushy Hills Trails sign and Town Spring on the right, with parking lot opposite.

Talking Native Plants Lunch

April 14th at 11:30. Our last TNP lunch for the season at Sweet Treats, 19 W. Washington St. Come tell us what is showing up on your property - the good, bad, and ugly.

President's Column

Deer, deer everywhere, and not a thing to eat! I suppose we could look at deer management in that light instead of our usual moans and groans about disappearing native plant materials. Henry Wilbur, the last presenter of the day for our VNPS 2015 workshop, took that approach "Oh Deer: How Perennial Woodland

Herbs Survive the Overabundance of Whitetails." Down at Mountain Lake - a biological research station in Giles County - he designed a classic experiment to fence deer out of a number of sites in meadows and in the low and high-canopied woodlands. Some were fenced, others staked but not fenced. Native plant materials in all of these were identified and counted. Then, as the seasons rolled by, recounts were made.

What survived and thrived in the fenced in areas? What was their favorite food in the unfenced sites? The answer was in all sites that plants which are members of the Liliacea and Orchidacea families, which should not surprise us. We also find some tasty. We think asparagus which is al lily; they think Clintonia (blue bead lily). Descriptions of lilies are on p. 1155 & ff in FLORA). So this spring as your patch of trout lilies (Erythronium) emerges, you might want to fence them in with netting or wire. Because it also turns out that lacking leaves for photosynthesis because the deer continue to nibble the leaves, the "storage tank" corm below the ground does not build up stores of food for the next season. So repeated nibbling gradually starves some of our spring ephemerals out.

Deer also showed up in the first talk that day, Anne Alerding's presentation on garlic mustard. Do the whitetails relish it, too? No, but more than likely they are among the culprits for seed dispersal. To illustrate the point, she had a photograph of a deer hoof print. There, between the 2 halves of the hoof print, were lots of short hairs. Golly, what a perfect seed carrier. The print of course was from one of her study areas. It turns out that, while many mustards are capable of shooting seeds from ripe seedpods, this invasive foreigner cannot. So how do the seeds disperse? How do large patches form? Most seeds fall very close to the parent plant. When you go a-pulling garlic mustard this spring, watch where you step and clean your boots afterwards.

Katherine Smith

Plant Sale Calendar <http://vnps.org/conservation/2015-native-plant-sales/> from the VNPS website. The earlier ones are up in NoVa but the later ones are closer by:

April 18th Shenandoah chapter at Staunton for Earth Day

www.earthdayStaunton.org/ or call Anneli Taterdall (540-248-0932)

May 2nd Shenandoah Chapter at Waynesboro's Riverfest

<http://riverfestwaynesboro.com/604-2/> or call Eleanor Baker (434-797-2824).

May 9th Blue Ridge Chapter at the lovely WCC Arboretum in Roanoke.

May 23rd Hill House Gardens, Castleton VA.

May 30th UJRC native plant sale within the Master Gardener's Plant Sale at the W&L Pavilion.

News from the VNPS Board meeting - March, 2015.

The 2016 wildflower of the year is *Goodyera pubescens* (Rattlesnake-plantain). The FLORA (p 1176) describes it as being part of a genus with an unknown number of species but possibly as many as 100, mostly from Southeast Asia. This puts it in those particular members of very old plant families we in North America shared with the Asian continent back in Pangean times when we were one



and the same. However, Goodyera is small, seemingly insignificant. On the other hand, magnolias are large and visible. They have come down to us from the same Pangean and place.

The best ecological description I have is that in Spira's *WILDFLOWERS AND PLANT COMMUNITIES*, p.380, "Rattlesnake orchid (that's a clue) is one of our most common and easily recognized orchids. Individuals spread vegetatively by underground stems -rhizomes- so a single plant may have multiple rosettes, a few of which may bloom in any given year. After flowering, individual rosettes wither and die, but one or more new rosettes arise from the rhizome ensuring survival."

This paragraph explains why I find clumps now in the deciduous woods here but later in the summer not much of anything. I've marked the clump I found over the weekend. And because it's an orchid I'm fencing it in. I also learned from Spira that orchid seeds don't store up food to nourish their seedlings. Rather the seeds rely on special fungal relationships to germinate and thrive. Spira rates the chances of this adventure as "very small", and those lucky enough to manage this feat won't flower for up to 10 years later! So now I'll really fence them in. Also since the flowers are very small, and it's a woodland plant, there's a bee, but it must be a very tiny bee, that pollinates these flowers.



Boxerwood Mondays

In the early 1900s, along with the nature-loving fellows, there were some gals who took it upon themselves to write botanically about native plants. Their style seems rather flowery now. Here's a paragraph from *NATURE'S GARDEN* by Neltje Blanchan, who is usually better known by her married name, Mrs. Abner Doubleday.

"A newly opened flower which is in the female stage has its anthers tightly closed, and the pollen must therefore be carried from distinct plants by the short-tongued bees and flies out collecting it. No nectar rewards their search, although they alight on young blossoms in the expectation of finding some food, and so cross-fertilize them. Late in the afternoon, the petals, which have been in a showy, horizontal position during the day, rise up to the perpendicular before closing to protect the flower's precious contents for the morrow's visitors."

What does all this have to do with Boxerwood? Keep reading. The species of bees she mentions are members of the Halictus tribe (miner and sweat bees). And the Syrphid flies. These would be what we casually call yellow-jacket mimics because of their coloring. They are also called hover flies. This past Monday when four of us gathered at our Boxerwood work site, we did see two bloodroot in bloom. Alas, not on our site, but up under a tree near the Education office. It is quite likely they arrived there as seeds, carried in by shoes. Ants are the usual seed dispersers. And there is a picnic area close by. Hmm, a



connection perhaps? This article has great photos and interesting facts. Bloodroot as plaque inhibitor? <http://www.wimastergardener.org/?q=bloodroot>

Back at our site, we have found only one native spring ephemeral-Sweet Cecily. We've also found grape ferns. We've kept busy removing canopy and creepers (not Virginia creeper), but the non-native invasive sorts otherwise known as Japanese honeysuckle and English ivy. *Aralia spinosa*, which is native but infamously invasive and thorny, is there as well. We have begun root extraction and glyphosate application. Pulling invasives by necessity exposes ground surfaces and so we can expect a carpet of new problems as the weather warms. But perhaps we may also find some native surprises?

We have been very careful to remove only shrub or tree seedlings that have alternate leaves. It has been pointed out to us that we may find at a later date yellowwood or large leaf magnolia both of these would have alternate leaves. Most of the shrubby things we have taken out so far have been viburnum species; some we can't even identify until they leaf out or bloom. We have left everything with an official Boxerwood tag.

Virginia Native Plant Society Upper James River Chapter

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We welcome new members and guests. For more information, contact a board member.

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