



Virginia Native Plant Society

Conserving Wild Flowers and Wild Places

November 2024

Dear Friend of Native Plants,

As the year gradually winds down and we gratefully slip into gentler autumnal weather, we start reflecting on what the year has brought us. Being members of the Virginia Native Plant Society (VNPS), we are all champions of native plants and wild spaces. And in our wonderous explorations of both, **we rely heavily on a trusted companion – The Atlas of the Virginia Flora. We’d like to encourage you to help us make it even better.**

We all are naturally fascinated with the whole spectrum of our flora – native or not! – and especially the mysteries of plant distribution. Knowing our flora and the fascinating ways plants travel is a consuming pastime for all of us.

Virginia Botanical Associates, the most crucial botanical organization in Virginia you may not be aware of, is devoted to cataloguing this geographic range of plant life through the **Digital Atlas of the Virginia Flora**. The Atlas was first published in the 1970s, quickly becoming the definitive catalog of Virginia plants and their distribution. This essential resource appeared in three hard copy editions and evolved into the web-based Digital Atlas of the Virginia Flora in 2005. Virginia Botanical Associates, a nonprofit originally founded by Dr. Alton M. Harvill, Jr. of Longwood College, maintains the Atlas. The members are truly obsessed with finding out what plants grow in Virginia, and where they grow – and with making this information readily available to everyone.



Green Hairstreak Butterfly on Butterfly-Weed.
(Gary Fleming photo)

The **Virginia Native Plant Society** has provided substantial financial and moral support for the famous *Flora of Virginia*. What many people may not realize is that the Atlas formed the backbone of the 2012 *Flora* and guides its evolution as an app today with constantly refined distribution and habitat data on Virginia plants. After all, knowing what species occur in Virginia and where they occur is the most basic and crucial information needed for any flora. The close partnership with VNPS is also exemplified by the fact that the geographic data maintained in the Atlas are used for everything from our native plant brochures to answering citizen inquiries about native and non-native species. For an organization like VNPS, having the most up-to-date information on nativity and

location is crucial to informing the public about our flora and the threats posed by invasive species. Unlike most other resources on this subject, the Atlas data is based on primary sources, meaning voucher specimens are used to definitively anchor the identity of a plant with a place.



Pyrausta Moth on Spotted Bee Balm
(Gary Fleming photo)

Your generous gift in support of the Atlas will make a measurable difference. Since the creation of the digital version of the Atlas in 2005, repairs to this aging site have become increasingly necessary to fend off even basic malfunctions and security concerns. Improvements are also needed to increase the value of the Atlas and provide a better user experience. A steady stream of

suggestions for creating a stronger product has come from within the Atlas group but, more importantly, from the many Atlas users. As always, the time and effort necessary to move forward means financial commitment. A long list of possible improvements exists, but a few examples include:

- Improve overall site design and page displays
- Improve design and ease of use on mobile devices
- Implement more sophisticated search and data export functions
- Add a protocol for mapping verifiable iNaturalist and other non-specimen-based records
- Improve efficiency for the transfer of maps and other information between the Atlas and Flora of Virginia Mobile App
- Add links to outside data sources (e.g., Flora of the Southeastern United States)
- Add conservation and invasiveness ranks to species pages

As we enter the holiday season and you consider your philanthropic contributions to deserving causes and organizations, we hope you include **the Atlas of Virginia and Virginia Botanical Associates** in your considerations of support. We trust that you will support – as generously as you can – this continuing effort to catalog our diverse native flora and keep tabs on our up-and-coming invaders. From basic site functionality to a better user experience, **please help the Atlas keep informing important decisions as it spreads the word about the diverse and fascinating flora of Virginia.**

Grateful for Your Ongoing Support,



Nancy Vehrs, President



Emilia Godwin, Fundraising Chair

P.S. If the Atlas is new to you, you can read more about it and visit the website at vaplantatlas.org. Together, we can make the experience of learning from it more enjoyable and beneficial for countless gardeners, botanists (both professional and amateur), conservation specialists and the growing numbers of others who rely on the information built into this wonderful tool. **Thank you!**



VNPS ANNUAL FUND APPEAL 2024

Please give generously to support the **VNPS Digital Atlas of the Virginia Flora Fund**.

Enclosed is my tax-deductible gift of: \$1,000 \$500 \$100 \$75 \$50 Other \$____

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Make checks payable to VNPS and mail to: **VNPS Digital Atlas of the Virginia Flora Fund**, 400 Blandy Farm Lane #2, Boyce, VA 22620. Thank you! VNPS is a 501(c)(3) nonprofit organization. Contributions are tax-deductible to the extent allowable by law.

400 Blandy Farm Lane, #2, Boyce, Virginia 22620, 540-837-1600, www.vnps.org