



Bulletin

A publication of the VIRGINIA NATIVE PLANT SOCIETY

<http://www.vnps.org>

Conserving wild flowers and wild places

VNPS Registry Site is newest state park



Caledon, a VNPS Registry Site sponsored by the Fredericksburg Chapter and located in King George County, has become Virginia's newest state park. At a 9 a.m. ribbon-cutting ceremony on June 14, Caledon ceased being a Virginia Natural Area and became a Virginia State Park.

Caledon was donated to the state by the Smoot family in 1974 with the idea that the 2,579-acre tract along the Potomac River would become a state park. A task force appointed by then Gov. Chuck Robb recommended that the land be managed as a natural area with emphasis on protecting the habitat of the significant bald eagle population located there. Caledon has one of the largest concentrations of eagles on the East Coast. As many as 60 bald eagles have been sighted at one time along the Potomac River bluffs.

Of special interest to the Virginia Native Plant Society is the fact that 800 acres of the park were designated a National Natural Landmark in 1974, one of only 10 such places in Virginia. The designation comes because of the undisturbed climax forests located within the park. The site includes forests of several types, both mesic and dry, as well as fields, beaches, and wetlands. The oldest forests have trees more than 150 years old in ravines. There is a wealth of native plants, with more than 500 species documented, and at least 18 species of rare or unusual plants. VNPS member Martha Shelkey, a member of the Northern Neck Chapter, compiled a plant inventory complete with photographic records for Caledon's education programs. For her work, she was nominated for a conservation award.

The status change to a park was precipitated by the delisting of the bald eagle as a federally endangered species several years ago. It was felt that the area could be used for

(See Caledon, page 5)

Miles of hiking and biking trails through stately forests are part of the attraction at Caledon State Park. (Photo by Nancy Sorrells)

Vote for the 2012 VNPS slate of candidates, page 7.



From the president

Celebrate our VNPS birthday together

I hope lots of you are planning to attend our Annual Meeting in Richmond to help us celebrate our 30th Anniversary! Thirty years is certainly something to celebrate.

We have grown from our beginnings in 1982 as the Virginia Wildflower Preservation Society, when plant rescues were the focus of our founding group (now the Potomack and Prince William chapters). Gradually we became more aware of the connections between plants and the entirety of the natural world, and as VNPS we grew to 13 chapters. This is something to be proud of! Our projects and gifts over the years have helped to conserve land, study plants and their habitats, teach young people about the natural world and help gardeners understand why what they plant matters.

From one of our founding members with many years of service on the board, Stan Sletler's famous line of "Save habitat, save habitat, save habitat" continues to ring in my ears. He also stated that conservation is local, and that it requires people in an area to come together to conserve property. I was recently reading about the impact of Hurricane Agnes, an unusual June hurricane in 1972. The article compared the effect of the massive rains of a 500-year storm falling in the Chesapeake Bay watershed in modern times with what might have happened during the millennia previous to that. A sort of pad of forest, forest duff, and wetlands was contrasted with pavement, toxic waste and trash,

and lack of forest cover. (Bay Journal, Volume 22 Number 4, June 2012)

In my own area, our response to deforestation, especially on riparian corridors, has been to plant fields full of little sticks. Yes, I've seen some of these plantings grow, and it may not be too long before some of them become effective. When I paddle on tree-covered streams or parts of the Shenandoah where ancient silver maples or sycamores form a wall of solid roots on the bank, I can't help but think that we need to have a stronger ethic of protecting mature buffers as well.

There are many such examples where a little protection will save a lot of work and waiting, and we need to seek these out. Last year in Winchester we had a dinner with representatives from as many local conservation oriented groups as possible. In this getting to know you meeting we all gave five-minute presentations about ourselves. In this way, we learned who our partners are locally, and I hope we'll meet again with an emphasis on action.

I want to thank returning board members and welcome new faces—see the ballot insert in this newsletter. I am especially indebted to Prince William Wildflower Society's Nancy Velrs, who will take over as the society's president this fall. I know she will do a great job for us, so please thank her when you see her! Also, take note of the vacancies listed—can you help us?

Your President, Sally Anderson



**Celebrate VNPS's 30th birthday
at the Annual Meeting
Sept. 14-16**

Future bleak for Virginia's ash trees

The future is not bright for Virginia's native ash trees. The Virginia Department of Agriculture and Consumer Services has expanded the Emerald Ash Borer Quarantine to include the entire state of Virginia. This action became necessary after the recent detection of the borer in the counties of Buchanan, Caroline, Giles, Hanover, Lee, Prince Edward, Stafford and Warren counties. The quarantine previously included Arlington, Charlotte, Clarke, Fairfax, Fauquier, Frederick, Halifax, Loudoun, Lunenburg, Mecklenburg, Pittsylvania and Prince William counties and the cities of Alexandria, Danville, Fairfax, Falls

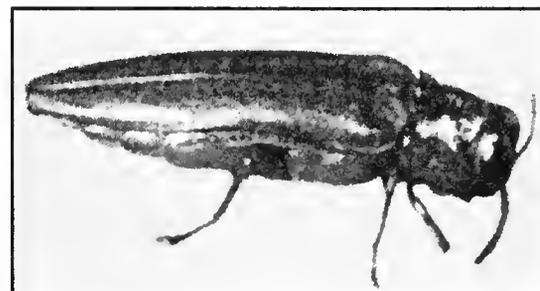
Church, Manassas, Manassas Park and Winchester.

Under this statewide quarantine, the regulated articles, which include ash trees, green (non heat-treated) ash lumber and ash wood products, as well as hardwood firewood, are no longer subject to localized restrictions on movement and may now move freely within the state. For additional information about the Emerald Ash Borer Quarantine call the Virginia Department of Agriculture and Consumer Services at 804-786-3515.

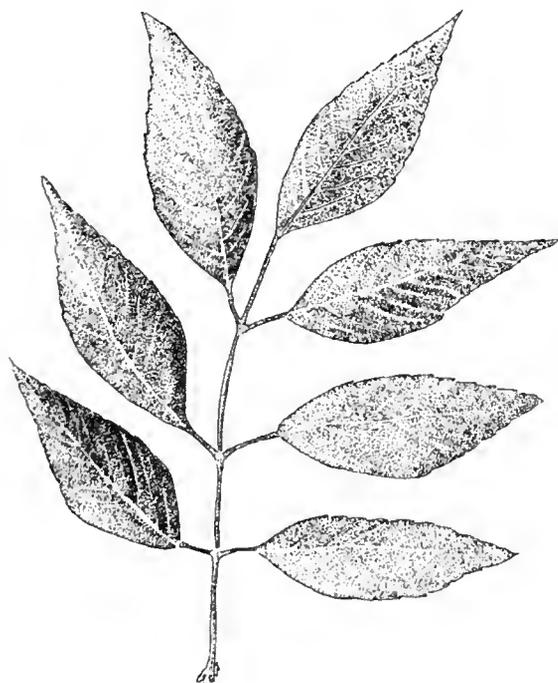
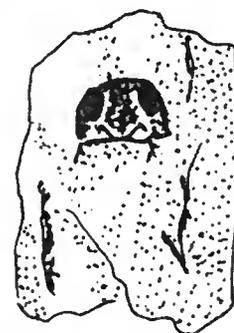
VNPS Director-at-large Ruth Douglas noted in her report at the July board meeting that the emerald ash borer has graphically demonstrated its ability to hopscotch across Virginia. Until recently, it had only been known to be present in Northern Virginia and Frederick County. As of July, however, the exotic flat-headed insect has been spotted in nearly every corner of the state.

Unfortunately, this probably means that the emerald ash borer is on its way to a tree near you. The larvae of this emerald green insect tunnels around inside an ash tree until it metamorphoses into an adult and crawls out of the wood to feed on leaves, and produce the next generation of pests. This has the very likely potential to effectively kill every ash (*Fraxinus* Sp.) in the state. This will change the composition of our urban, suburban and rural forests alike.

If you are not already familiar with this destructive pests, please visit the following: www.emeraldashborer.info and a video, *A Lot of Mouths to Feed*, at www.hungrypests.com/press-room/psa.php.



The culprit, the emerald ash borer, above, and an example of its work boring holes in trees, right.



Fraxinus americana
white ash
Drawings by Nicky Staunton

Waynesboro hosting urban tree workshop

Trees: Fifty Shades of Green is the theme for the 17th annual Waynesboro Plant Health Care for Urban Trees Workshop sponsored by the Waynesboro Parks and Recreation Department, Trees Virginia, and the Virginia Department of Forestry to be held September 21. From the very first workshop/slide show to today's modern presentations, the program's goal has remained the same, to gather cutting edge speakers for thought provoking dialog on making our communities better through trees. This year's lineup features a timely discussion on assessing risks to trees as well as tools to put the "park" back into our parking lots. No matter what shade of green your trees may be, there will be something new to learn about urban forestry in Virginia. For information or to register contact Dwayne Jones at the Waynesboro Parks and Recreation Dept. (parksandrec@ci.waynesboro.va.us; 540-942-6735).

The Flora has Gone to Texas!

A quick note to let you know that the last piece of the *Flora of Virginia*—the Salicaceae through the Vitaceae—was shipped electronically to the Botanical Research Institute of Texas Press, our publisher in Fort Worth, on July 24. A team of dedicated botanists is giving the effort a big boost by reading sections of the taxonomic treatments for errors of any kind that present themselves. We have proofs back on nearly the entire book and are marking corrections on them, in another heat to get them to the BRIT Press in time for printing to begin around September 1. Exciting times!

Bland Crowder, associate director and editor, *Flora of Virginia Project*

Videos offer tips for defending natural spaces

Some like to argue for argument's sake, but most of us do not enjoy the sport of debate, nor are we gifted with the verbal agility of Robin Williams, the laser wit of Oscar Wilde, the strategic insight of Bobby Fischer, or the eidetic memory of a Dr. Sheldon Cooper. Even having a brilliant mind and prepared rhetoric doesn't guarantee one's voice and physical bearing can hold sway comparable to that of Gregory Peck as Atticus Finch. Yet, we without credentials in botany or law may be pressed into service as community defenders of ecological landscapes. To support such trials, I give you exhibit A, the video series titled *Landscaping: Pride, Science, and Law*. All are accessible on YouTube.com. I produced the three-part program for citizens and officials who are creating or updating lawn and weed ordinances for public health and safety and environmental protection.

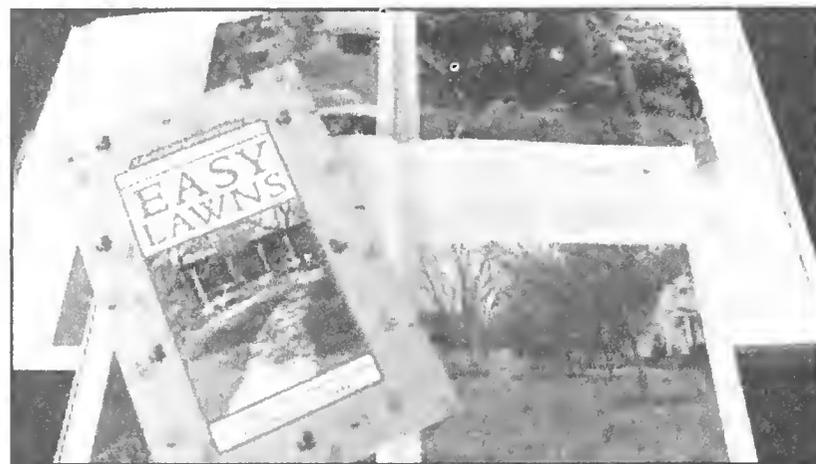
The first installment, eight minutes long, illustrates how the home landscape has been influenced over time and why many of us have chosen to grow naturalized landscapes. Subsequent segments—*Science* (11 minutes) and *Law* (12 minutes)—unravel the tangled subjects of green plants and red tape. Although designed to enlighten governing bodies, the contents can also be entertaining, taken as an overview of the merits of landscaping with native plants.

I was prompted to compose this program after being bullied by an official at a 2011 village meeting where I, being a former editor for *Wild Ones* with some knowledge of land-use policies, had been invited by the chair of the local planning commission to speak. This commission was deliberating the enforcement of a simplistic mowing-height regulation in order to quiet a conflict between neighbors (strangers to me) over one seldom-mowed lawn. I volunteered to contribute to

the authorship of a state-of-the-art ordinance based on natural resource advisories, but was abruptly blindsided with disparagement by three commissioners. One of them, a retired police officer and newcomer to the village, told me I had no right to say anything and that "we will make you mow." Keep in mind that my native plant landscape was not, nor had it ever been, a point of contention. In fact, none of my new found adversaries even knew which property I owned.

After this utterly bewildering altercation, I suffered weeks of insomnia and digestive distress the likes of which I had never experienced before, perceiving the whims of a few small-town tyrants as a potential threat to the decades-old, naturalized landscape of our former home (we have rented out the property since 2002). Frustrated by their ignorance and impertinence, I clawed at my mind for some way to shine a light on their boorish behavior and preempt the ratification of any irrational dictates. I also dreamed of finally expressing the value of science-based landscaping in an unfettered public forum.

For about a month, I was consumed with the task of turning my thoughts into a documentary. A lifetime in publishing made the flow of words and images conceivable, however, formulating the counterarguments to both the remembered and imagined brutish voices in my head proved emotionally wrenching. A forced introduction to audio recording technology added to the challenge. After uploading the files to YouTube, I sent emails to village officials and the village attorney, telling them of my unpleasant meeting experience; my resolve to litigate, if necessary, to defend our landscape; and referred them to the



video. In what way my message has contributed, or will contribute, to the status of village policy, I can't say. It's been about a year, and I've heard nary a murmur. It may well be that the planning commission just gave up even bothering with the subject, which was my number one recommendation to them.

You are welcome to air my videos in public forums and embed them in websites. For off-line use, it's possible to download YouTube videos using various software programs, browser plugins, or mobile apps. Sadly, YouTube no longer offers an automatic "enable download" feature, or I would activate that convenience for you. I like to believe that the accessibility and content of this presentation will have value for those writing ordinances and those playing Clarence Darrow in their neighborhood's courtroom of public opinion. Joy's videos can be seen at: youtube.com/user/quarryjoy.

--Joy Buslaff's article is reprinted from the *Wild Ones Journal* (wildones.org). *Wild Ones* promotes environmentally sound landscaping practices to preserve biodiversity through the preservation, restoration and establishment of native plant communities. *Wild Ones* is a national not-for-profit environmental education and advocacy organization. Buslaff maintains a blog at homemadewilderness.com where she posts and organizes others' videos about ecological landscaping and organic gardening as they are published.

•Caledon

(Continued from page 1)

more low-impact recreation now. A new master plan opens up previously restricted areas to year-round hiking and bicycling. Kayaking and canoeing are also available. Some trails are still closed during eagle nesting season.

All told, there are now six miles of hiking/biking trails and eight miles of hiking-only trails. The trails offer views of the river, 3.5 miles of Potomac shoreline, wetlands, and mature forests. Automobiles are allowed only to the visitor's center, located just inside the park. Interpretive ranger programs are given year round.

"We're really excited about this change and what this means for the future and growth of the park," said Joe Elton, director of the Division of State Parks of the Virginia Department of Conservation and Recreation. "This is more than just a name change. Our offerings will grow in ways that allow more people to enjoy this unique

area while protecting those resources that make it attractive to both humans and eagles."

Several of the newly opened trails should be of particular interest to VNPS members. The Poplar Grove hike meanders through a mature forest that includes several large beech trees, while the Laurel Glen Trail includes a boardwalk over a stream and woodland. If wetlands are what you are seeking, the Caledon Marsh Trail includes both marshland and Potomac shore-

line, while the Jones Pond Loop passes through several habitat restoration projects including a wetland. The easy 2.14-mile Belmont Trail includes several stands of mature trees, several of which are listed in the book *Remarkable Trees of Virginia*. Finally, the Smoot Trail, next to the visitor center includes a native plant garden.

For more information about Caledon, visit www.dcr.virginia.gov/state_parks/cal.shtml.

Nancy Sorrells
VNPS Bulletin Editor



More than three miles of Potomac shoreline add to the attractiveness of Caledon State Park. (Photo by Nancy Sorrells)

Native plant landscaping book to be reprinted

The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service is gearing up for a potential reprint of *Native Plants for Wildlife Habitat and Conservation Landscaping*. Interested individuals and organizations may purchase their copies directly from the printer. The cost will be based on how many orders are received. If orders justify 15,000 copies, then the price will be \$1.60 per copy (+shipping); 20,000 copies, the price will be \$1.50 per copy (+shipping); and 30,000 copies creates a price of \$1.40 per copy (+shipping). There is currently enough interest to print 5,000 copies, so more orders need to be generated to make the reprinting affordable. Those who are interested need to send their name, organization, address, email, and the maximum number of copies to which you can commit to Kathryn Reshetiloff at Kathryn_Reshetiloff@fws.gov. If you need less than 200 copies then consider partnering with another group.

Horticulture short course offered

The Mid-Atlantic Horticulture Short Course will be held February 4-7, 2013, at the Marriott at City Center in Newport News. This is the green industry training highlight of the region, offering hundreds of continuing education credits for more than a dozen professional organizations.

The four-day conference is divided into industry-specific tracks, and participants can mix and match subject areas. National and regional speakers present new techniques, university research and discuss advances in the field. The course allows participants to qualify for many industry continuing education credits and certifications.

Programs and registration forms will be available in the fall. More information is available at www.mahsc.org, on the event's Facebook page or by calling Dawn M. Alleman, education program coordinator at the Virginia Horticultural Foundation, 757-523-4734. The Mid-Atlantic Horticulture Short Course is produced by the Virginia Horticultural Foundation, a 501(c) (3) nonprofit organization that provides educational programs designed to education public and professionals alike in effective and efficient horticultural approaches, landscaping, environmental concerns and gardening.

Lobstein tracks taxonomic changes in Figwort family

Chelone glabra or smooth turtlehead has had an interesting taxonomic journey. In the *Flora Virginica* (2nd ed.) it was called "Chelone acadensis flore albo" by Tournefort in 1706 and was assigned its current binominium by Linnaeus in 1753. *Chelone* has traditionally been placed in the Scrophulariaceae (Figwort family). This family (as well as Plantaginaceae) was proposed by A.L. de Jussieu in 1789. The taxonomy of Scrophulariaceae has been a challenge since that time and has been one of the flowering plant families undergoing recent significant change or disintegration! Over the last two centuries, this family has been divided into subfamilies and tribes. Orobanchaceae (Broomrape family) has moved in and out of that family as have other families such as Paulowniaceae. Since the early 1990s continuing DNA research on members of the Scrophulariaceae has resulted in this family being disintegrated into a minimum of five families for genera that are in Virginia. The listing below shows the families and our genera assigned to these families:

•Scrophulariaceae (Figwort family-redefined)

- Scrophularia* (figwort),
Verbascum (mulleins)

•Orobanchaceae (Broomrape family) [traditionally included only *Conopholis* (cancer- or squaw-root), *Epifagus* (beechdrops), and *Orobanche* (broom-rape) -all species are plant root parasites]

•Former Scrophulariaceae genera (all hemi-parasitic on roots of other plants) reassigned to Orobanchaceae are: *Agalinis* (false foxgloves), *Aureolaria* (false foxgloves), *Bnchnera* (bluehearts), *Castilleja* (Indian paintbrushes), *Melanpyrum* (cow-wheat), *Pedicularis* (louseworts)

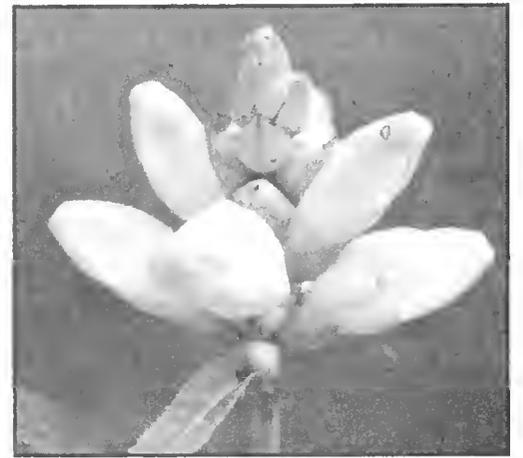
•Phrymaceae (Lopseed family) [traditionally included only *Pluryma* (lopseed)]

•Former Scrophulariaceae genera reassigned to Phrymaceae are: *Mazus* (mazuses), *Micranthemum* (micranthemums), *Mimulus* (monkeyflowers)

•Plantaginaceae (Plantain family) [traditionally included only *Plantago* (plantains) genus from our area]

•Some modern taxonomists such as Richard Olmstead propose placing most of the former OROBANCHACEAE genera into the family Veronicaceae (Durande,1782) but this family name is not valid.

•Former Scrophulariaceae genera reassigned to Plantaginaceae are: *Antirrhinum*



Chelone glabra or smooth turtlehead
(Photo by Nicky Staunton)

(snapdragons), *Bacopa* (water-hyssops), *Chelone* (turtleheads), *Collinsia* (blue-eyed Mary), *Cymbalaria* (Kenilworth ivy), *Gratiola* (hedge-hyssop), *Kickxia* (cancerworts), *Limosella* (mudworts), *Linaria* (toadflaxes), *Lindernia* (false pimpernel), *Mecardonia* (axilflowers), *Nuttallantlms* (toadflaxes), *Penstemon* (beard-tongues), *Veronica* (speedwells), *Veronicastrum* (Culver's root)

•PAULOWNIACEAE (Princess tree family)

- Paulownia* (Princess tree)

As you can see, the dismantling of the Scrophulariaceae is a very complicated situation.

--Marion Blois Lobstein, Botany Chair, Prince William Wildflower Society (Article adapted from articles published in PWWS's Wild News)

See the address label for your membership expiration date

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Address _____

City _____ State _____ Zip _____

___ Individual \$30

___ Student \$15

___ Family \$40

___ Associate (groups) \$40*

___ Patron \$50

___ Sustaining \$100

___ Life \$500

*Please designate one person as delegate for Associate membership

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Which chapter do you wish to join? (See www.vnps.org) _____

Paying by credit card? ___ MC ___ Visa ___ Discover Exp. date _____

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Make check payable to VNPS and mail to:

VNPS Membership Chair, Blandy Experimental Farm, 400 Blandy Farm Lane, Unit 2, Boyce, VA 22620

Membership dues are tax deductible in the amount they exceed \$5 Contributions are tax deductible in accordance with IRS regulations

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Nancy Sorrells, Editor

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The deadline for the next issue is Oct. 7, 2012.



Virginia Native Plant Society Slate of Candidates

The following slate of candidates is proposed by the 2012 VNPS Nominating Committee to replace officers, standing committee chairs, directors-at-large, and members-at-large of the Nominating Committee, and to fill existing vacancies in other classes. Please note that there are a number of open seats that need to be filled by enthusiastic volunteers. Please consider giving of your time and talents for the special plants and habitats in our commonwealth.

Nancy Vehrs - President (2012-2015) Nancy grew up near the banks of Bull Run and traces her love of wildflowers to her discovery of masses of Virginia bluebells in bloom there in April when she was a young girl. Now she enjoys native plants both in the wild and in her suburban garden. Nancy joined the Prince William Wildflower Society in the late 1980s and has served in a variety of capacities from membership chair and newsletter editor to president. She has recently served as secretary to the state board. She retired from her job with the Fairfax County government for 30+ years, with the last 21 as clerk to the board of supervisors. She is an alumna of the College of William and Mary with a concentration in economics. She enjoys hiking in the natural world and is now trying her eyes and ears at birding.

Sally Anderson - 2nd Vice President (2012-2015) Sally has served three terms as president of VNPS. She has a degree in botany from the University of Texas. After working in a neuropathology lab doing electron microscopy, she obtained a masters in archeology from Boston University. A native of Texas, she has lived in several states, but has called Winchester home for about 25 years. She likes to travel, especially to see other landscapes, even though she lives in just about the prettiest place on earth. Since reconnecting with botany through Marion Lobstein's field botany class at Blandy Experimental Farm, she has been the lead volunteer for the native plant trail at Blandy. She has completed Master Naturalist certification. She also serves on the board of the Piedmont Chapter.

W. John Hayden - Botany Chair (2012-2015) John is professor of biology at the University of Richmond, where he has been since 1980. He received his M.S. and Ph.D. degrees at the University of Maryland, pursuing research involving the systematics, morphology, and anatomy of plants in family Euphorbiaceae. He has taught introductory botany, plant anatomy, plant morphology, systematic botany, and Mesoamerican ethnobotany. Additional duties include curation of the URV herbarium and management of the greenhouse. John's publications include inventories of plant diversity, descriptions of several tropical species new to science, treatments of various euphorb genera in flora projects, as well as comparative and developmental anatomical studies. He is author of three genera (*Tetracoccus*, *Bischofia*, and *Manihot*) to be published in *Flora North America*. John is an avid gardener of ornamentals and vegetables; a small flock of chickens are integral partners in his organic gardening efforts. Since 2003, he has served as VNPS Botany Chair; in that capacity he researches, writes the text, and contributes photographs for the Wildflower of the Year brochure, along with similar articles for the *Bulletin*. He is a member of the Virginia Botanical Associates and part of the southeastern regional review team for the Flora North America Project.

Bland Crowder - Publications (2012-2015) Bland has worked at the Flora of Virginia Project since January 2007. As associate director he is primarily involved in development and public relations, and as editor he has compiled taxonomic descriptions for the flora and copyedited the nearly 1,600-page volume. From 1994-2006 he worked at the copy desks of *People*

and *Time* magazines and was copy chief at ABCNews.com. Prior to that he was education and publications coordinator with the Chesapeake Bay National Estuarine Research Reserve in Virginia and an assistant editor at the Texas A&M University Sea Grant College Program. He holds degrees in biology from the College of William and Mary and journalism from New York University. He is a lifelong environmentalist, mostly organic gardener, with a love of the natural world that developed while spending weekends at Buggs Island Lake, in Mecklenburg Co., Va. He looks forward to using his expertise to further the VNPS cause, whose work, he believes, ultimately brings to bear cultural and scientific approaches to many of the problems that the environment faces.

Sue Dingwell - Director at Large (2012-2015) In 2000, Sue's interest in native plants led to her active participation with the Florida Native Plant Society; becoming in turn, president of the Palm Beach County Chapter, Director-at-Large for the statewide organization, and then its Communications Chair. She pioneered FNPS's social media presence, originating their blog and Facebook page, and writing the first FNPS Annual report. Her last project in Florida was a coalition for Urban Re-Forestation. She is a Master Gardener, receiving her Ten Year Service Award in 2010, and certified as a Master Naturalist in both Florida and Virginia. Since moving to Northern Virginia last fall, Sue has given a series of children's classes at River Farm, helped with installation and signage for the native plant demonstration at Potomac Overlook and enjoyed attending the VNPS workshop in Richmond.

Erika Gonzalez - Director at Large (2012-2015) Erika, a native of Venezuela, has studied fossil and living plants of North America since her move to Virginia in 2007. She has a master's degree in geology (Central University of Venezuela, 2002) and tropical botany (University of Los Andes, 2007). After her move to the United States, she worked hard to learn all the temperate plants that were new to her, working at the departments of paleobotany and botany at the Smithsonian Institution National Museum of Natural History in Washington, D.C., collaborating in research on the morphology of temperate fossil plants and modern Asteraceae of North America. Her love for nature, especially plants, has led her to explore many states. A short hike at Shenandoah National Park will always amaze her. She is a member of the Virginia Botanical Associates and currently works as a botanist for the Smithsonian Conservation Biology Institute in Front Royal. She serves as a director and curator of the Harvill Stevens Herbarium (FARM) at Longwood University, the largest collection of Virginia native plants in the world.

open - Secretary

open - Publicity

open - Fund Raising

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Save time & postage: E-mail your vote to:
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PROXY, 2012 VNPS ANNUAL MEETING

I hereby authorize the Corresponding Secretary to cast my vote for the slate of candidates proposed by the Nominating Committee

Signed _____

Address _____

Return by Sept. 10 to:

Corresponding Secretary, VNPS

Blandy Experimental Farm

400 Blandy Farm Lane, Unit 2

Boyce, VA 22620

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Trees can be protected from storm damage

Recent storms wreaked havoc upon trees across a wide swath of Virginia and other eastern states. While there is little landowners can do to avoid damage from a 70 to 80 mph wind, thoughtful planting and routine maintenance can go a long way toward protecting your trees from the average storm, says Eric Wiseman, associate professor with the Virginia Tech College of Natural Resources and Environment and extension specialist.

"Mindful planting of the right trees in the right places and correct routine pruning can help you avoid tree damage from summer storms," says Wiseman, who specializes in urban forestry and arboriculture.

Property owners should be discriminating when planting or retaining trees on their property. Most oaks are "well-behaved," Wiseman notes. They are slow-growing trees known for strong wood, with less tendency to develop co-dominant leaders, an unstable condition of multiple main trunks. Besides oaks, Wiseman recommends hickory, fruitless sweetgum, beech, and blackgum as storm-tolerant lawn trees.

He advises against landscape plantings of silver maples, willows, ashes, white pines, and loblolly pines, as well as the notoriously fracture-prone Bradford pear. These faster growing trees tend to be weak-wooded and decay-prone, he explains.

Even the right tree can be easily uprooted if not planted properly. Selecting a tree with a well-developed root system and planting it at the correct depth is crucial to the tree's longevity.

"You get what you pay for," he warns, "so buy your tree from a reputable nursery."

Trees need routine maintenance, particularly during their "adolescent years," Wiseman says. Periodic pruning improves a tree's structure by removing dead and defective branches, such as multiple leaders or trunks and weak branch attachments with embedded bark. Both of these conditions make trees susceptible to storm damage.

Topping, or indiscriminate reduction of tree height, is not an appropriate pruning practice. In fact, topping will likely weaken the tree in the long run.

Wiseman recommends calling in

an arborist for evaluation and tasks related to tree health and safety. The person who cuts your grass and trims your shrubs may give tree advice, but may not have an arboriculture (tree care) background. An arborist can detect the signs and has tools to help with the detection of root problems.

Even the best trees are put to test during high derecho winds like those experienced June 29. Under these conditions, it's impossible to absolutely avoid tree problems.

Signs that a tree is in trouble include cracks, cavities, decay, dead limbs, and sometimes mushrooms at its base. Recent excavation beneath the tree damages its roots, which in turn weakens the tree, increasing its susceptibility to decay, pests, and wind damage.

"The only thing you can do to eliminate tree problems is to get rid of all trees, but that's not a good idea," Wiseman says. "Trees reduce cooling and heating costs in homes, mitigate air pollution, protect water quality, and have aesthetic value."

--Article reprinted from <http://www.vtnews.vt.edu/articles/2012/07/071712-cnre-protecttrees.html>.



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