

Northern Neck Chapter, Virginia Native Plant Society

# NN Native Plant News

Fall 2011, Volume 8, No. 3



## ***Native Plant SALE***

***Saturday  
SEPT. 10***

***9:00 a.m. - NOON***



*Kosteletzkyia virginica*, seashore mallow

Joan Hattersley (artwork)

## Message from the President

As you can tell by this newsletter, our chapter is well into producing one of our best plant sales ever. Please mark your calendars and tell your neighbors to mark theirs for September 10<sup>th</sup> from 9 to noon.

I recently returned from a 25-day trek along much of the Spanish section of the Camino Frances. As I walked 12 to 15 miles per day while carrying a 20-lb. backpack, among the most enjoyable sights were the many colors of Spain's wildflowers. I could easily have spent days photographing and trying to identify them, but was limited by my goal of arriving in Santiago de Compostela in time to get to Madrid to catch my plane home. Traveling by foot gives one a real flavor of a country. The Spanish also fill many pots with plants to beautify their villages and towns, which added greatly to my pleasure as I passed through at foot pace.

Although not quite Spain, our chapter offers easy walks during which we look at and identify, or at least gain practice in trying to identify, plants in bloom (See below and page 6). In addition, twice a month Marie Minor is currently botanizing the Doghouse Trail that our chapter helped construct at Chilton Woods. Anyone can join her, and seeing various plants as they come into bloom is a real treat. Occasionally new species records for a county result from one of her walks! If you enjoy the outdoors, colorful blossoms and good company, check the last page for the schedules of Marie's walks and our other outings for the fall.

Also, please check the exciting lineup of speakers for our September through November meetings. If you purchase one of the inexpensive cups we offer for sale, you have the option of taking it home or leaving it at the church for the next meeting you attend. If the latter, our Hospitality Committee reminds you to be responsible, *i.e.*, remember to wash and dry your cup before leaving. Those who are interested are encouraged to occasionally bring some (healthy) food to share.

I am really looking forward to the 2011 fall program, and hope to see you at one of our events.

*Carol Hammer*



## Mycro-heterotrophs Amongst Us



While observing and identifying spring wildflowers at Hickory Hollow last April, we were pleased to find a nice colony of Virginia pennywort, *Obolaria virginica*, in bloom (left). The lack of significant leaves led to the question of whether the plant is parasitic, living on the roots of nearby plants. A little research revealed that they are indeed included in a number of flowering plants that have abandoned photosynthesis. The plants are frequently mistaken for parasitic plants but are more accurately called myco-heterotrophs. They can live

without photosynthesis because they have established a coevolutionary relationship with a mycorrhizal fungus that is attached to the nearby roots of a photosynthetic, woody plant. So, there is a three-way association such that nutrients flow from plant root, to mycorrhizal fungus to the myco-heterotrophic plant!

Scientists using sugars containing radioactive carbon have shown that carbohydrates synthesized by forest trees pass into the mycorrhizal soil fungi and eventually into the mycotrophic "fungus flowers." Since they are living parasitically on fungi that are, in turn, parasitic on the roots of trees, these amazing flowers have been termed epiparasites (a parasite on a parasite), or myco-heterotrophs. These flowering plants could be considered a parasite of the fungus. But the term is inaccurate because they do not obtain their nutrition in the same manner as true parasites, such as the downy false foxglove, *Aureolaria virginica* (which we also saw), and which actually invades host stems or roots by means of a modified root called the haustorium.

In the past, myco-heterotrophs were referred to as saprophytes. There are no true saprophytes among the flowering plants. Among large, multicellular organisms, only fungi are able to utilize dead organic material for nutrition. The mycotrophs don't directly invade the photosynthetic "host" roots, but indirectly obtain nutrients via the intermediate fungus. But unlike fungi, they are true vascular plants with flowers and seed-bearing capsules! The myco-heterotrophic habit has evolved several times in unrelated angiosperm families, occurring in pinesap *Monotropa hypopithes*, Indianpipe, *M. uniflora*, pygmypipes, *Monotropis odorata*, spotted wintergreen, *Chimaphila maculata*, and some orchids, such as species of coralroot, *Hexalectris*. **Text and photos: Ellis Squires**



**Left to right:** pinesap *Monotropa hypopithes*; Indianpipe, *M. uniflora*; pygmypipes, *Monotropis odorata*; spotted wintergreen, *Chimaphila maculata*; spiked crested coralroot, *Hexalectris spicata*.



## Kayaking on Dragon Run

Last spring, my best friend came to visit on her bi-annual trip to the Northern Neck. For something new, we decided to join my fellow members in the Northern Neck Chapter of the Native Plant Society on the Dragon Run kayak trip down the Middle Peninsula.

Every year for only one month from early April to early May the Friends of Dragon Run (FODR), a non-profit organization formed for the protection of this environmental gem, open it up for special kayak trips. The only way to make this trip is with the FODR, who take groups down this relatively untouched part of our commonwealth's natural heritage.

Dragon Run is a million year old, 35-mile (55-km) long, remote tributary of the Piankatank River. This protected area is surrounded by hiking trails and discouragingly difficult access points for kayaks.

Since 1985, FODR has purchased and protected surrounding land financed with tax-deductible donations and run by an all-volunteer organization. They currently control over 466 acres. The remaining area surrounding Dragon Run is managed responsibly by its owners who practice no-till planting, reforestation, contour farming, and sensitive timber techniques, as well as use filter strips to keep unwanted nutrients and pollution from contaminating the waters.

Our guides were all volunteers from FODR including the very informative Teta Kain, who fell in love with the area when visiting decades ago from Maine. Like many of us *come here's*, once enchanted by the area, she couldn't stay away. All who can should visit this ecologically significant and unique ecosystem located on the Middle Peninsula of Virginia's western shore!



After meeting at 9 a.m. in the Saluda Food Lion parking lot, we all "caravanned" over to the put-in site. FODR provided the kayaks, paddles, life jackets, and a quick lesson on how to set the foot pedals and how to launch. One by one, we were launched into the run by being pushed down a small swale—like a short, exciting, water park ride!

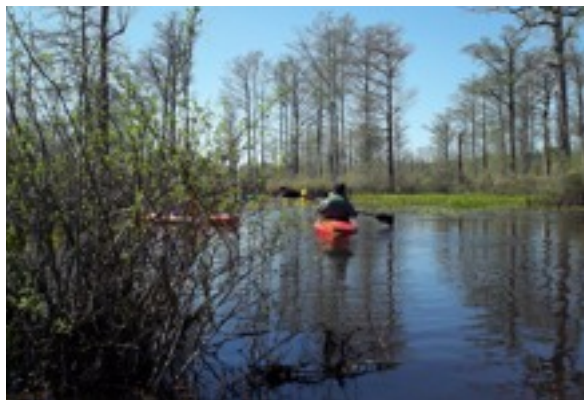
The kayaks were shorter than we usually see on our creeks on the Neck to permit easy maneuvering through the thick swamp vegetation, primarily *Nuphar variegata* (bullhead lily), *Pontederia cordata* (pickerelweed), *Zizania aquatica* (wild rice), *Sagittaria latifolia* (duck potato or broadleaf arrowhead) and *Typha latifolia* (common cattail).

Around the base of the large *Taxodium distichum* (bald cypress) emerging from the water was *Pleopeltis polypodioides* (resurrection fern) in full bloom as it had rained the night before. (Our guide said on the previous day you would have sworn it was all dead.) Along the banks were violets, *Chelone glabra* (turtlehead), and *Iris virginica* (Virginia or southern blue flag iris). The colors and shapes reflected in the water in ripples of color so that it was like moving through Monet's painting of water lilies. It was just spectacular!

The trees are almost entirely typical coastal plain hardwood such as *Liquidambar styraciflua* (sweet gum), *Platanus occidentalis* (sycamore), *Betula nigra* (river birch), *Acer rubrum* (red maple), *Cornus florida* (dogwood), *Asimina triloba* (pawpaw) and some *Fraxinus americana* (ash).

Most impressive were the cypress, some were 10-foot (3-meter) diameter monsters with massive trunks keeping them stable as they grew out of the water. Dragon Run is the northernmost cypress swamp, and is said to be one of the few places that still is as it was 400 years ago, when Captain John Smith explored the area. There was almost a tropical feel as we stopped to eat our lunch. (You do need to bring your own food and water.)

By 2 p.m. we were near the end of our trip, having zigged-zagged through the enclosed swamp, traversed over 3 or 4 beaver dams, and then through a more open area where we could see eagles circling and then landing in their nest. Most of the wild life we saw was flying overhead. It was early yet for the osprey or heron, but we could hear the prothonotary warbler.



The most abundant bird in Dragon Run is the colorful wood duck, but we only saw an empty nest as we paddled along. The kayak trips are a major fundraiser for FODR but I plan on going every year for the fun, beauty and delight of it. **Text and photos: Bette Gruben**



### References

A map of Dragon Run's protected lands, and more information about the river, can be found at the FODR website: [www.dragonrun.org](http://www.dragonrun.org)

To get a real feel for the trip, here is a video:  
[www.youtube.com/watch?v=MyNMHrfcwww](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=MyNMHrfcwww)



## Behind the Scenes: Growing Plants for September's Sale

### *Kosteletzkya virginica*, seashore mallow, from seed



Nick Ferriter

If you want to propagate seashore mallow (*Kosteletzkya virginica*), the easiest way to do it is to grow some from seeds. Since the plants, once established, are prodigious seed producers, finding seeds requires only that you have a friend who has the plants. Seeds may be started in March through June. This year's sale plants were started in pots in May. Depending on when they were started, the plants will bloom in pots or in the ground in August/September. If potted, they should be put in the ground before winter if you want them to survive.

The seeds need to be scarified, according to the literature. I have found, however, that all you need to do to find seeds that will sprout is throw them in water, and then wait and see which ones sink. They do not sink immediately. It may take several days or even a week or more. Once they sink, they are ready to plant. Plant about 3/8" (1 cm) deep. Start the seeds in good, well-drained soil.

The plants need plenty of water, but once established do not need to be babied. Once established, the plants self-seed freely, something to consider in deciding where to plant them! Seashore mallow is salt tolerant and will grow along banks and in marshes, as well as in your yard, and when they bloom, they are quite spectacular.

Nick Ferriter, as told to Jackie Ferriter

### *Monarda*, beebalm, by division



© Tom Barnes, University of Kentucky

Monarda, or beebalm, is a lovely self-seeding, moderately spreading wildflower genus with tousled flower heads ranging in color from lilac to pink to bright red. The runners are easy to divide in spring or fall. I just dig them up gently with a spading fork to preserve as much of the root structure as possible and either transplant them to a new location or pot them up. They like moist, fertile soil and full sun, although they will do okay in light shade. They do tend to suffer from powdery mildew, but they can be cut back after blooming (unless you want them to self-seed).

You can also grow them from seed, but you have to mash the seed heads to get the seeds out from the base of the calyx tubes after they have turned brown and allowed to dry. The seedlings are easily transplanted as well and will bloom the second season.

Jeff Wainscott

### *Iris cristata*, crested iris, as rhizomes



© US Forest Service

I simply wait until late August to early September when the iris goes dormant and the rhizomes shrivel. Then I carefully dig them up and put them in plastic baggies for sale. The following year the rhizomes should plump up from the wet ground and put out new leaves again.

Marie Minor

### *Castanea pumila*, chinkapin, from bare roots



Judy Lang

The chinkapins were received from VA Department of Forestry bare rooted. I put them into a bucket of water until I could pot them up—I think then next day or day after. I trimmed off some root tips so that they would accommodate the pots, and used a 50/50 mix of my rich compost and the local, crummy sand/clay/top soil in my yard. I placed one bare root plant in each pot, troweled in my home-made "soil mix" and watered it well. I am keeping the plants adjacent to my rain barrel where I water them every other day.

Ted Munns



# Other Natives for September Sale

*Kosteletzkya virginica*, seashore mallow



Carol Hammer

*Iris virginica*, Virginia (southern blue flag) iris



Carol Hammer

*Eupatoriadelphus dubius*, joe pye weed



© Iowa State University Extension

*Zizia aurea*, golden Alexander with swallowtail butterfly



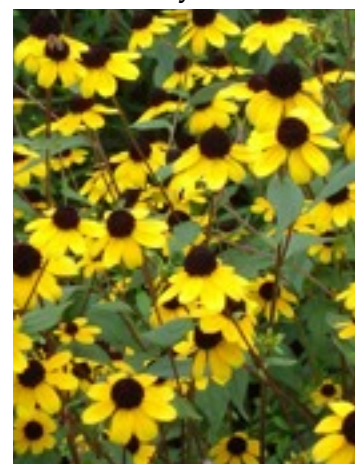
© Denise Greene, Sassafra Farm

*Callicarpa americana*, American beauty



Carol Hammer

*Rudbeckia triloba*, brown-eyed Susan



© Denise Greene, Sassafra Farm

*Clethra alnifolia*, sweet pepperbush



© Denise Greene, Sassafra Farm

*Conoclinium coelestinum*, blue mistflower



© Paul Redfearn, Missouri State University

**September 10, 2011  
Wicomico Church  
9:00 a.m. - NOON  
Be there!**



Carol Hammer



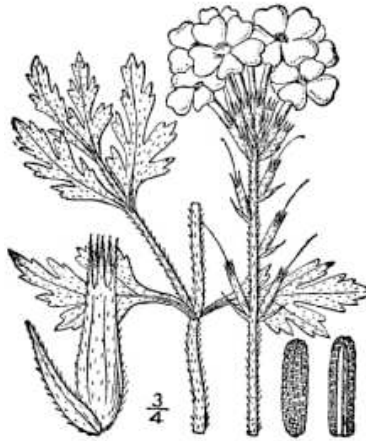
## Rose or Purple Verbena: *Verbenaceae* *Glandularia canadensis*, previously *Verbena canadensis*

My husband recently passed away after a period of illness. Since I am still recovering from this event, I write about a bright and lively plant that caught my eye as I stared out my front window into my “butterfly garden.”

It is the ‘Homestead Purple’ verbena, a cultivar easily available from many sources and a “must have” for any Virginia garden. Whether I would call it purple is subjective, but many flower colors are seen differently by viewers, whether human or wildlife. A commonly written fact is that butterflies prefer purple flowers; without an infrared camera, a human cannot know the color an insect really sees.

In my sunny garden, ‘Homestead’ blooms in April and puts on quite a show for the rest of the growing season. It is a great front-of-the-border ground cover, being partially evergreen, although most winters cause some dieback, prefers moist, well-drained, slightly acidic soil and a sunny location.

I saw a mass planting of ‘Homestead’ around a birdbath and it was stunning; however, to add height, contrast, and more winter foliage, you might mix in some blocks of (non-native) *Dianthus sp.* (mine is very pale pink) and/or *Penstemon digitalis* ‘Husker Red.’



From: USDA-NRCS PLANTS Database, after Britton, N.L., and A. Brown. 1913. *An illustrated flora of the northern United States, Canada and the British Possessions*. Vol. 3: 97.

I hope everyone has an opportunity to enjoy the butterflies and perhaps hummers attracted to plantings like these!

*Paula Boundy,  
Horticulture & Conservation Chair*

### Web Sites

Digital Flora of Virginia:  
[www.biol.vt.edu/digital\\_atlas](http://www.biol.vt.edu/digital_atlas)  
USDA Plant Database:  
<http://plants.usda.gov>

## The Chesapeake Trail's Chestnut Trees



On Thursday, June 16, 2011 Virginia State Foresters accompanied members of the NNNPS along the Chesapeake Trail in Lancaster County to investigate possible occurrences of the American chestnut (*Castanea dentata*). Pictured here, state forester, Rich Steensma, points out features of the leaf and twig that confirm the growth of this rare tree. Rich explained that the Tidewater region is considered outside the official range of the tree, which was commonly found in the mountainous and Piedmont areas of Virginia before the devastating chestnut blight of the early 1900s. NNNPS members discussed the possibility of having the smallest trees found here inoculated against the blight fungus in hopes that they may eventually reach towering heights.

*Text and photos: Sarah Ferriter*

## More Plant Finds at Chilton Woods!

The May 25<sup>th</sup> workday at Chilton Woods was a success in more ways than one. We were able to freshen up about a mile (1.6 km) worth of trail leading down to the old state route 618 bridge which used to cross Balls Branch on its way up to route 3. This yet-to-be named trail (suggestions welcome) was in surprisingly good shape early on, but needed serious work along the southern half. Thankfully, there's plenty of good work to go around, and that will get more eyes on the ground to find native plants which could be lurking anywhere.

On this particular hike, one little green thing turned out to be a green adder's-mouth orchid (*Malaxis unifolia*). This orchid is tiny (see photo), about 3 inches (7.5 cm) high and completely green with a single leaf and one, somewhat taller, flower stalk clustered with tiny green flowers, the shape of which lends this plant its name. According to *Audubon Guides*, this orchid is found in “dry, sandy pine or oak woods, jack-pine barrens and moist swampy woods.” While quite a range of conditions, our mesic (*i.e.*, moderately moist) woods obviously provide what this orchid needs.

Another woodland oddity was found along the same stretch of trail—a ring of yucca plants growing around a holly tree. The likely origin of the plants is the small farm that occupied the area until the early 1940s. They may have been planted as an ornamental or even for practical reasons as it has many uses. Besides having edible flowers, its leaves are fibrous and can be stripped and wound into cordage. The roots, which contain saponin, can be boiled, pounded and turned into soap. The same property which makes it suitable for soap production also has a toxic affect on fish, and the mash was used to that end by Indians and early settlers.

*Text: Mike Aherron; Photo: Nick Ferriter*



*Malaxis unifolia* growing among *Mitchella repens* (partridge berry) at the Ferriter's place.

## Education

Maybe you have seen us at local festivals, craft fairs or even our plant sale?

We strive to inform the public about the importance of native plants. The huge assortment of materials that we have assembled includes: books for sale; free pamphlets and fact sheets from the state and other VNPS chapters; our chapter's informative newsletters; and a beautiful new coloring booklet for children designed by a talented artist, our very own Joan Hattersley! In addition, when they are available, we give away plants and seeds from our own gardens.

One of the most rewarding experiences our volunteers have is meeting people who are new to the Northern Neck, or new to gardening, and who need information on how to make the transition to native plant landscaping. Another is working with children on one of our many hands-on activities to help teach them about native plants. Potting a pretty seed or plant with them to take home and plant in their own yard is always popular!

Many of our members know native plants from observing them in nature and/or their gardening activities, and we hope you will consider joining us at one of our outreach events. We can virtually guarantee you will have a great time and will want to do it again!

*Nancy Garvey*

To help, please contact:

**Tanya Bohlke at [tmbohlke@yahoo.com](mailto:tmbohlke@yahoo.com) or (804) 435-8824 or Nancy Garvey at [ngarvey@hotmail.com](mailto:ngarvey@hotmail.com) or (804) 436-8401**

## R.I.P.:

### Remove Invasive Plants

The Northern Neck chapters of VNPS and Virginia Master Naturalists joined forces on May 7 to wage war at two Lancaster County locations during the third annual Invasive Plant Removal Day.

District Resource Coordinator Paul Billings led the attack by Nancy Garvey, Bette Gruben, Jane Henley, John Narney and Earline Walker on autumn olive and (the unfortunately named) tree-of-heaven in two different areas of Belle Isle State Park.

At Chilton Woods State Forest, Forest Technician Mike Aherron educated Paula Boundy, Tanya Bohlke, Nancy Garvey, and Hap Hadd on the identification and eradication of Japanese stiltgrass.

At both locations Bette Gruben's facsimile of a tombstone bearing the inscription R.I.P. (Remove Invasive Plants) made its debut. Look for it at future education and outreach events!



*Text and Photo: Earline Walker*

**Welcome to Our Newest Members!**  
**Judith Holyfield, Dail Moore and Julie Thostenson**

## Officers

President.....Carol Hammer 453-5500 [caroljhammer@aol.com](mailto:caroljhammer@aol.com)  
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Corresponding.....Marie Minor 925-5950 [mmminor685@gmail.com](mailto:mmminor685@gmail.com)  
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## Committee Chairs

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Education.....Tanya Bohlke 435-8824 [tmbohlke@yahoo.com](mailto:tmbohlke@yahoo.com),  
.....Nancy Garvey 436-8401 [ngarvey@hotmail.com](mailto:ngarvey@hotmail.com)  
Horticulture.....Paula Boundy  
Hospitality.....Pam Collins, Jane Peterson  
Membership.....John Krainock 472-3051 [jkrainock@usa.net](mailto:jkrainock@usa.net)  
Newsletter.....Judy Lang [jlange@riposi.net](mailto:jlange@riposi.net) 453-6605  
Nominating.....Jane Peterson, Nick Ferriter, Tanya Bohlke  
Programs:  
Speakers.....Carol Hammer  
Outings.....Joan Hattersley 529-5467 [hattersley4@gmail.com](mailto:hattersley4@gmail.com)  
Special.....Earline Walker 529-9362 [Earlinedickinson@aol.com](mailto:Earlinedickinson@aol.com)  
.....Nick Ferriter 462-6242 [Ferriter@aol.com](mailto:Ferriter@aol.com)  
Publicity.....Kari Garell 493-1316 [garellk@aol.com](mailto:garellk@aol.com),  
.....Susan Christopher (also Boy Scout and Church liasons)  
Ways & Means.....Judy Lang

## Other Board Members

Ex-President.....Marie Minor  
Members at Large.Bette Gruben [bettegruben@gmail.com](mailto:bettegruben@gmail.com)  
.....Jeff Wainscot

## Membership Fees

**Individual: \$30**  
**Family: \$40**  
**Secondary: \$5 (goes to another chapter)**

*Send your check to:*

VNPS Membership Chair  
Blandy Experimental Farm  
400 Blandy Lane, Unit 2  
Boyce, VA 22602

*In the lower left hand corner of your check add:*

**"Membership, Northern Neck Chapter"**

All memberships are good for one year from the month you join.  
The state office of VNPS will send you a renewal reminder.

**See address label for renewal date.**

**Please advise us if our records are incorrect.**

All but \$5.00 of any membership is tax deductible.

**Please Help Us Keep in Touch with You!**

Whenever your email address, phone number or postal address changes, please contact:

John Krainock at [jkrainock@usa.net](mailto:jkrainock@usa.net) or (804) 472-3051

**Whenever you can, please carpool to our meetings, field outings and other activities.**

**Friend Us on Facebook!**

Northern Neck Chapter Virginia Native Plant Society

**NN Chapter of the VNPS Outings and Meetings Calendar:**  
**Chapter Meetings & Saturday Outings are open to the public.**

Aug. 27, Sat.	<b>9:00 a.m.</b> <i>Belle Isle in Bloom.</i> Charlene Talcott (Park Interpreter). Belle Isle State Park.
Sep.10, Sat..	<b>9:00 a.m. -NOON.</b> <i>Native Plant Sale.</i> Wicomico Parish Church Thrift Shop.
Sep. 15, Thur.	<b>Noon.</b> Chapter Meeting. <i>Fine Filter – a Closer Look at Northern Neck Natural Area Preserves.</i> Rebecca Wilson (Virginia Natural Heritage Program). Wicomico Parish Church. <u>Followed by:</u> <b>2:00 p.m.</b> <i>Hughlett Point Natural Area Preserve Tour.</i>
Sep. 24, Sat.	<b>9:30 a.m.</b> <i>Good Carbon Capture Day: 350.org Activities.</i> Belle Isle and Westmoreland State Parks. Paul Billings and Nick Ferriter (leaders).
Oct. 8, Sat.	<b>10:00 a.m.</b> <i>Fall Fungi Walk.</i> Hickory Hollow Natural Area Preserve. Tom Teeples (leader, Virginia Master Naturalist).
Oct. 13, Thur.	<b>10:00 a.m.</b> <i>Environmentally Friendly Garden Design Tour.</i> Cat's Cove. Kathy Hoffmann and Charles Newton (leaders). <u>VNPS members only.</u>
Oct. 20, Thur.	<b>Noon.</b> Chapter Meeting. <i>Native Ferns of Virginia.</i> Dr. Chip Morgan Wicomico Parish Church. <u>Followed by:</u> <b>2:00 p.m.</b> <i>Native Fern Outing at Chilton Woods State Forest.</i>
Nov.17 Thur.	<b>Noon.</b> Chapter Meeting. <i>The Climate Change Conundrum: Communicate Now (and How?)...Or Calamities Later?</i> Bud Ward (Yale Forum on Climate Change & the Media). Wicomico Parish Church.

*Expect more!* Additional outings will be announced to our members via email. Driving directions will be emailed to members in the week before each outing. **For more information, contact:**  
 Joan Hattersley at hattersley4@gmail.com or 529-5467

**Marie Minor's Botanical Surveys in Chilton Woods**

All VNPS members are welcome to walk with Marie as she botanizes the Doghouse Trail at Chilton Woods State Forest.

Bring water, bug spray when needed; if you wish, binoculars, camera and field guides.

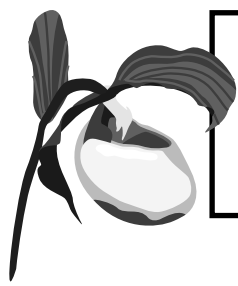
**Dates: Sept 7 and 21**  
**9:00 a.m.**

**Oct. 5 and 19**  
**10:00 a.m.**

*All rain dates will be on the following Wednesdays.*

For information on where to meet, contact Marie at:  
**(804) 925-5950 or**  
**mminor685@gmail.com**

**Newsletter: three issues annually.**  
**Send ideas, articles, photos, etc.**  
**by Dec. 1st to [jlang@riposi.net](mailto:jlang@riposi.net)**



Northern Neck Chapter  
 Virginia Native Plant Society  
 P.O. Box 339  
 Ophelia, VA 22530

Note expiration date.  
 Please renew as needed if record is correct, or contact us if incorrect..