

# Northern Neck Chapter, Virginia Native Plant Society

## President's July Native Notes

Betsy Washington

*Happy July! After unseasonably cool spring weather, we are finally being blasted by HOT Summer weather with temperatures predicted to reach about 100 degrees today and for the next few days! Climate Change is here for sure so please take care of yourselves, your gardens and plant sale plants!*

**The Old Courthouse Gardens in Heathsville are flaunting their summer finery thanks to a dedicated crew of volunteers led by Gardener Extraordinaire, Bonita Russell.**

Thanks to our loyal volunteers, our Flagship Demonstration Garden at the Old Courthouse in Heathsville the garden is looking fabulous! Many thanks to Bonita Russell who heads up the work and to her cadre of dedicated volunteers who have been busy dividing, pruning and otherwise stewarding this garden. Please thank Bonita and let her know if you would like to volunteer too! And do stop by and admire this beautiful garden. Work and renovation is ongoing...



**Roger Gruben, Nancy Garvey, and Head Gardener Bonita Russell, and Bette Gruben lend their considerable gardening skills to refurbishing this beautiful garden (Photo by volunteer Molly Calloway). Photo on right by Ted Munns.**



**From left to right: Black-eyed Susans and Phlox on left; Black-eyed Susans and Coneflowers; Garden Phlox and Spiderwort, & Phlox, Asters and Blue Flag dazzle in the garden. (Plant photos by Bonita Russell)**



# Dedication of the new Sign at the Kilmarnock's Town Centre Park on June 28

Our Northern Neck Chapter partnered with the Friends of the Rappahannock to create and install a new Sign in one of our Native Demonstration Gardens along our Native Plant Trail, The Town Centre Park in Kilmarnock. The design of new sign matches a sign installed by the Friends of the Rappahannock explaining that this is *"NOT your Grandmother's Garden"* but instead is a showcase of sustainability using cutting edge techniques to catch, filter and absorb all of the stormwater runoff from adjacent roads and parking lots along Rt. 3, as well as from the parking and buildings in the park - all before it reaches the stream that flows to the Bay below the Park. And extensive use of native plants!

The newly dedicated Interpretive Sign explains the importance of our Northern Neck native plants in absorbing and filtering runoff. These plants have evolved and adapted to our region and are well suited to tolerating the alternating cycles of wet and dry soils in the stormwater retention ponds. Native Plants are also critical in supporting our pollinators and other wildlife which have evolved with and depend on our native plants. And native plants are not only beautiful, but they are well adapted to our soils and climate and seldom need much in the way of watering, fertilizing or other maintenance. We received an enthusiastic response from Town Manager, Susan Cockrell and Council member Rebecca Nunn, Manager of Parks and Playgrounds were so enthusiastic that they have asked us to collaborate with them again to create a new Monarch-pollinator garden for the park! Look for opportunities to volunteer and showcase our native plants in the near future. Kilmarnock's Town Centre Park is a great place to see innovative techniques like permeable paving and five stormwater retention ponds planted with Virginia native plants and trees. Indeed, this Park has really 'grown and blossomed' and makes us all proud!



**Left:** Beautiful sign with artwork by Carleigh Starkston, Communications Coordinator for the Friends of the Rappahannock.  
**Right:** Betsy and Kilmarnock Director of Planning Marshall Sebra who helped this Park become a model of sustainability.  
Photo from City of Kilmarnock Facebook page and the Rappahannock Record



**Left:** Kilmarnock Town Council members & Native Plant enthusiasts listen as Betsy Washington and Brent Hunzinger, Manager of Tidal Programs for the Friends of the Rappahannock discuss the significance of this visionary Town Park with its Bay Friendly Native plants and cutting-edge stormwater management systems.  
**Right:** Complimentary native Seed packets like these by Betsy and Kevin and free Guide to Northern Neck Native Plants and other brochures offered to dedication attendees will be available at our Fall Plant Sale!



## Plant Sale Committee Meeting Updates



Happy Shoppers at our Fall 2022 Plant Sale



Pat Lust in Green T-shirt leading the Propagation Workshop

Plant Sale Committee members joined by our member plant growers have met twice this summer and plans for the Fall Plant Sale are growing as well as the diverse plants we are nurturing. Board member Andy Bailey has created a fantastic spreadsheet listing all of the plants being grown along with the growers and important cultural requirements of each species such as sun/shade; wet/dry, and pollinator importance. This is a herculean effort, and we thank Andy along with the help of Judy Lang who has managed our list for years. We plan to have helpful lists available for shoppers and our volunteers at the Sale. It looks like we are on target to have well over 100 species of beautiful Virginia and Northern Neck native plants for sale, all grown by our knowledgeable members. Many of these species are difficult to find in the trade, so this is the perfect chance to stock up a variety of native plants perfect for your garden. We will have knowledgeable members to advise you and plenty of free handouts in our Outreach Booth during the Public Sale days as well as landscape designers to help you select the perfect palette of plants for your needs.

**The Plant Sale Schedule** is ready for prime time. Set up begins Weds. afternoon, Sept. 11th and continues through Thursday and Friday morning. **As you know it takes a village and we need lots of volunteers to help set up and to help during the sale. No expertise is required, just a friendly smile. We promise you will meet great, like-minded folks, have fun, and learn loads of new things! Our Education Outreach Chair, Nancy Garvey, is organizing a volunteer schedule so please let Nancy know how and when you can help out.** Look for member emails and announcements in the near future with a list of volunteer opportunities!

And remember, plants should have been dug and transplanted by the **end of June** to give them a chance to have well-established, healthy root systems.

**The very popular Members Only Presale** is scheduled for **Friday, Sept. 13 from 2:00 – 5:00 at Dug In Farms** in White Stone. Once again, we are collaborating with partner, Dug In Farms, and they will also be fully loaded with a wonderful selection of native plants. We will be offering a variety of enticing refreshments and drinks to our member shoppers, created by the amazing kitchen at Dug In Farms. Don't miss out on the special member perk with the first choice of plants!

If you are not yet a member but would like to take advantage of the Presale, visit our website, [Northern Neck Native Plant Society \(nnvnps.org\)](http://Northern Neck Native Plant Society (nnvnps.org)) and register or simply come to the Presale and register.

And lest you forget, Board member and **expert Plant Propagator, Pat Lust**, led a fantastic Propagation workshop last April. All spots were taken with a waiting list. Yes, she is that good! Pat sent this reminder to all attendees.

***“Well, we were just talking about the NNNPS propagation workshop that was held last April, and I started thinking about all the new plant growers who will be contributing to the plant sale this year. I can't wait to see the additions to the plant repertoire, and to have a chance to talk with all the new growers about their experiences and especially their discoveries through this adventure.”*** Pat will be at the Plant Sale so come chat and share!

If you have not sent a list of plants you are growing please send a list to me, Andy Bailey and Judy Lang, as soon as possible. **Our next plant sale meeting is scheduled for August 17 at 10am. Stay tuned for location but save the date.**



**NN CHAPTER OF THE VNPS CO-SPONSORED THE 5<sup>TH</sup> ANNUAL SUMMER BUTTERFLY COUNT IN NORTHUMBERLAND- LANCASTER COUNTY, ON JULY 25**



Left: Volunteers from left: Robin Matthews, Denise Greene, Shawn Towne, Betsy Washington (Sector Lead) & Jan Towne.  
Right: Joe-pye-weed attracts clouds of Variegated Swallowtails to its nectar.

Once again, our NN Chapter co-sponsored the Northumberland- Lancaster Butterfly Count on July 25. These counts are organized by the North American Butterfly Association and are held throughout the country. The NN Count was coordinated by member Jeff Wright and included at least 5 Native Plant board members as well as many members and their gardens full of native plants and butterflies. Several of our Chapter's Demonstration Gardens also proved to be some of the best sites to find butterflies. This Citizen Science project is producing exciting new information; every year we find new species of butterflies that have never been reported from our area. Volunteers are providing critical information on the changes in the distribution and species of butterflies from year to year, in the face of the rapidly changing climate. As native plant enthusiasts, you all know that we observe by far the most butterflies in gardens with native pollinator and host plants that our butterflies have co-evolved with. And we found the greatest diversity especially in meadows full of native plants. Mt. Mints, Wild Bergamots, Joe-pye-weed, Rudbeckias, and Bluemist attracted clouds of butterflies. We always need volunteers so consider signing up. We will be holding a Fall Count in Westmoreland, Richmond and Essex Counties on Sept. 26<sup>th</sup>. Look for announcements in our local newspapers and in our Member emails and come join the fun!

**NEW ORCHID SPECIES RECORD DISCOVERED IN THE NORTHERN NECK**

Speaking of Citizen Science, a lifetime member of our Chapter noticed some orchids growing along a roadside in Northern Neck. DCR Chesapeake Bay Steward (and orchid expert), Zach Bradford, confirmed they were **Yellow Fringed Orchids, *Platanthera ciliaris***. Not only is this species **new to the Northern Neck**, but **Zach believes they are the only population on the entire Virginia Coastal Plain!** How exciting is this! Zack says that, "***This find is a good reminder that there are still interesting things to discover in our area***". Several co-occurring plants also set **new** records.

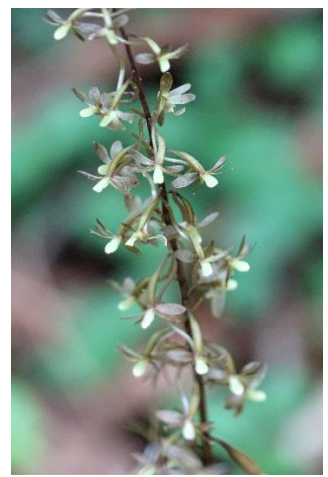


**Newly discovered population of Yellow Fringed Orchid, *Platanthera ciliaris***



## What Else is Blooming Around the Neck?

The closely related Crested Fringed Orchid is blooming in Hickory Hollow and other woodlands around the Northern Neck! Our beautiful Downy Rattlesnake Plantain Orchid is also blooming in woodlands near you. Folks are reporting that the delicate Crane-fly Orchids are blooming, with slender stalks rising from the bare ground. Of course, many summer flowering shrubs and perennials are blooming in our natural areas, fields and meadows, woods, and shorelines - many already mentioned in this newsletter. Get out and enjoy the natural beauty around you!



Crested Fringed Orchid, *Platanthera cristata* (by BW); Turk's-cap Lily, *Lilium superbum* in a wet ditch in Lancaster County (by BW); Crane-fly Orchid, *Tipularia discolor* (by Kevin Howe)

### An article sent in by Paula Boundy on the issue of Nativars

*(The entire article is too long for this short President's Notes but I thought the intro might be of interest.)*

In my continuing search to purchase native plants for my landscaping, I became aware several years ago of 'American Beauties Native Plants' (<https://abnativeplants.com/>) as a brand and grower. Local nurseries may join their program and receive marketing materials as well as native plants for sale. I noticed that those materials promised that a part of the purchase price went to support a conservation effort. Ahhh, I can feel good about spending a few extra dollars for this plant! I lost track of this brand until this year [2023] when lo-and-behold, there was the brand at my local nursery in Mathews! I noticed many of the plants had a cultivar name on them - usually separated after the Latin name with single quotation marks, for example: *Echinacea purpurea* 'Magnus' and sometimes as Purple coneflower 'Magnus'. So a local nursery source for native plants - but are they? It raises the whole question of Native vs Cultivar vs Nativar? Importantly, is it a native plant for where I am gardening!?

The **Grow Northern Neck Natives** project provides us with a reference guide to what is native locally and the other guides are specific to other areas in Virginia. Northern Neck Chapter of the Virginia Native Plant Society relies on the Flora of Virginia Project and the Digital Atlas of the Virginia Flora for clarity on nativity. So, if a plant's Latin name is in the Guide, it is a Northern Neck native plant. Our Chapter's native plant sale is extended to include Virginia natives as verified on the digital atlas.

Plant tags from a retail nursery show a **cultivar** name. What is that or what does it mean? From the Virginia Native Plant Society website [<https://vnps.org>; Conservation tab] is the **Statement on Cultivars**:

"The Virginia Native Plant Society (VNPS) encourages communities and individuals to incorporate native plants into managed landscapes and, when doing so, to maximize the use of wild-type plants. Such an approach provides the most reliable way to support the flora and fauna with which these plant species have coevolved over millennia, to maintain genetic diversity and to minimize the risks inherent in introducing plants to an ecosystem. This is particularly important in ecological restoration projects, mass plantings in parks and on private grounds and in any landscaping in proximity to natural areas.

VNPS recognizes that wild-type plants may be difficult to find in the marketplace and that cultivars and hybrids of native plant species can offer distinctive characteristics which increase their effectiveness in landscape design. However, due to documented cases where the introduction of cultivated plants has negatively impacted natural populations, and because the ecological implications of such plants have not yet been adequately evaluated, we recommend avoiding hybrids and using cultivars only in locations distant from natural areas (e.g., urban gardens) and to exercise caution in the selection of plants that vary significantly from the wild type (e.g., in flower structure, flower color, fruit size and leaf color).

VNPS encourages the horticulture industry to provide more wild-type plants and to clearly label cultivars to assist the public in distinguishing between the two. Adopted March 17, 2021 "

...My conclusion is to plant what I can get/purchase for my garden. I will concentrate on adding straight species. It is a bit of an ethical/ecological concern...

## Volunteers Needed for Nomination Committee and to Serve on the Board

**We need volunteers to step up and serve on the Nomination Committee.** Several of our Board positions have reached their term limits and we need fresh faces and new, creative ideas on the Board. In short, we need you! This is a great group to work with and as the saying goes, many hands make light work! We have several Board positions that remain unfilled such as Vice President and a 'real' Newsletter Editor. Other Board members like Paula Boundy who has served as our very able Treasurer for too many years might a volunteer to step in and learn the ropes with her. Please think of ways you can contribute fresh energy and ideas to our Chapter and contact Nancy Garvey or myself if you are willing to serve.

### Calendar

**Our next gathering will be our Members-only Presale on September 13<sup>th</sup>** where we can refresh ourselves with delicious refreshments, catch up with other members to see how their garden grows, and enjoy first choice on the diversity of gorgeous plants! And of course, we look forward to seeing you at the Public Plant Sales too.

It is hard to believe that our October General Membership Meeting and Elections will be here before we know it. **We need to select and announce a slate of candidates at least 30 days in advance of the elections.** Won't you volunteer to help us find new candidates? Or better yet volunteer to serve on the Board! We need fresh faces and energy!

**Our October meeting and elections will be held at Belle Isle State Park on October 19 at noon.** Bring a brown bag lunch and enjoy light refreshments provided by the Board. This will be followed by a brief public meeting and the elections. Afterwards, we have a fabulous program lined up – a tour of the new Shoreline Restoration and Plantings at the Park. Park Manager, Katie Sheperd, and our Board Member and Master Gardener Shoreline expert, Carol Martin, and I will lead a tour and I will do my best to keep up with my distinguished colleagues and field any plant questions! This should be a very informative and fun program! **Save the date – October 19.**

**Our last meeting of the year will be on November 16 at the Lancaster Public Library.** Biologist Maeve Coker will present a program on the native plants in her garden and the dazzling array of pollinators she has observed in her gardens and property. Maeve is an extraordinary biologist, botanist, and photographer and a keen observer of nature. Maeve is also the Chair of the Citizen Science Committee for the Friends of Dragon Run and has discovered many new plants that are not recorded from Middle Peninsula or Northern Neck and is working with VNPS Botanist, John Hayden to have specimens submitted into the record. I am sure you will find her program as exciting and fascinating as I do. Please save the date.

**Stay cool and safe during this beastly heat but do find time to get out and tend your heat-stressed gardens and explore this botanically rich 'Neck' of the woods. We are so lucky to live in this beautiful area rich in natural history. Hope you are managing to have as much fun as I am botanizing, butterflying, and exploring, despite the heat.**



*Members of the Friends of Dragon Run Citizen Science Advisory Committee: Sherry Rollins, Maeve Coker, Robin Matthews, and yours truly, Betsy Washington) marveling at a huge Cinnamon Fern along the shores of the Dragon Run during a Bioblitz last week. Hot, sweaty, and muddy up to our knees, but yes we were having loads of fun and finding some incredible botanical treasures and new county records!!!*