

Northern Neck Chapter, Virginia Native Plant Society

President's May Native Notes

Betsy Washington

Happy May and Happy World Bee Day, May 20th! This past month our Chapter members have continued to “bloom” and grow our Programs and Outreach efforts.

Historic Shiloh Schools and the Native Plant Garden

Our May meeting at Shiloh School and the native plant Garden (one of our Demonstration Gardens on our Native Plant Trail) last Thursday was a great success! Over 30 attendees were treated to wonderful presentations, first by Jack Moore on the history of the schoolhouses which date to 1906. Jack was, until recently, the President of the Northumberland Preservation, Inc., a nonprofit dedicated to preservation projects in Northumberland County and the preservation of these two Shiloh school buildings have been a large focus. Following Jack, former NNVNPS President Paula Boundy spoke on her initial design of the native plant gardens which Jack so carefully has nurtured for several years. We were delighted to welcome many new visitors to our meeting. Afterwards, we enjoyed a beautiful afternoon touring the gardens and historic buildings. The gardens were filled with regionally native plants that children who attended the historic schools at the beginning of the 20th century would have been familiar with. Penstemon, Sundrops, Blue-eyed Grass, Blue Flag Irises and Lyre-leaf Sage were a few of the gorgeous plants in bloom and busy supporting bees and butterflies with their nectar and pollen. Outreach Chair, Nancy Garvey provided a delectable array of treats and drinks to sustain us on our garden tour.



Jack Moore discussing the history and renovation of the historic Shiloh Schools; Paula Boundy describing designing the gardens, and members Karen Williams and Linda Orr discovering a Monarch caterpillar in the garden.



Some of the Blooms in the Shiloh School Gardens: Southern Blue Flag Iris, Smooth Penstemon, Sundrops, and Blue-eyed Grass

May Plant of the Month is our beautiful Virginia Sweetspire, *Itea virginica*.

Members should have received an email copy; if not Check out our Plant of the Month Article on our Website at www.NNVNPS.org, on our Facebook page, <https://www.facebook.com/NN.NativePlants>

VIRGINIA SWEETSPIRE



Sweetspire's beautiful flower spike



Fall Color of Sweetspire



A beautiful Red Admiral nectaring

Spring Walk at Hickory Hollow Natural Area Preserve, Sunday April 30th

Sixteen happy hikers enjoyed a beautiful afternoon walk through Hickory Hollow NAP down to Cabin Swamp, a rare Coastal Plain Basic Seepage Swamp community. Cabin Swamp supports the only known occurrence of this community on the Northern Neck and it is considered globally imperiled. This community type occurs adjacent to steep ravines and seeps where water percolates down to the Tertiary shell and lime sand deposits dissolving the shell's calcium and carrying it into the swamp waters. This phenomenon occurs in only a few locations in the inner Coastal Plain. Cabin Swamp is subject to this constant groundwater seepage and contains relatively high soil calcium levels in contrast to the higher elevations in Hickory Hollow where the soils are mostly acidic. The swamp is extremely diverse with over 500 species of plants recorded, with many rare and disjunct (mountain) species. The highlight of our walk was a peek at the newly opened Kentucky Lady Slipper Orchid, ranked as critically imperiled in the state, with the next closest populations in Tennessee and Kentucky. We also marveled at the many Purple Twayblade orchids along the White Trail as well as many other wonderful wildflowers.

Be on the lookout for additional field trips this summer and join the fun and discovery of our botanical explorations! We are so lucky to have such wonderful botanical treasures and Natural Area Preserves close at hand!



Kevin Howe discussing Hickory Hollow, the beautiful flower of the rare Kentucky Lady Slipper, and Purple Twayblade Orchid

Garden Workday at Wilna Gardens at Rappahannock River Valley National Wildlife Refuge Wednesday, May 24th at 9:00 at the Headquarters Garden

Several Native Plant members and Master Naturalists joined clean-up efforts at the Demonstration Gardens at the Rappahannock River Valley Wildlife Refuge Wilna Unit on **Tuesday, April 25**. Not only are these work-days fun, but Assistant Refuge Manager Bill Crouch and Refuge Friends' President Steve Coangelo led us to some stunning Pink Lady Slipper Orchids and the beautiful Sundial Lupines that occur at the Refuge. **Join the fun at the next workday on Wednesday, May 24th at 9 am**. Bring a pair of garden gloves and your favorite weeding tool and meet at the headquarters garden at the top of the hill at the Rappahannock Wildlife Refuge, Warsaw. Take Wilna Rd. from Sandy Lane. Please let Steve know if you can come or need directions or information at: smcolangelo@gmail.com



Asst. Refuge Manager Bill Crouch in a sea of Golden Alexanders



Pink Lady Slipper Orchids



Sundial Lupines

Help Spruce up the Old Courthouse Gardens in Heathsville, May 31

Please volunteer on Wednesday, May 31 from 10 am to noon for a spring clean-up at our NNNPS Old Courthouse Native Plant Garden, located between the post office and some parking on the west side of Rte. 360 in Heathsville, Northumberland County. Please bring your garden tools. Bonita will provide trash bags to accomplish garden tasks. Please let Bonita Russell know if you are participating at: Bonita.A.Russell@hotmail.com

Great News! This garden to undergo a renovation - Paula Boundy and I met to finalize the plans for the Old Courthouse garden renovation. Paula has designed a great garden make-over for the inner garden at this Old Courthouse Gardens featuring all Northern Neck Native Plants. This will help revitalize our flagship Native Plant Trail demonstration garden and reduce maintenance. Native shrubs and groundcovers will provide a structural frame on the outer borders. Look for updates and ways you can help renovate this key demonstration garden.

Volunteers Needed for the Strawberry Festival in Heathsville, May 27th

This is a fun event that attracts hundreds of people that we don't usually reach. And it is a really great day so please help out the Chapter and think about volunteering a few hours at our Outreach Tent. Email Nancy Garvey if interested at nangarvey@hotmail.com. This is an opportunity for VNPS to spread the Native Plant word – just a meet & greet and distribute guides (*and Wild Strawberry Plants – see below*).

A Big Thank You to Nancy Garvey for Heading up Moving and Organization of our New Northern Neck VNPS Storage Unit at Jeff's Storage in Kilmarnock!



Wild Virginia Strawberry Potting Party Celebrates our own Native Strawberry!

Speaking of the Strawberry Festival, several chapter members met at my house to divide and pot up over 50 beautiful Wild Virginia Strawberries for the Strawberry Festival on May 27th in Heathsville at St. Stephens Church. Did you know that our own **Virginia Strawberry, *Fragaria virginica***, is one of the parents of commercial strawberries? It produces showy white flowers for weeks on end in spring that attracts tons of bees and butterflies, produces small red edible fruit (if you can beat the wildlife and birds to them) and has glossy evergreen foliage that takes on brilliant red tints in fall and winter. Like other strawberries it spreads by runners and can cover a large area making for an excellent groundcover.



Nancy Garvey, Andy Bailey, Paula Boundy, Susan Titus and (photographer Betsy Washington) Potting up Wild Strawberries

Call for Volunteers – Another Potting Party!!!

Did you miss out on the fun and comradery of the last couple of Potting Parties? You are in luck! We are expecting about 50 more plugs from Mid-Atlantic Nursery to arrive next week and we will be holding another Potting Party. **Look for a Member Email Announcement asking for volunteers to help pot these new plants with information on the date, time, and location.** I promise you will have a wonderful time and be doing a great service!

The Lancaster-Northumberland 5th Annual Butterfly Spring Count on May 30th

The Northern Neck Chapter of the VNPS will once again sponsor the Spring Butterfly Count in Lancaster and Northumberland Counties. If you want to brush up or to see a tutorial on identifying our local butterflies, join Jeff Wright and Betsy Washington for a **Zoom Workshop on Sunday evening, June 11th** where we will cover how to identify a number of our butterflies with information about their native host plants and a bit about gardening to support butterflies. Support National Pollinator Week and join this Citizen Science project to monitor their populations and distribution! For more information or to sign up, **Text or Call Jeff Wright** (Compiler for the Northumberland-Lancaster and the George Washington Birthplace Butterfly Counts) **at 703-801-0239.**



Buckeye on Joe-pye-weed



Butterfly Counters at Dug In Farms last May

Beth Kendrick, Bob Dunstan, Betsy Maddux, Bill Blair & Betsy Washington
We all know we find the most butterflies near native plants!



American Snout on Mt Mint

Workshops on Native Plants at Partner-Vendor Dug In Farm Spread the Word – Go Native, Grow Native!

Several members of our Board and Chapter volunteered to present workshops at Dug In Farm in White Stone this past month. Chapter Board Member and Master Gardener, Carol Martin, presented a workshop on **Shoreline Gardens** featuring many native plants and generated lots of excitement and interest. On May 6th, I presented a workshop on **Plant This, Not That** introducing many wonderful native plants that make fabulous replacements for noxious invasives, that are sadly still being sold in nurseries. Not only are these replacements gorgeous but they provide important ecological services, support biodiversity and hold the intricate and delicate web of life together. Chapter member, Karen Williams led a very popular, interactive workshop on gardening for Monarchs just last week. All were completely filled with 25 participants plus ‘walk-ins’. We have had many enthusiastic responses afterwards of, “When are you going to have more workshops?” and “...I had to miss so please have another workshop” and “We want anything on Native Plants”! In addition, several hundred native plants went home to fill new gardens with pollinators, songbirds, and beauty! As you may know, Dug In Farms is our location-partner for our annual Fall Native Plant Sale.

If you missed out, look for more workshops in the coming months!



Board Member Carol Martin shares expert shoreline advice and a list of perfect native shoreline plants



Betsy warning against the vices of invasive plants and recommending luscious native alternatives.



Member, Karen Williams tells all about attracting and raising Monarchs!



Members of the audience rush to buy native plants for their own gardens after the workshops!

2023 Calendar of Events

While subject to change, meeting reminders will be emailed in advance

All members are welcome to all Board & Committee meetings

General Meetings begin at Noon for a social lunch & talk of native plants and gardens so bring a brown bag lunch.

Programs begin around 12:30

MAY –

Saturday 20th but *postponed until June* **How to Garden for Pollinators** Workshop at Dug In Farms, VNPS Member Denise Greene,

(TO register, visit: [Workshops — Dug In Farms](#))

- Weds. 24th** Workday at Wilna Headquarters garden, Rappahannock Wildlife Refuge, Warsaw
- Saturday 27th** Strawberry Festival, St Stephens Church in Heathsville 9 – 3, volunteers needed
- Tuesday 30th** Save the Date: Lancaster-Northumberland County Butterfly Count sponsored by our chapter, NNVNPS. Look for member email notices for more information
- Wed. 31st** Workday at Old Courthouse Gardens in Heathsville

JUNE - No General Meeting

- Sunday 11th** Zoom Butterfly Identification and Native Host Plant Workshop with Jeff Wright and Betsy Washington to celebrate National Pollinator Month
- Thursday 15th** Plant Sale Meeting 10am, location TBD – open to anyone
- Tuesday 27th** Save the Date: Washington Birthplace Butterfly Count (Westmoreland, Richmond, Essex Counties)

JULY - No General Meeting

- Thursday 20th** Plant Sale Meeting/workshop 10 am, location TBD
- Tuesday 25th** Save the Date: Lancaster-Northumberland Summer Butterfly Count

AUG. Thursday 17th Plant Sale meeting/workshop 10am & Call for Volunteers

SEPT. Fall Plant Sale at Dug In Farms, White Stone!

- Thursday 14th** Set-up for Plant Sale
- Friday 15th** Members only Pre-Sale Friday afternoon, Sept. 15th
- Saturday 16th** Sale open to the Public at 9:00 am
- Saturday 23rd** Sale open to the Public at 9:00 am
- Tuesday, 25th** Save the Date, Washington Birthplace Fall Butterfly Count

OCT.

Thursday 19th General Annual Meeting, Election of Officers, Budget
At Belle Isle State Park to include a **Shoreline Field Trip**

NOV.

Nov 16th General Meeting: The Amazing Pollinators Attracted to a Native Plant Garden by Maeve Coker

DEC. No meeting