

NN Native Plant News

Spring 2010, Volume 7, No. 2

Tracking Skunk Cabbages

EACH YEAR our chapter tries to focus on plants that bloom at a particular time. January being a fairly unpromising month for blooms of any kind, we gird ourselves to trek into Cabin Swamp to look at skunk cabbage (Symplocarpis foetidus), a far from beautiful but fascinating plant that, in theory, appears in January. Last year it was the wildflower of the year, a choice that would probably leave non-native plant people quite bewildered.

At any rate, last year Nick and I went into Cabin Swamp the week before the scheduled walk to see if any skunk cabbage would be likely to be visible. We found quite a lot that appeared to be just starting up, and thus expected to be greeted with an array the following week.

The following week, as almost none of you will recall since you had the sense to stay home because it was freezing, the skunk cabbage previously seen seemed to have contracted back into the soil, leaving us wondering if the plant had magical shrinking powers based on temperature.

THIS YEAR, we again went to Cabin Swamp the week before the walk, found promise of plants to view, saw the weather turn much colder, went on the walk at the chosen date, and again found little to see (photos). This is supposed to be a plant that heats the soil around it, but based on our non-scientific treks, ours may be plants with furnace failure.

As non-scientists, however, Nick and I have been back to Cabin Swamp two more times this year to see what, if anything, is going on with the wildflower of last year.



Visitors to Cabin Swamp at Hickory Hollow on January 9, 2010 (above), saw only the tops of a few skunk cabbage plants poking through the snow (below). Carol Hammer (photos)



WE CAN REPORT as follows:

It may be that if the weather turns quite cold after the plant starts to grow, it shrivels.

In February, we found more skunk cabbage up in more or less new locations.

In late February we found some large enough to remark upon.

At some point the plant will put up large green leaves upon which we can really remark when we go back to Cabin Swamp to look at false hellebore and marsh marigolds. So, perhaps next year, we should schedule our January walk for February. Of course, if we do, next January will be warmer than it has been the past two years.

Jackie Ferriter

1st April Field Outing

William and Mary Herbarium
Williamsburg
Saturday, April 3

Carpool from Grace Episcopal Church, Kilmarnock, at 9:30 a.m.

Public Welcome

Message from the President

Hello, Everyone!

I ATTENDED THE VNPS' ANNUAL WORKSHOP held on Saturday, March 6, 2010. The theme was Virginia's shores. I wish more of you could have gone as its topics were relevant to most of you who live in the lower Northern Neck. Here is a summation of what I learned:

Dr. James E. Perry (VIMS) Rising Tides

Sea level is rising by 4 mm each year (about 1.5 inches each decade). Global sea levels are rising by 2 mm/year, and this part of Virginia is subsiding by the same amount due to "glacial rebound." At its maximum extent, the weight of Pleistocene ice depressed Earth's crust to our north, causing this part of Virginia to rise. When the ice melted, the crust "relaxed," so we are sinking!

Seventy percent of the marshes in Virginia are saltwater marshes. The other 30% are freshwater wetlands. As sea level rises, what are currently freshwater areas will become saltwater marshes. Therefore, the freshwater marshes are becoming endangered along with the flora and fauna which have adapted to them. It is believed that eventually the Chesapeake Bay's freshwater marshes will all become saltwater marshes because there won't be enough rain to keep the salt water at bay. But there is a wrench thrown into this hypothesis. How will global warming affect the precipitation patterns in Virginia? No one knows for sure, and this could modify the fates of all the marshes in our coastal area.



The native *Phragmites australis* (common reed) is being replaced by a European variety that has invaded many of our coastal creeks and rivers. This invader has proven to be hard to exterminate; controlling it is more realistic. Non-native *Phragmites* damages wetlands by removing water and drying out the soil. Expanding both by rhizomes and by windblown seeds, it crowds out the native wetland plants like *Spartina alterniflora* (smooth cordgrass) upon which wildlife depend. Reasons for its expansion include saltwater increase in wetlands (as *Phragmites* ages, its salt tolerance increases), and increases in areas of infrequent floods or areas with high amounts of nitrogen in the sediment. Coastal storms, sea level rise, and changes in tidal amplitude all create habitats that nourish this alien. Wetlands in the Northeast, where non-native *Phragmites* was introduced, overall have higher nitrogen levels than marshes below the Potomac River, which probably reduces the rate at which it is invading our area.

Dorothy Fields (Virginia Natural Heritage) Plants of the Coastal Edge

Ms. Fields has studied the types of habitats found on the Eastern Shore, Lower Northern Neck, Lower Middle Peninsula, and Lower Peninsula. She stated that hurricanes and Nor'easters are major factors of change. The habitats she identified are beaches (low tide), salt flats/overwash fans (high tide), dune grasslands, secondary dunes, mixed maritime forests, seepage areas of maritime forests, interdune ponds, sea level fens, and saltwater marshes. She showed slides of plants which have adapted to these various habitats. An interesting note is that some infrequent sources of nitrogen for plants on beaches are dead (and decomposing) sea animals and bird droppings.

Joe Scalf (habitat restoration specialist, The Nature Conservancy) The Living Shoreline Project

Mr. Scalf's slides illustrated how planting natives contributed to the restoration of a derelict beach in Oyster Village on the Eastern Shore. This beach was despoiled by piles of junk and a rotten bulkhead - all of which were replaced with a gentle slope on which were planted wildflowers, native grasses, and shrubs. Bulkheads prevent development of natural habitats by blocking water and animals from the land. The restored habitat will control erosion, absorb nutrients, filter sediments, provide for wildlife, and dissipate waves. *Marie*

2nd & 3rd April Field Outings

Swamp Biota-Kayak
Dragon Run
Thursday, April 15, 9:00 a.m.
To register, contact Carol Hammer

Spring Ephemerals
Hickory Hollow
Natural Area Preserve
Saturday, April 17, 10:00 a.m.

Public Welcome

Key to Photos on Page 3

Row 1, left to right

Gaylussacia baccata (black huckleberry), May 2009 Carol Hammer (photo)
Trailblazers, February 2009, Rich Steensma (photo)
Leaves of Aplectrum hyemale (Adam & Eve), February 2009, Earline Walker (photo)

Row 2, left to right

Forester *Rich Steensma*, September 2009, *Earline Walker (photo)* Cypripedium acaule (pink lady's slipper), May 2009, *Earline Walker (photo)* Gary Garret at work, *Earline Walker (photo)*

Row 3, left to right

Chilton Woods Map, March 2010, *Mike Aherron (photo)*Desmodium nudiflorum (nakedflower ticktrefoil) in July 2008, *Carol Hammer (photo)*Carol Hammer (composition)



Trailblazing in Chilton Woods

STARTING IN THE FALL OF 2008. members of the Northern Neck Chapters of the Virginia Native Plant Society and/or the Virginia Master Naturalists descended upon Chilton Woods State Forest to begin a task which would last into 2010. The first day we cut a hundred yards worth of trail near the south end of the power line. After almost two years, and hundreds of hours of volunteer effort. over three miles of trail now exist at Chilton Woods! This work happened

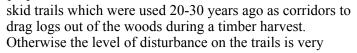


Glvn Surdam with a chainsaw.

bit-by-bit in all types of weather conditions with anywhere from three people working at a time to over fifteen. These three miles of trail also include a half mile section that had to be recleared after a pine thinning harvest.

The new trails (see page 3) pass through several forest types including bottomland hardwood, pine-hardwood, pine plantation, and one area where we will watch a new forest grow in the shade of scattered oaks and poplars. These areas also demonstrate different forest management strategies. The forest we will get to see grow is the result of a shelter-wood harvest; the pine-hardwood and pine plantation are the result of a clearcut; and the bottomland hardwoods are stream management zones used to protect water quality during a harvest by preventing sediment from entering a swale.

EXCEPT FOR CHAINSAWS, and a one day visit from a bush hog, the trails were cleared almost entirely by hand using pruning shears, hand saws, and clippers. The paths were laid out in order to pass through as many different stands as possible, with the knowledge that most of the work would be by hand. Therefore, some parts of the trail have relatively clear paths incorporating a formerly bulldozed fireline used as a control for a site preparation burn in 1988, and several old





minimal. This means more clearing more often, but it also means the soil will not be exposed and subject to movement.

THERE IS SO MUCH TO NOTICE while walking through Chilton Woods! At certain times of the year one can see pink lady's slipper or yellow fringed orchid in the recently thinned pine plantation, or showy orchis in the streamside management zone. Other natives include running cedar and pawpaw along swales in moist shaded areas, mountain laurel and holly almost everywhere, and many different tree species. The

trail also visits the old State Route 618 bridge over Balls Branch, winds through an understory burn, and skirts a few old farmhouse sites that give clues to the history of the area.

There is much yet for us to accomplish here too. Plans for the trail include improving access



Earline Walker with clippers.

to the "picture tree" and providing interpretation for this and for other sites around the forest through a self guided brochure. The recently completely stretches should blaze with orange in the coming weeks, and there are plans to address stump holes, one by one, along the way.



Paula Boundy with a hacksaw.

AS ALWAYS, FOREST MANAGEMENT will continue at Chilton Woods, benefiting the health of the forest as well as local forest product industries, and contributing to Lancaster County's revenue (25% of sales go to the county). These ongoing operations will require continued maintenance of the trails in the future, but as recent clearings have demonstrated. opening a trail after a harvest isn't nearly as time consuming as going through a mountain laurel thicket! With the help of

the Native Plant Society and the Master Naturalists, Chilton Woods is becoming a true public asset. Mike Aherron, **VDOF Forest Technician (text)** Carol Hammer (photos)

Chilton Woods State Forest is located on the south side of Rt 602 (Field Trial Rd.) between Rt. 3 (Mary Ball Rd) and Rt. 602 (Lara Rd.). Field Trial Rd. enters Rt 3 about 4.2 miles NW of Lively and about 15.6 miles SE of its intersections with Rt. 360.

1st May Field Outing

Showy Orchis (if in bloom) and **Ditch Doings Walk Chilton Woods State Forest** Saturday, May 1, 10:00 a.m. After Invasives Removal at 9:00 a.m.

Public Welcome

Potsitters Needed!

Saplings from the Virginia Dept. of Forestry, arriving here in mid- April, will need "potsitting" until our plant sale in September. No fears - our experts have promised to provide "potsitting tips" specific for each type of sapling. To volunteer, please contact:

Judy Lang, jlang@riposi.net, or (804) 453-6605

Discovering a National Treasure

AS A PHOTOGRAPHER and someone who enjoys working in art media, I challenged myself this winter by taking a workshop on Botanical Illustration. My goal is to draw native plants in the field in order to identify those with which I am not familiar in hopes of later being able to identify them. In plant identification, a photograph is nice, but a botanical drawing shows infinitely more detail.

This particular class is one of the required courses for a degree in Botanical Art and Illustration at the Corcoran School of Art and Design. I knew I would meet some seasoned artists, and I knew I would learn a lot from the course, from seeing what others produced, and from the amazing environment in which the course was held.

If you have never been to the U.S. Botanical Gardens in D.C., you must make it a "to do" on your bucket list! Go in the winter when all is cold and dreary outside, for when you enter the Conservatory you will experience permanent collections of plants from subtropical, tropical and arid regions. The Conservatory showcases orchids, medicinal, economic, endangered and Jurassic-era plants, as well as special exhibitions. One's senses are all bombarded at once! The eye sees the beauty of the colors, the light and forms of the plants that grow there. The nose detects different aromas depending on which area one is walking through. As the skin feels either moist or dry heat, one is transported to a place of serenity. They even have animal sounds in the rain forest to make you believe you are truly there!

Now You Ask, what does botanical art, desert climate, tropical forest, etc. have to do with *our* native plants? What I discovered, besides the wonderful interior climates and spaces, is that outdoors, on one side of the Conservatory, there is a National Garden that features a Mid-Atlantic native plant garden. Winter wasn't the best time to visit, but I noticed that there were more birds in that garden than anywhere I had been that weekend, and all the plants were well marked, too.



Orchid bulb drawn in black ink; paper background washed with black walnut ink. Carol Hammer

Not only did I discover this national treasure, but in class, I learned from our instructor how to make black walnut ink (from our native tree) which has been used for centuries by many artists, in particular Rembrandt. We drew with ink using brushes and pens and learned ink wash techniques.

So, if you have not yet visited the U.S. Botanical Gardens you have much to look forward to. Their website is ww.usbg.gov and they offer programs all year long. For example, I noticed there was a winter tree tour of the Capitol Grounds this year.

Carol Hammer

2nd May Field Outing

Woodland Natives
Gary Chafin, Twin Oaks
Heathsville
Thursday, May 20, 10:00 a.m.
VNPS Members Only

3rd May Field Outing

Kentucky Yellow Lady Slipper
Hickory Hollow
Natural Area Preserve
Saturday, May 22, 10:00 a.m.
Public Welcome

Early Spring

by Rainer Maria Rilke

Harshness vanished. A sudden softness has replaced the meadows' wintry grey. Little rivulets of water changed their singing accents. Tendernesses, hesitantly, reached toward the earth from space, and country lanes are showing these unexpected subtle risings that find expression in the empty trees.

Here is a submission for the newsletter that my sister, April Moore, shared with me. In view of our harsh winter, it seems very timely. **Tanya Bohlke**

1st June Field Outing

Hilda Wilson's
Summer Garden
Mt. Holly
Thursday, June 10, 10:00 a.m.
VNPS Members Only

2nd June Field Outing

Hardwood Forest and
Forested Wetland
Westmoreland State Park
Saturday, June 19, 10:00 a.m.
Public Welcome

Family Violacae; Genus Viola (Violets)

"VIOLETS ARE WELL-LOVED spring flowers with distinctive, colorful blooms" (Phillips and Burrell, 1993). I distinctly recall picking violets in my Aunt's shady back yard during a time when lawns included whatever grass would grow, along with clover, broad and narrow-leaved plantains, chickweed, etc. A lawn without broadleaved plants was not yet the standard, it was 'back in the day' and I yearn for those days sometimes¹. But I've digressed from my subject - violets, to many gardeners or lawn growers, a broad-leaved weed to be eradicated.

During the planting for my new home, I purchased a *Viola pedata* (birdfoot violet) from a nursery that had included it in their shady plant selections. That's where I put it (and we did experience a wet spring that year); but *V. pedata* prefers full sun to part shade and very good drainage, so it died, or appeared to have. Lo and behold what then appeared but my 'back in the day' flower *Viola sororia*, aka *V. papilionaceae*, wooly blue or common violet.

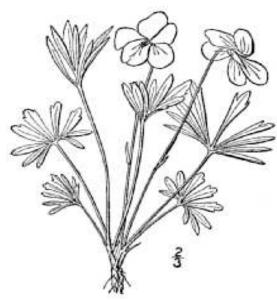
There are abundant species of native violets begging to be grown in our sustainable landscapes. Once invited in, they quickly make themselves at home. Plant (or leave) some where you

July Field Outings

Wildflowers, Trees & Eagles Caledon Natural Area Saturday, July 24, 10:00 a.m.

Yellow Fringed Orchid Chilton Woods State Forest Saturday, July 31, 10:00 a.m. (alternate date if not in bloom)

Public Welcome at Both Events



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. 2: 547.

REFERENCES

Phillips, E. and C. C, Burrell. 1993. Rodale's Illustrated Encyclopedia of Perennials. Rodale Press, Inc.p.490. Miller, J.H. & K.V. Miller. 2005. Forest Plants of the Southeast and Their Wildlife Uses. University of Georgia Press. 472 pp.

John Boring, J.K. and five others. 1995. *Natural Gardening-a Nature Company Guide*. Time-Life Books. 288 pp.

www.biol.vt.edu/digital_atlas/

can let them be. Like many native plants they provide ecological benefits to wildlife. Their foliage is larval food for fritillary butterflies, the flowers are attractive to small butterflies such as the spring azure, and the seeds are eaten by Northern bobwhite. In woodland gardens, wild turkeys will forage on certain species' tuberous roots. In addition, the flowers are irregular (botanically), gorgeous, child friendly, fragrant, edible or charming as a garnish when crystallized with sugar.

MY LANDSCAPE IS MOSTLY SUNNY and well drained, so my quest for *V. pedata* continued to the lamp post area where I planted some from a mail order source last March. Much to my delight, the darlings bloomed much showier than the common violet! I watched them last summer and fall, and now during the winter they are evergreen and have the deeply lobed, five or more "birdfoot" leaflets that give this species its name.

Perhaps once they have grown for another season, my violets may even re-bloom in the fall and spread. (Many more than the five that I planted will be needed for them to have any impact as a ground cover!) This year I'll be watching for the fritillaries.

Contact me by e-mail for source or other information:

paula.boundy @va.metrocast.net

Paula Boundy, Horticulture Chair

Education

The Education Committee members expect to be busy this spring!

Already scheduled outreach events, some with activities for children, include the:

NN Master Gardeners Spring Seminar, March 27, 9:00 a.m. - 3:00 p.m.

Northumberland H.S. PAES Plant Sale, April 24, starting at 8:00 a.m.

Hutchinson Tract, RRVNWR, Open House, May 8, 9:00 a.m. - 12:00 p.m.

Menokin Music Festival, May 8, 1:00 - 4:00 p.m.

Chatting with the public about native plants and nature is a lot of fun, and helps support the VNPS mission "to futher appreciation and conservation of Virginia's native plants and habitats." **Volunteers are welcome.** To help, please contact:

Tanya Bohlke at tmbohlke@yahoo.com or (804) 435-8824 or Nancy Garvey at nangarvey@hotmail.com or (804) 436-8401

¹The author is welcome to visit the editor's yard whenever she misses 'back in the day.'

Plant Sale Preparations

Calling all native plant lovers-we need you!

Our annual plant sale in September:

generates much of our income;

helps increase the number and biodiversity of native plants in local gardens; educates the public about nature, native plants and low-impact gardening; AND

provides valuable "life-long learning" experiences for members who help raise many of the plants that we offer for sale!

Judy Lang has fearlessly (foolheartedly?) volunteered to chair the 2010 Plant Sale, but she can't pull off something of this magnitude on her own.

If you have extra native plants, and need help getting them into pots, or if you need pots, or if you are willing to host a "native potting party," please contact Judy at:

jlang@riposi.net or (804) 453-6605

August Field Outing-A

Summer Wildflowers
Belle Isle State Park
Saturday, August 21, 9:00 a.m.

Public Welcome

August Field Outing-B

Streamside Perennials-Kayak
Bush Mill Stream Preserve
Date and Time TBA

VNPS Members Only

Summer Joys



One of the joys of summer: a visit to VNPS member John Hummer's fertile and fragrant pond habitat, with its pitcher plants, ferns, and other natives. Susan Barrick (photos)



Welcome to Our Newest Members!

Wanda Atkins (Montross); Dan Bashore (Mollusk); Elizabeth Gruben (Kilmarnock); Lucy Hottle (Richmond); Adrienne Lapeyre Green (Lancaster); Fawn Palmer (King George); Kia Ware (Tappahannock)

Officers

President	Marie Minor 92	25-5950 m	ntminor@verizon.net
Vice President	Carol Hammer	453-5500	caroljhammer@aol.com
Secretaries:			

Recording...... Judy Burgess Corresponding. Patsy Lockman

Treasurer...... Paula Boundy 435-3685 paula.boundy@va.metrocast.net

Committee Chairs

ConservationPaula Boundy		
EducationTanya Bohlke 435-8824 tmbohlke@yahoo.com,		
Nancy Garvey 436-8401 nangarvey@hotmail.com		
Horticulture Paula Boundy		
HospitalityPam Collins, Jane Peterson		
Membership Sandra Ehlert 453-3519 jehlert@haloisp.net		
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NominatingJane Peterson, Nick Ferriter, Tanya Bohlke		
Programs Earline Walker (speakers) 529-9362		
Earlinedickinson@aol.com		
Joan Hattersley (trips) 529-5467 hattersley4@gmail.com		
PublicityJay Walker, Susan Christopher		

Other

Ex-President......Nick Ferriter
Member at Large Sally Caskie

Ways & Means Judy Lang

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 upper right hand corner of 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 Sandra Ehlert.

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

NN Chapter of the VNPS Outings Calendar. All Saturday Field Outings are open to the public.

09:30 a.m. Herbarium of the College of William and Mary Tour.		
Meet at Grace Episcopal Church, Kilmarnock, Carol Hammer (leader).		
9:00 a.m. Swamp Biota. Dragon Run Kayak. Carol Hammer (contact).		
10:00 a.m. Spring Ephemerals Walk. Hickory Hollow Natural Area		
Preserve. Tom Teeples and Ellis Squires (leaders).		
9:30 a.m. Earth Day Native Wildflower Planting Activity. Belle		
Isle State Park. Paul Billings and Nick Ferriter (leaders).		
9:00 a.m. Virgina Master Naturalists & Virginia Native Plant Society		
Invasives Removal Day. Chilton Woods. Mike Aherron (leader)		
10:00 a.m. Showy Orchis (if in bloom) and Ditch Doings Walk. Nick		
Ferriter (leader).		
10:00 a.m. Spring Woodland Natives Walk. Twin Oaks,		
Heathsville. Gary Chafin (leader). VNPS members only.		
10:00 a.m. Kentucky Yellow Lady Slipper Walk. Hickory		
Hollow Natural Area Preserve. Tom Teeples (leader).		
10:00 a.m. Hilda Wilson's Summer Garden. Mt. Holly. Hilda		
Wilson (leader). Bring a brown bag lunch. VNPS members only.		
10:00 a.m. Hardwood Forest and Big Meadows Forested Wetland Walk.		
Westmoreland State Park (Paul Billings, leader).		
10:00 a.m. Wildflowers, Trees and Eagles Hay Ride. Caledon		
Natural Area. Paul Billlings and Sammy Zambon (leaders).		
10:00 a.m. Yellow Fringed Orchid (alternate date if not in bloom).		
Chilton Woodss State Forest. Nick Ferriter (leader).		
09:00 a.m. Summer Wildflowers Walk. Belle Isle State Park.		
Paul Billings (leader).		
Time TBA. Streamside Perennials. Bush Mill Stream Kayak.		
VNPS members only		

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

Bring water, bug spray when needed and, if you wish, binoculars.

Dates: April 14 and 28
May 12 and 26
June 9 and 23
July 14 and 28
August 11 and 25

Time: 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 mfminor@verizon.net



Northern Neck Chapter Virginia Native Plant Society P.O. Box 158 Millers Tavern, VA 23115

Note expiration date.

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