



NN Native Plant News

Spring 2017, Volume 14, No. 2

NORTHERN NECK CHAPTER
Virginia Native Plant Society

Old Courthouse Demonstration Garden



On Tuesday, June 20 a small group of members met at the Old Courthouse Demonstration Garden for a spring cleanup. We pulled several bags of river oats. There were so many that many of the featured plants were well hidden. The path was cleaned up too.



Although the river oats are native, they are also invasive and will certainly be back as they not only seed, but have runners. We pulled as much of the root as possible and got all of the seeded tops, but expect to be having such cleanup events periodically for some time to come.

Text: Bette Grugen

Photos: Bette Gruben & Nancy Garvey



Calling All Native Plant Growers and Plant Sitters!

Summer has officially started and the NNNPS native plant sale is scheduled for Saturday, September 9th!

Members and friends:

We need plants. As in previous years, your donations of healthy looking native plants will be critical to its success. If you haven't done so already, the plant sale committee is asking you to pot up some of the desirable “extra” native plants as are growing in your gardens or yards.

To help guide our collective efforts, please send an email with the names (scientific if you can and/or common), and the approximate numbers of any plants you have already potted, or which you are planning to pot in the near future to Judy Lang at jlang@riposi.net.

We need plant potters and sitters. We'll be hosting a few native-plant potting parties in another month or so. If you aren't away on vacation, please come help: it's an great way to learn some good gardening tips or native plant lore! And we hope you'll be able to take some home with you to “plant sit” until the sale.

If your plans for summer travel have you worried about leaving the plants unattended, we can try to help with locating a “plant sitter” during your absence.

Submitted by Judy Lang



The Northern Neck Chapter met on Thursday March 20th to hear Dr. Manuela Dal Forno explain “Why Lichens Are the Coolest.”

A postdoctoral research fellow in the Botany Department at the Smithsonian's National Museum of Natural History, Dal Forno

studies the evolution, diversity and microbial associates of a group of tropical lichens in which mushroom-like fungi live symbiotically with nitrogen-fixing cyanobacteria. After the presentation, Dal Forno led a short walk around the church property to look for lichens.

In addition, the Chapter got to meet and hear the three Nature Camp recipients speak of their experiences at the camp last summer. The children answered a number of questions from the audience about what they did, heir favorite parts of the camp and subjects they studied.



Photos: Carol Hammer

2017 Plant of the Month

January



Common Ground-pine, (*Dendrolycopodium obscurum*), is a primitive clubmoss plant with underground stems which shoot from beneath the moist leaf mold along the margins of our woods and swamps. Sticking up from these stems are “treelets” with tiny, spore-bearing cones and thin, needle leaves. Less than one foot tall, they resemble small pine trees.

The plants are evergreens, and form attractive patches which are easy to spot in the woods in winter. However, they are difficult to establish in the home garden.

Common Ground-pine resents disturbance and over-fertilization. The best option is to enjoy these plants in the forest and leave them undisturbed.

Photo by Kenneth Lawless

March



Rue Anemone, (*Thalictrum thalictroides*) is a charming, spring flowering native plant found in our woodlands, usually under the partial shade of deciduous trees. It only grows about 9 inches tall with a fern-like foliage but its delicate, showy, white or pinkish-white flowers stand out on the woodland floor.

One of a group of plants known as spring ephemerals that have evolved to take advantage of available sunlight before spring leaf out, Rue Anemone goes dormant in the summer and does not emerge again until late winter.

Because some of its roots are fleshy and can hold water, it is an excellent plant for woodland gardens. Rue Anemone is relatively easy to grow and often persists for many years. Most mammals including deer leave it alone since the leaves are poisonous.

Photo by Denise Greene

May



Common Bluets, also known as Quaker Ladies, (*Houstonia caerulea*) is a delicate and beautiful wildflower commonly found growing among mosses in moist fields, grassy meadows and forest edges of the Northern Neck. Occasionally it is found in picturesque broad swaths on meadows or fields that are not mowed.

It has small pale blue flowers with yellow centers on plants that are about eight inches in height and blooms from mid-spring to mid-summer. The leaves are in the shape of spatulas and are unbranched.

Common Bluets is attractive in natural areas of the home garden where it can be left undisturbed. The flowers provide nectar for bees and small butterflies. Because this plant must be allowed to re-seed or it will die out, increased mowing of roadsides and grassy areas has led to its unfortunate decline.

Photo by Betsy Washington

February



Smooth Alder (*Alnus serrulata*) is a multi-stemmed shrub or small tree that grows in damp, mucky areas along streams, ponds and swamps in partial shade or sun. Its leaves are two to four inches in length and are variable in shape even on the same branch.

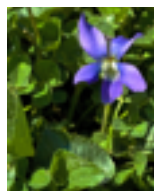
It has distinctive catkins (clusters of male and female flowers) in late winter or early spring. The male catkins are quite interesting and picturesque as they sway in the breeze on sunny days.

The female catkins resemble small pine cones. They remain on the stems from season to season, and in the first year produce seeds that provide food for birds.

Smooth Alder is a larval host for the tiger swallowtail and mourning cloak butterflies. Although difficult to find in nurseries, it is a useful plant for soil stabilization along streambanks and ponds.

Photo by Gary Chafin

April



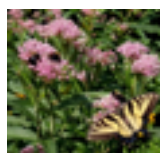
Common Blue Violet (*Viola sororia*) is one of the most prevalent violets in our area. Its flowers and leaves emerge directly from a fleshy rhizome (underground stem). As the name implies, the flowers are usually violet or blue in color but white flowers are also occasionally seen. It prefers moist partial shade but will grow in sun and deep shade.

The blooms appear from mid-spring to early summer. Few insects visit the flowers because they lack fragrance and have little pollen. The plant has the unusual habit of producing self-pollinated seeds in summer from flowers without petals. When ripe, the seed capsules explode and disperse the seed.

Many consider Common Blue Violet a weed because it spreads so prolifically, especially in lawns, but their leaves provide critical food for the caterpillars of our beautiful fritillary butterflies. Wild turkey will often eat the entire plant. Although not usually considered suitable for the home landscape, it works well when naturalized in wild areas or used as a dense ground cover in partial shady areas where it has room to spread.

June

Photo by Carol Hammer



Swamp Milkweed (*Asclepias incarnata*) is an attractive and beneficial wildflower that is native to most of the eastern United States. Three to four feet in height, it grows naturally in swamps and wet areas in full sun. The plants produce a white, toxic sap when the stems are cut, hence the milkweed name.

In July and August, fragrant pink or mauve flower clusters appear on the ends of the stems. Four inch long seed pods form after the flowers mature. When ripe, the pods open to emit silky-haired seeds which are dispersed by the wind.

Like other milkweeds, its nectar is very attractive to butterflies, bees and wasps. The lance-shaped leaves provide food for the larval stage of the monarch and other butterflies. An added bonus for gardeners is that deer rarely touch it.

Although it prefers wet areas, Swamp Milkweed does very well in drier areas of the home garden, particularly those with clay soils. It has a deep taproot which makes it difficult to transplant once established, so starting with smaller plants is usually more successful.

Photo by Betsy Washington



Northern Neck Green - a new website with huge potential to promote the Northern Neck as an area with lots of partners that are active caretakers of the environment. The site's logo includes the phrase: "Resources for Maintaining a Natural Paradise". The link is <http://www.nnkgreen.org>. The Northern Neck Native Plant Society (NNNPS) is one of eighteen partners participating in promoting sustainable 'green' activities, information, and education. The site's "about" tab says:

"NNKgreen.org is a regional website designed as the go-to place for all topics environmental, relevant to the Northern Neck of Virginia. It is maintained with the active participation and contribution from many of the region's organizations that are dedicated to making the most out of our air, land, and water—by making them last."

I have been the liason for NNNPS during this endeavor's planning and am now part of the 'highly trained' people that can post to the site. There will be a big push to publicize the site soon; however, you have advance notice of the site and can go check it out! There are several posts about NNK native plants or Go Native-Grow Native (GNGN).

If you have material you want to share on the site, you can send it to Paula Boundy at paula.boundy@va.metrocast.net for consideration [all posts go through an edit].

Submitted by Paula Boundy

Virginia's Vanishing Orchids

The Northern Neck Chapter of the Virginia Native Plant Society was treated to an interesting and informative presentation on Thursday, May 18, at the monthly meeting at Wicomico Church. Mr. Zach Bradford gave a presentation entitled "Virginia's Vanishing Orchids" and included photographs and map locations of current and extinct species. He talked about the changing topography affecting the habitat of these orchids. Unbeknown to many of us, orchids are sometimes very small and easily overlooked in the landscape. It is only through the trained eyes of Mr. Bradford that he can spot a likely site and get down low to ID the tiny plants. Bloom times and topography are critical in helping to identify these tiny plants. Herbariums in West Virginia, Virginia, and North Carolina provide additional resources in his quest to locate many sites and rare or near extinct varieties.

Mr. Bradford, a native of the mountains of western Virginia earned a degree from the College of William & Mary and is currently employed by the Virginia Department of Conservation and Recreation Natural Heritage Program. His duties include managing Hughlett Point, Dameron Marsh, and Bush Mill Stream here in the Northern Neck but his search for rare or endangered orchids take him throughout the Virginia and neighboring states.

He knows the likely spots for orchid growth. Some require a dolomitic seep; some require an acid bog marsh, and some require an area where periodic burning occurs. He found that controlled burning reinvigorates some species. Burning reduces the duff and provides the small orchids a place to raise their flower spikes amongst the taller grass competitors. Of the 26 rare orchids, 12 require fire to thrive.

Our meeting adjourned after an interesting presentation and question/answer session. Many members of our Chapter now know what physiological terrain to be on the lookout for, and provided Zach with some likely sites for him to investigate.

Submitted by Ted Munns

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 Nominating.....Open

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 Outings.....Paula Boundy 436-4944 paula.boundy@va.metrocast.net
 GNGN.....Open
 Publicity.....Judy Lang 453-6605 jlang@riposi.net
 Susan Christopher (Church liason)
 Ways & MeansNick Ferriter 462-6242 ferriter@aol.com

Other Board Members

Ex-President.....Ted Munns tedmunns@va.metrocast.net
 Members at Large....Jeff Wainscott bramwood@kaballero.com
 Bette Gruben bettegruben@gmail.com

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.

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 or
 (804) 472-3051

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

NN Chapter of the VNPS Outings and Meetings Calendar
Chapter Meetings & Saturday Outings are open to the public (unless noted)

Sept. 8 Friday	9:00 am. <i>NNK NPS Plant Pre-Sale Setup.</i> Wicomico Parish (Episcopal) Church. Set-up by members beginning at 900 am until finished.
Sept. 9 Saturday	9:00 am - Noon. <i>NNK NPS Plant Sale.</i> Our annual Native Plant Sale!!! Members need to be present on Saturday by 8:00 am for sale to public at 9:00 am.
Sept. 21 Thursday	Noon - 1:30 pm. <i>TBD.</i> Wicomico Parish (Episcopal) Church Hall. Bring bag lunch. (Board meeting starts at 10:00). After meeting plants may be available for purchase.
Sept. 29- Oct. 1 Fri-Sun.	<i>VNPS Annual Meeting 2017 - Tri-State Native Plant Conference.</i> Shepherdstown, WV. Please visit VNPS website: http://vnps.org/events/vnps-annual-meeting/ for details.
Oct. 19 Thursday	Noon - 1:30 pm. <i>TBD.</i> Wicomico Parish (Episcopal) Church Hall. Bring bag lunch. (Board meeting starts at 10:00).
Nov. 16 Thursday	Noon - 1:30 pm. <i>TBD.</i> Wicomico Parish (Episcopal) Church Hall. Bring bag lunch. (Board meeting starts at 10:00).

Welcome to Our Newest Members

*Helen Bell, Bobbie Burton,
Maeve Charlesworth,
Ellen Clarke, John Clements,
Martin Coffee,
Pete & Betsy Courtney,
Margaret Epps Curtis,
Christine Daywalt, Rochelle Garwood,
Nancy Joel, Mary Kukla, Stephen Milone,
Steve Pope, Peggy Pursley, Peter & Jenny
Saam, Lee & Sandra Scripture,
and Jane Wells*

Expect More!

Additional outings will be announced to our members via email. All walks are weather permitting. Driving directions will be emailed to members in the week before each outing and are included in publicity releases. *For more information contact Paula Boundy at 804-436-4944 or e-mail at paula.boundy@va.metrocast.net*

***Newsletter: three issues annually.
Send ideas, articles, photos, etc.,
by August 1st to
bayfishers3@aol.com***

Visit Our Chapter Website at:

<http://www.nnnps.org>

***Be Sure to Check Your Local Paper for More Details on
NNNPS Meetings and Events***

Friend Us on Facebook!
Northern Neck Chapter Virginia
Native Plant Society



**Northern Neck Chapter
Virginia Native Plant Society
P.O. Box 336
Reedville, VA 22539**

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