



*Shenandoah Chapter*  
**Shenandoah Chapter**  
*Virginia Native Plant Society*  
**April, 2008**

**Mission Statement:**

We are a conservation organization dedicated to conserve Virginia's native plants and their ecosystems through education, advocacy and activities that promote appreciation, stewardship and appropriate use.

**Next Meeting:** April 10. We will meet at Bald Rock Road at 6:30 for our annual spring wildflower walk. For further information or discuss directions and carpooling contact Chris Bowlen [bowlenchris@comcast.net](mailto:bowlenchris@comcast.net) or Michael Seth [sethmj@jmu.edu](mailto:sethmj@jmu.edu), 540 438 1301.

**2008 Shenandoah Chapter and Events Calendar:**

- April 26, Riverfest in Waynesboro and location for our **annual plant sale**. Please contact Anneli Tattersall for more info or to help 540-322-1146 or [annelitatt@yahoo.com](mailto:annelitatt@yahoo.com)
- May 2-4, Webster County Nature Tour, Webster County W Va. \$90 for an incredible weekend exploring Elk Mountain during peak wild flower time. Price includes 5 meals, dormitory accommodations, tours, and evening entertainment. The largest Sycamore in the US is in the area. For more info contact Jay Shaner 540-886-5763 Check out the website [http://www.proseandphotos.com/wv\\_spring\\_in\\_the\\_mountain\\_park.htm](http://www.proseandphotos.com/wv_spring_in_the_mountain_park.htm)
- May 3, Staunton Farmers Market 8-Noon for the second weekend of the plant sale. Contact Anneli above
- May 4, Shale barrens outing to Highland County. Details in this newsletter
- May 8, 5:30-dark Shenandoah Chapter annual Social at Hone Quarry, George Washington National Forest. Bring a dish to share. Details in May newsletter
- May 16, Wintergreen Resort 7 AM over 50 programs and hikes available at Wildflower Symposium [www.twnf.org](http://www.twnf.org)
- May 17, 11-3 Trillium of Reddish Knob. State VNPS Trip. Leader Lib Kyger. Help Help Help! Assistant Leaders desperately needed. Contact Lib Kyger 540-828-6252
- June 7, Blister Swamp and Sinks of Gandhi Leader Jay Shaner. Contact Jay 540-886-5763 Or Chris Bowlen. Details in this newsletter

**Calendar for JMU Edith J. Carrier Arboretum**

April 19-- Native Plant Sale 9-2

April 20 April Walk in the Arboretum 9:30-10:30

May 24 Annual Herb and Garden Fest 9-3

For additional programs and info go to: [www.jmu.edu/arboretum/](http://www.jmu.edu/arboretum/)

**Shenandoah Chapter Annual Plant sale**

Saturday, April 26<sup>th</sup>, at Riverfest in Waynesboro from 8 until 4. Riverfest starts at 10 AM and is held at the Farmer's Market between Broad and Main Streets near the Waynesboro Fire Department and the South River.

Saturday, May 3<sup>rd</sup>, at the Staunton Farmers' Market from 7 until 12. The Farmers' Market is located off of Johnson Street in the Wharf area.

Spring has finally arrived and the date for our annual plant sale is very close. We need your help in two ways:

- ❖ Supply the merchandise.

Bags of potting medium and pots will be available at the April meeting from Anneli Tattersall. Some of you may have already started plants from seed and as plants emerge from the ground please pot some of your “extras” to offer for sale. If you would like to contribute but do not have time, or need help digging and potting up, please contact Anneli. You can bring your plants to the April meeting or you can make other arrangements by contacting Anneli Tattersall [annelitatt@yahoo.com](mailto:annelitatt@yahoo.com) or 540-248-0932

❖ Help for an hour or two during the sales.

Remember to donate only propagated plants or plants that are from your own property; never dig plants from protected areas. Jack in the Pulpit, Bloodroot and Virginia Bluebells all sell very well as does anything that is in bloom. This year, the Wild Flower of the Year is Spiderwort. Small pots sell better than large. We are hoping to offer some potted Turk's Cap Lillies from the fall plant rescue. **Please Label Every Plant that You Bring**

#### **Announcements:**

##### **Field Sketching with Lara Call Gastinger**

Saturday, April 26 – Sunday, April, 27

See last month's newsletter for complete information.

##### **Wildflowers of the Shenandoah Valley**

Identify the first wildflowers of spring. Learn many interesting facts such as why Skunk Cabbage melts snow and what wildflower the Indians used as a salt substitute. From hepatica to violets, learn about the spring beauty all around us on the beautiful rocky slopes of the Blue Ridge Mountains. All classes, except the first one, will be hands-on in the field.

62224, \$50

Three Wednesdays, April 23-May 7, 6-8 pm

BRCC Weyers Cave Plecker Center P126C

Instructor: Diane Holsinger

##### **Bringing Nature Home**

A new book was released in the fall of 2007 that may be of interest to Native Plant enthusiast, wildlife enthusiast or anyone interested in a beautifully landscaped garden. It's titled “Bringing Nature Home- How Native Plants Sustain Wildlife in our Gardens” by Douglas W. Tallamy. Tallamy illustrates how the choices we make as gardeners can profoundly impact the diversity of life in our gardens, towns and on our planet. He explains the new vital role of the suburban garden - how alien plants affect biodiversity, creating balanced communities and how to make it happen in your garden or community. There is a fascinating section on caterpillars, butterflies and other insects attracted to native plants which then provides food for birds. The book has incredible photographs, is well organized and offers many useful facts which can easily be followed in any garden. It is available online from [amazon.com](http://amazon.com)

By Paul Dennison

##### **Shenandoah Chapter Outings for May and June**

Sunday May 4: Shale Barrens west of Hightown, Highland County. Meet at Ramsey's Draft Picnic Area Rt 250 West of Staunton at 9:30AM to carpool. Bring lunch and binoculars. Shale Barrens will be viewed from the road because climbing the steep hillside will ruin the plants. There are several stops on the way in McDowell and Monterey to view other interesting plant areas. Stops will depend on the group; there is no designated leader. Contact Chris Bowlen

Saturday June 7: Blister Swamp and Sinks of Gandi (WVa). Leader Jay Shaner. This area is the headwaters of the E. Greenbrier River. Water or purple avens, *Geum triflorum*, might be in bloom then. This is a three mile hike; bring your lunch, water and sturdy shoes (boots are not necessary). To make this a one way hike, we need one or 2 drivers to meet us at the other end of the trail. (Spruce Knob Lake is a nearby destination for the drivers). Meet 9 AM SHARP in Ernie's Market parking lot, Monterey (Rt 250, Highland County). To sign up, contact Jay Shaner 540- 886-5763 or Chris Bowlen.

### Chapter Officers

<b>President</b>	vacant		
<b>Vice President</b>	Michael Seth	540-438-1301	sethmj@jmu.edu
<b>Treasurer</b>	Chuck Auckerman	540- 828-2065	ChuckAuckerman@aol.com
<b>Hospitality</b>	Lib Kyger	540-828-6252	kyger@Bridgewater.edu
<b>Newsletter/ Website</b>	Elaine Smith	540-298-0773	smithes6@juno.com
<b>Membership</b>	Bea Woody	540-289-6106	beawoody@hotmail.com
<b>Conservation/ Education</b>	Chris Bowlen	540-289-6801	bowlenchris@comcast.net

#### Volunteer Opportunities

Our Chapter has two excellent opportunities to do some public outreach in April--Earth Day Month. We are looking for some volunteers to person a table of VNPS information-- talk to people about native plants, our Chapter and local environmental concerns. If you think you don't know enough to do this, you really do. Please consider helping at either event or both contact Chris Bowlen to help:

April 12 **Blacks Run Cleanup Harrisonburg**. Set up is at 7:30AM. The event is over at 1 PM. The most important time to cover this event is as people are finishing the cleanup--11-1

April 19 **Earth Day in Staunton** 8-1. This is the second year for this event. They asked us to do this last year and we did not have any coverage. They are just getting this event rolling and it would be nice to help them out.

**Paul State Forest** is looking for some help with invasive plants. Located outside of Otobine west of Bridgewater, Paul State Forest has a notable stand of trees and a serious invasive problem. The Forest has some funds to start dealing with the problem and could use help with identification and control strategies. Contact Joe Scharrer joes41@comcast.net or 540-434-8494

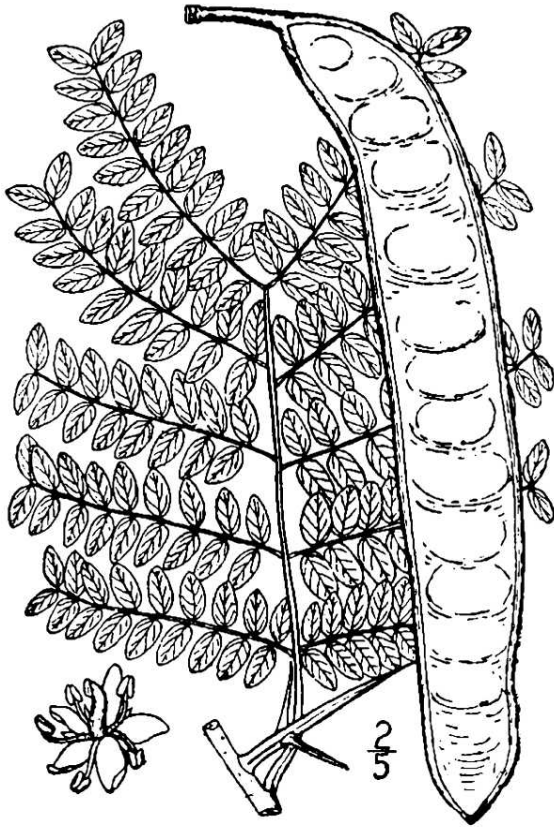
In connection with its new **Rock Outcrop Management Plan**, Shenandoah National Park is developing a volunteer program to monitor human and invasive plant impacts on precious outcrop habitats. They have identified 28 sites that are the most vulnerable and we have volunteers to cover many of them. However, there are several sites still in need of monitors. Most of them are in the central or southern areas of the park, so we had the thought that there might be people in your VNPS chapters who would be interested in joining the team.

The sites that need monitors are: Hawksbill N slope outcrops, Hawksbill N slope talus, Hawksbill Summit, Old Rag Summit E, Old Rag Summit W, Franklin Cliffs N (needs little monitoring), Franklin Cliffs Overlook, Franklin Cliffs S. Most of the sites need to be visited 1/mo. from April to November; some less frequently because they are farther from trails. Detailed training will be provided starting this spring.

If anyone is interested, please have them drop me an e-mail or give me a call and I can brief them in more detail on the program. Thanks in advance for your support of this exciting program!

## Honey Locust (*Gleditsia triacanthos*)

by Michael Seth



On a recent hike this we wandered into a wooded area with many honey locusts. What is this tree with its scary thorns? Also called sweet-locust or appropriately thorny-locust it is a member of the legume family (Leguminosae). A medium to tall tree with nasty thorns, the honey locust is barely a native plant to Virginia which is on the edge of its range but is sometimes planted. The honey locust can reach 80 feet but are not usually found that tall. It is a moderately fast growing tree commonly found on moist bottom lands, near rivers and lakes. It prefers limestone soils and does not do well in gravelly soils. Fruits are 8 to 18 inch flattened twisted pods with sweet pulp between numerous oval seeds that appear in September. It has feathery-compound leaves, and dark, somewhat scaly bark. Leaves are 5 to eight inches with 15 to 30 narrow leaflets. The flowers are small greenish, and cluster on racemes; they bloom in late spring and early summer from May to July. Honey locust leaves are nearly full grown when the flowers are produced.

Even though it likes moisture it is also very draught resistance. This quality and the fact that it is tolerant of salinity makes it a popular tree for windbreaks and soil erosion control. The thornless variety has been planted to replace the elm in many urban areas. The thornless variety

is also planted as an ornamental tree. The wood is dense, hard, and durable but used only locally. Honey locust pods are sweet and eaten by livestock and wildlife. The tree is relatively short lived, reaching the age of 125 years. It is more common in southern areas but can tolerate very cold temperatures as low as 20 to 30 degrees below zero Fahrenheit. Nowhere is the honey locust a dominant tree but grows among Mesophytic species such as red maple (*Acer rubrum*), persimmon (*Diospyros virginiana*), blackgum (*Nyssa sylvatica*), pecan (*Carya illinoensis*), boxelder (*Acer negundo*), Kentucky coffeetree (*Gymnocladus dioica*), black walnut (*Juglans nigra*), oaks (*Quercus spp.*), elms (*Ulmus spp.*), ashes (*Fraxinus spp.*), and hickories (*Carya spp.*). Seeds are borne in long (15 to 41 cm, 6 to 16in), flat and often twisted pods; they ripen about mid-September in the southern portion of the range and around mid-October in the north. Soon after fruits mature they begin falling and dissemination often continues into late winter. Honey locusts begin bearing seed at about 10 years of age, optimum production occurring between 25 and 75 years. Trees continue to bear fruit up to about 100 years of age. They generally bear fruit each year and produce abundant seed crops every year or two. The honey locust is intolerant of shade and needs open areas to reproduce. This is possible only in openings in the forest canopy. The seeding range or natural dispersal of honey locust seeds is not extensive. The pods, however, are readily eaten by cattle, whereby seeds are scattered in the feces. Undoubtedly seeds are also disseminated by birds and other mammals that feed on the fruit.

Perhaps the most interesting thing about the honey locust is its thorns. They are formidable weapons several inches long. Thorn production usually diminishes gradually and finally ceases in the upper and outer crown growth as the tree ages. Thorns may still be produced on the lower trunk and on lower-trunk and limb

sprouts. Typical trees, 10 years old or more, show a definite thornless region in the upper and outer shoot growth. Oddly the thorns are four to five inches apart, too far apart to prevent deer from feeding on twigs. The question then arises why did a tree evolve with thorns that are largely useless in protecting it from animal grazers? The likely answer is the tree evolved its thorns when it needed to protect itself from very large herbivores such as the giant sloths that were once common in North America but which became extinct in the megafauna die-off ten thousand years ago.

Sources: George A Petrides and Janet Wehr. *Peter Field Guides: Eastern Trees*. New York: Houghton Muffin, 1998; Robert M. Blair, "Honey Locust," [http://www.na.fs.fed.us/pubs/silvics\\_manual/volume\\_2/gleditsia/triacanthos.htm](http://www.na.fs.fed.us/pubs/silvics_manual/volume_2/gleditsia/triacanthos.htm); Virginia Tech, Department of Forestry, "Honeylocust;," Bob Pickett, naturalist for the PATC;

**WANTED:** Newsletter articles.

Contact Elaine Smith if you want to include anything in YOUR newsletter.  
Anything is welcome, even just a few lines!