



Shenandoah Chapter
Virginia Native Plant Society
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March 2009

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: March 12, 7:30 BRCC Plecker 104 (auditorium). Speaker: John Eckman of the Valley Conservation Council will speak on new initiatives being undertaken by the Council.

Calendar 2009

Mar 8- Wolf Ridge Trail 6.5+mi hike moderate difficulty with stream crossing. Hike starts at trailhead 10 AM Sponsored by Wild VA. Leader Chris Bowlen. Call 289-6801 to sign up as there could be a route change depending on trail conditions.

Mar 24- Deep Run Ponds Garlic Mustard removal day. Meet 9:30 at Deep Run Ponds. Bring water and work gloves. DCR Steward Bryan Wender might join us for this work day so there is the possibility of a short hike after. Remember this is a tick infested area and garbage bags must be carried out for disposal. Call Chris Bowlen 540-289-6801 for more info.

Apr 3- from 10 am to 2 pm. Invasive Plant Removal at Ivy Creek/Loft Mountain, SNP

The Ivy Creek/Loft Mountain Natural Heritage Area is home to state-rare plant populations, globally-rare vegetation types and one of the few old growth areas in Shenandoah National Park. Invasive non-native plants like garlic mustard, Oriental bittersweet, stiltgrass are threatening this unique place. Spend a few hours helping the Park protect this high priority area.

Where: We'll meet at Loft Mountain Wayside at 10 am. Or, be at the bottom of Madison Run Fire Road (at the end of Rt 663) in Grottoes by 9:45 am, then carpool to the site.

What to Bring: Lunch, water, sunscreen, hat, clothes you don't mind getting dirty. We'll provide extra water, gloves, tools and trashbags.

Contact: Please RSVP by contacting Jake Hughes at 540-999-3500 ext. 3492 or Jake_Hughes@nps.gov

Apr 11 –Black's Run Clean-up Harrisonburg. Chapter needs help staffing an information table and helping identify natives, non-natives and invasives in various parks in downtown Harrisonburg.

Apr 18- Earth Day in Staunton-details in April newsletter

May 1-3 Wildflower Weekend Webster County WV Camp Ceaser Visit Webster County WV website or contact Jay Shaner 540-886-5763 for additional information

May 14-Shenandoah Chapter Social Hone Quarry Picnic Shelter-details in May newsletter

May 15-17-26th Annual Spring Wildflower Symposium at Wintergreen Resort

July 11 - Cranberry Glades Botanical Area, Monogehela National Forest, WV. Leader Jay Shaner. A visit to Cranberry Glades is a great opportunity to see many acidic loving plants some at the extreme southern end of their range. Several orchids might be in bloom. Meet in Buffalo Gap 8AM SHARP! ¾ mile past the intersection of RT42 and 688 at a small white church on the right. Bring water, lunch and hiking boots. Approximately 2.5 hour drive one way with a 4-5 hour outing at several locations in Cranberry Glades. To carpool from Staunton area contact Jay Shaner 540-886-5763; from Harrisonburg area contact Chris Bowlen 540-289-6801.

Third Annual George Washington National Forest Clean-up Day scheduled for April 25, 2009.

Last year over 6,000 pounds of trash was removed from our national forest!

To coordinate details of how you can help this year **please contact Mark Healey at mahealey@fs.fed.us or call (540)-432-8247.**

Looking for a few good Plant Photos

Our Chapter has been working with Sandy Green of the Headwaters Conservation District for several years on the Marle Creek Project. This is a educational trail for school kids to learn about ecology and biodiversity. It is also a favorite spot of many birders because the habitat attracts a wide variety of local and migrating birds to a very accessible place.

Sandy wants to install two educational signs one about birds, one about native plants. Jo King of the Augusta County Bird Club is gathering information for the bird sign and our chapter is working on the native plant sign.

To help with this project, we need digital photos of the following plants: wild geranium, Virginia bluebells, bloodroot, black elderberry-in flower and with seeds, jewelweed (orange flowers), blue lobelia and cardinal flower. Please contact Chris Bowlen: bowlenchris@comcast.net if you have any photos to contribute. Credit will be given to the photographer for any photos used. Thanks!



Shenandoah National Park Seed Propagation Project

Jake Hughes is looking for some help growing native grasses: little bluestem (drawing at left), Indian grass, purpletop, poverty oatgrass, hairgrass, for introduction into several sites in the Park. (Possibly other species that are a bit more difficult as well.) Jake will provide supplies; all you need is your green thumb and the ability to accommodate an 8" X 8" container(s) on your window sill or growing area. Contact Jake at 540-999-3500, extension 3492 or jake_hughes@nps.gov

Not Ready for Roundup's Results

By Jim Minick

Tony and Mary operate a small farm in southwest Virginia. Like many, they moved to the country for a better life, and to finance this, they turned to growing grapes. Over the past decade, they've planted and tended a small vineyard and recently began making their own wine. I've picked those grapes, tasted their sweetness, and relished the full flavor of Mary and Tony's kindness: They are good friends.

But the better life turned bitter recently when Mary was diagnosed with non-Hodgkin's lymphoma (NHL), a form of cancer. The taste of the diagnosis turned even more sour when they learned the probable cause: the herbicide Roundup that they regularly used on their farm. I can only imagine Tony's anger and pain at this realization. I know he handled the poison with caution, wore safety equipment, and sprayed only on windless days and never around the house. He followed the directions on the label, but maybe they were wrong, and this puts everyone at risk.

Though Tony and Mary have no direct proof that Roundup caused Mary's cancer, scientists have begun to question the herbicide's marketed innocence. In 1999 Roundup's active ingredient glyphosate, was linked to non-Hodgkin's lymphoma. Swedish scientists Drs. Lennart Hardell and Mikael Eriksson published their study in the *Journal of the American Cancer Society*, finding that exposure to glyphosate "Yielded increased risks for NHL." The report has since been criticized for relying too much on case studies, and no one has yet conducted a double-blind study of glyphosate. But the *Journal of Pesticide Reform* found over a hundred other studies all illustrating the lethal toxicity of this chemical.

Monsanto, Roundup's manufacturer, churns out this chemical at an incredible rate and markets it as one of the safest on the shelves. According to a *New York Times* report from August 2001, Monsanto "produces close to 160 million gallons a year," which makes Roundup "the best-selling agricultural chemical product ever, with \$2.8 billion in sales" in 2000. It is an international success that "outsells other chemicals five to one."

Why so popular? Roundup effectively kills just about everything, and Monsanto markets it to just about everyone. Like a household cleaner, you can find it premixed in a spray bottle ready to use in any hardware store. My parents use it on dandelions in their yard, my neighbors use it to kill the thistle in their pastures, and other farmers spray millions of acres with it before they plant. It has become the mainstay of "no-till" agriculture, a method of farming that prevents soil erosion by substituting the spray gun for the plow, but at what cost? And with what kind of warnings?

Sadly, glyphosate is even more pervasive than most people realize because of genetically-modified seeds called "Roundup Ready." According to the *New York Times*, these seeds "account for almost 70 percent of the 70 million soybean acres [planted] in the United States." The plants tolerate the herbicide, which, as the USDA found in 1997, "resulted in a 72% increase in the use of glyphosate." Pushed to make more money, farmers spray up to three times more Roundup on these crops. The resultant poisonous residues have been found in wells, rainwater, and our food. Maybe this explains why, as the Leukemia and Lymphoma Society reports, the "incidence of NHL rose 80% from 1973 to 1997" and that roughly sixty-four thousand people will be diagnosed each year. All of us, through our daily bread, are exposed to glyphosate and its resulting, cancerous damages.

Recently I visited the neighbor Lowe's and read the shelf of Roundup labels. Tony told me that none of the labels mention cancer, just "moderate eye irritation." If dogs and other domestic animals ingest large amounts, the chemical could cause "temporary; gastrointestinal irritation," but there is no mention of the dangers to humans. Labels on the higher concentration warn to "wear personal protective equipment" such as "long sleeved shirts and long pants, shoes plus socks."

All of the labels confirmed Tony's reading. Not one mentioned cancer; not one acknowledged that the tests only analyzed oral ingestion, not the much more lethal inhalation; not one mentioned the combination of chemicals in Roundup is more lethal than the individual ingredients; not one explained the long-term toxicity, the genetic damage, the effects on reproduction, or the carcinogenicity, all confirmed by scientists independent of corporate money; not one label mentioned any of this.

Mary is still battling the cancer. It continues to appear in other parts of her body. None of us will ever be ready for such results from Roundup. The FDA should require a clear warning of the potential for cancer and encourage independent scientific studies of glyphosate. Likewise, Monsanto should act responsibly to give accurate and adequate warnings on Roundup labels.

It is only fair that we are at least warned.

Quoted with the author's permission from his book, *Finding a Clear Path* by Jim Minick, 2005.

Jim Minick lives, writes, and farms in southwest Virginia, while also teaching writing and literature at Radford University. His poems and essays have appeared in many books and periodicals including *Orion*, *Shenandoah*, *YES!*, *Natural Home*, *Encyclopedia of Appalachia*, *Appalachian Journal*, *Appalachian Heritage*, and *Wind*. Since 1996, Minick has written a regular column for the "New River Valley Current" section of *The Roanoke Times*, as well as other articles that have appeared in major news-papers throughout the South.

Thanks to Paul Dennison for submitting this article