

Virginia Native Plant Society 2008 Annual Meeting
September 12th to 14th, Alexandria, VA
“The Potowmack Experience: Flora along the Fall Line”

The 2008 VNPS Annual Meeting will focus on the diversity of plant communities along our national river, the Potomac. The Potowmack Chapter lies in the fall line region, where the Piedmont meets the Coastal Plain. Despite our area's urbanization, spectacular local and national parks line the river and protect dramatic falls, fascinating geologic features, meadows, bogs, and marshes - all along a surprisingly short section of the river. During the weekend, we've lined up a variety of field trips to some outstanding natural areas, gardens, and herbaria. On Friday evening, enjoy a dessert reception followed by a presentation. Saturday night features the annual meeting, a buffet dinner, and our keynote speaker. We hope you will join us.

Accommodations: Rooms are being held until **Friday, August 22nd** at the Courtyard by Marriott, Alexandria Pentagon South, 4641 Kenmore Ave., Alexandria, VA 22304; \$99/2beds/night plus tax and \$10 parking fee. Call **(703) 751-4510** and mention **VNPS Annual Meeting**. Other local hotels include the Comfort Inn (703) 642-3422, Econo Lodge (703) 979-4100 and Best Western (703) 979-4400. **Field trips will leave across the street from the Marriott and it is the banquet location; we encourage you to stay there.**

Directions to the Marriott: From the south: Traveling on I-95, take I-395 north towards Washington, D.C. Take Exit 5, East (King Street, Rte. 7). Make first right on Menokin Drive then turn right on Van Dorn Street. Travel one mile, turn left on Kenmore Avenue.

From west: Take I-66 east to Falls Church, exit at Route 7 and head east (right). It's 8 miles to Menokin Drive. Turn right, then right on Van Dorn St. Travel one mile, turn left at Kenmore Ave.

Directions to Green Spring Gardens: From the south or north: From I-395, take Exit 3B (Little River Turnpike West, Rte 236). Go 1.25 miles, then turn right on Braddock Road. Stay in the right hand lane and turn right onto Witch Hazel Road, the entrance to Green Spring. Go right at the stop sign to the Horticulture Center.

From the west: From I-495, take Exit 52B (Little River Turnpike East, Rte 236). Travel 3.5 miles, turn left on Braddock Road. Follow directions above.

For maps, information on restaurants and links to field trip sites, visit www.vnps.org or contact the VNPS State Office at Blandy.

Friday Schedule

Registration and Friday events are at **Green Spring Gardens**, 4603 Green Spring Rd., Alexandria, VA 22312

1:00 to 5:00 p.m. and 6:30 to 8:00 p.m. Registration

2:00 to 5:00 p.m. Plant sales at the Potowmack Chapter propagation beds. Proceeds donated to VNPS.

7:00 to 8:00 p.m. Dessert reception and social hour, book and plant sale to benefit VNPS.

8:00 to 9:00 p.m. **Friday Evening Program: Notable Natural Areas and Flora of the Northern Virginia Region.** Presentation by Rod Simmons, plant ecologist and VNPS Registry Chair

Friday Field Trips

1. **George Mason University Herbarium**, Tours at 2:00, 3:00 and 4:00 p.m.

Join herbarium director, Dr. Andrea Weeks, for a tour of the Ted R. Bradley Herbarium on the campus of George Mason University. This research facility houses over 60,000 dried and pressed plant

specimens, including a synoptic collection of Northern Virginia flora that is used by students, scientists, and natural resource professionals as a reference collection for ongoing floristics projects. Gain insight into archival specimen preparation, curation, and how the "business" of taxonomic work gets done! Notable specimens and the extensive reference-text collection will be available for viewing, as well. (Directions to herbarium will be sent with registration confirmation).

2. **Turkeycock Run Stream Valley Park**, 2 to 5 p.m. Visit an upland Oak-Heath Forest at one of the highest points in Fairfax County. Terrace Gravel Forests are old-age communities characterized by gravelly soils deposited as glacial outwash from the ancestral Potomac River. A variety of heath species, oaks, hickories and remnant American chestnut will be seen as well as some fall wildflowers. Led by Rod Simmons, plant ecologist and VNPS Registry Site chair. Meet at Green Spring Gardens. Moderate

3. **Native Plant Garden tour, Green Spring Gardens**, 3:00 to 5:00 pm. The Virginia Native Plant Garden demonstration garden features a diversity of showy natives from many regions of Virginia. These natives perform well in garden settings of naturalistic designs to more traditional mixed border, perennial border, shrub border, and rock wall settings. There is also a remnant magnolia bog in the garden area. Tour led by Green Spring plant curator and horticulturist Brenda Skarpohl. Easy

Saturday Field Trips

All trips start at 8:30 a.m. from the parking lot behind Francis C. Hammond Middle School, 4646 Seminary Rd, Alexandria, VA 22304 across from the Marriott. Enter parking lot by turning right off Seminary Rd. at Pickett St. Turn right on Pegram St. to the parking lot.

1. **Riverbend Park**: Morning kayak trip and afternoon plant walk.

Explore the fascinating interaction between geology, geography and plants along the Potomac River. Aquatic and riverine plants and geologic features explored by kayak; floodplain and upland forest featured in the afternoon. \$30 extra for kayak rental fee includes lifejackets and paddles. Trip led by Martha Slover, geography instructor, George Mason University and VNPS board member. Moderate

2. **Great Falls National Park**: Explore the bedrock terrace habitats along Mather Gorge. Focus will be on rare, natural communities such as the Piedmont/Central Appalachian Riverside Outcrop Prairie and the Potomac Gorge Riverside Outcrop Barrens. Late summer species in flower include Indian grass, big bluestem, western sunflower, tall coreopsis, and riverside goldenrod. We also may explore Extensive rocky shoreline scour zone habitats may also be explored. Leaders: Cris Fleming, field ecologist and Maryland Native Plant Society president and Gary Fleming, vegetation ecologist, Division of Natural Heritage. Moderate

3. **Mount Vernon Historic Site**: For the native plant lover with an interest in history: Walk through the extensive upland and lowland forests behind the scenes at George Washington's historic Mt. Vernon on the banks of the Potomac River. Focus will be native trees and shrubs in the wild and those selected by General Washington to landscape the grounds of his beloved home. In the last hour and a half, tour the mansion, outbuildings, formal gardens, threshing barn, demonstration farm, and museum. Led by Dr. Elizabeth Wells, botany professor at George Washington University who specializes in native and naturalized plants of the east coast and early floristics records in 18th C Virginia. Extra \$11 reduced rate entrance fee. Easy to moderate

4. **Chain Bridge Flats**: This area offers flood-scoured Piedmont bedrock-terrace habitat with unusual flora and vegetation, including several Midwestern disjuncts or range-limit populations, such as prairie redroot, big bluestem, shingle oak, wild blue indigo, and rock grape, as well as various Appalachian, Piedmont, and Coastal Plain species. Slow hiking pace in the rugged terrain of the Flats, easy return on

the C&O Canal towpath, about 2-3 miles each way. Trip leader, Dr. Larry Morse, served as Chief Botanist of The Nature Conservancy and as North American Botanist for NatureServe. Moderate to difficult

5. Occoquan Bay National Wildlife Refuge: This walk will focus on early autumn meadow plants, birds and butterflies. The diverse wildlife habitat of the refuge is valued for its upland meadows and wetlands on Occoquan Bay. A botanical survey by Nicky Staunton and Elaine Haug found 699 plant species. Other surveys included butterflies (74 species) and dragonflies (59 species). Butterfly tagging demonstration during lunch break. Bring binoculars, hat, sun-screen, insect-repellant. Trip led by Nicky Staunton, board member of the Flora of Virginia Project and past president, VNPS and Elaine Haug, Information Manager, Smithsonian Botany Department. Easy

6. Huntley Meadows Park: This 1,500 acre park is set in a coastal plain lowland created by an ancient meander of the Potomac River. Boardwalks and trails wind through freshwater marshes, shrub swamps, forests and meadows. Morning exploration of wetland with a rich variety of fall bloomers likely, such as white turtlehead and climbing hempweed. Opportunity to observe many dragonflies and birds as well. After lunch and a look at the park herbarium, explore the park's spectacular meadows where tickseed sunflower, purple gerardia, grasses, sunflowers, and many varieties of goldenrod will be out in full force. Led by Karla Jamir, Huntley Meadow's herbarium coordinator and certified naturalist. Easy

7. Gardens of Washinton D.C.: Bill McLaughlin, Curator of the U.S. Botanic Garden will lead a tour of the National Garden. The garden features species from both piedmont and coastal plain habitats that impart the distinctive character of our flora, while emphasizing the garden-worthiness of those plants familiar and unfamiliar to horticulture. An exhibit garden on Rainscaping is also at the Botanic Gardens. Next, visit the beautiful, native landscape gardens of the National Museum of the American Indian. After lunch, explore the Smithsonian's Butterfly Garden with an option to visit the Natural History Museum's new Butterfly Exhibit. Easy

8. Suitland Bog, Maryland: Visit one of the most diverse of the surviving Fall Line Terrace Gravel Magnolia Bogs. These bog-like wetlands, while technically spring-fed fens, were once common throughout the Fall Line in the greater Washington D.C. area, but are now globally rare. Sweetbay magnolia, poison sumac, dangleberry, redmilkweed, rough aster and many other characteristic bog species will be seen. Trip led by Mark Strong, taxonomic botanist with the Smithsonian Institution. Half-day trip. Easy

9. Travilah Serpentine Barrens, MD: This is the only example in our region of the globally rare forested serpentine barrens community and is the largest site of its kind in the Mid-Atlantic region. These communities are underlain by ultramafic rock which produces a soil that can inhibit plant growth. The plant community is characterized by "flatwoods" of oaks, hickories, short leaf pine, grassy glades and plants such as Leonard's skullcap and wild crabapple. Field trip continues at Blockhouse Point a rugged forested area with disjunct montane species such as shagbark hickory, white pine, table mountain pine and cucumber magnolia. Trip led by Carole Bergmann, forest ecologist with Maryland National Capital Park and Planning Commission. Moderate

10. Barcroft Magnolia Bog and Terrace Gravel Forest: A half-day walk with a naturalist in and around Arlington's most significant natural plant community. Magnolia bogs are globally-rare (G1) wetland and this one was first described by W. L. McAtee in the early 20th C. Participants will have an opportunity to observe a floristically unique patchwork of wooded seeps, a remnant Acidic Seepage Swamp (S3), and the terrace gravel forest that produced the wetlands. Led by Greg Zell, Arlington County Chief Naturalist. Half-day trip. Moderate

Saturday Evening Schedule

Social hour/Buffer/Annual Meeting and Guest Speaker

Courtyard by Marriott, Alexandria Pentagon South, 4641 Kenmore Ave., Alexandria, VA

6:00 p.m. to 7:00 p.m. Social hour and cash bar

7:00 p.m. to 8:00 p.m. Buffet

8:00 p.m. **Keynote Presentation:** *Whither Potomac Wildness? Proximal to both the Coastal Plain and Piedmont provinces, the tidal-Potomac watershed below the fall line retains remnants of an impressive biodiversity once sustained by extensive forestlands. Even as we commemorate lingering examples bequeathed us by history, such as tidal-freshwater marshes, regionally endemic Magnolia Bogs, and pockets of shell-marl forest, the need for conservation looms lest we pass along little in the face of spreading urbanization.*

Keynote Speaker: Jim Long is coordinator of the Mattawoman Watershed Society and has been involved in southern Maryland and Potomac River conservation issues for many years. A Ph.D. physicist by training, he has assisted in field studies of Mattawoman Creek and its watershed, including botanical surveys and freshwater mussel assessments, and has led assays of habitat usage by migratory fish. Dr. Long has held numerous Maryland Scientific Collecting Permits, is a longtime, active member of the Maryland Native Plant Society, and was recently awarded the Conservationist of the Year award by the Southern Maryland Audubon Society.

Sunday Schedule

VNPS Board Meeting, Long Branch Nature Center 9:30 a.m. to 12:30 p.m.

Field Trips are scheduled from 9:00 to 1:00 p.m.

1 **Great Falls Park:** This 800 acre National Park is located at the fall line of the Potomac River where the piedmont and coastal plain meet and offers participants an opportunity to explore a wide variety of habitats and view colorful and sometimes rare native plants in bloom such as the riverbank goldenrod. Trip led by Marion Lobstein, associate professor of botany at Northern Virginia Community College and Joe Metzger, Maryland Native Plant Society field trip leader.

2. **Turkey Run Park:** Plant and Geology Walk. Mature forest with pockets of "old-growth" trees over 200 years old including the largest specimens recorded in the Potomac Gorge of sugar maple, tulip poplar, white oak, American beech. Floodplain and upland forest, deep ravines, streams and rocky bluffs. A key Potomac Gorge site, with interesting geologic features. Led by Rod Simmons, plant ecologist and Tony Fleming, geologist, formerly with the USGS.

3. **Barcroft Magnolia Bog:** See Saturday trips, number 10.

Registration Form