

A publication of the VIRGINIA NATIVE PLANT SOCIETY  
*Conserving wild flowers and wild places*

www.vnps.org



A swallowtail butterfly nectars on showy orchis (*Galearis spectabilis*). (All photos by Sally Anderson)



Our group: Sally Anderson, Judy Falk, Marjorie Prochaska, Carrie Blair, John Fry, kneeling is Robin Blair.

## The Smokies dazzle visitors from Virginia

The wildflower display in the Great Smoky Mountains National Park had reached mythic proportions for me, so when the idea came up that several of us from the Piedmont Chapter might go, I jumped at the chance. Six of us drove down for the five-day event April 22-26. We registered online for our guided walks, choosing from over 150 morning, afternoon or full day hikes. The pace was generally gentle. Strenuous hikes were labeled as such, so we avoided those. Shorter hikes were two to three miles long. Our longest hikes were six to seven miles up the fabled Porter's Creek Trail and to see the old trees in

Albright Grove. The guides were terrific. Many had connections with the University of Tennessee and have been leading hikes for years.

Each day one plant in particular dazzled. First it was the dwarf crested iris, *Iris cristata*. We allowed as how we had never seen anything like it—whole beds of it in places—and I wanted it for my home garden! The next day it was false Solomon's seal, now Solomon's plume, *Maianthemum racemosum*. Who would have thought this plant could bring so much joy? We saw it everywhere—huge and majestic—and when it was interleaved with Maidenhair fern, *Adiantum pedatum*, competing success-

fully for space and attention on our last day, we shook our heads in amazement.

Did I mention the sedums and the sedges? *Sedum ternatum* was blooming everywhere—sun and shade—and I want that, too, for my garden. And how can one forget the seer-sucker sedge, *Carex plantaginea*? The name alone brings a smile, but when arrayed on a hillside in a grand descending triangle, looking for all like a landscape designer's pièce de résistance, one nods humbly to that Great Designer in the Sky. We saw, too, the rare Fraser's sedge, (See *Nature's extravaganza*, page 6)

**INSIDE: Flora still important to Clayton descendants, p. 3**

## From the president . . . . .

# *VNPS is about plants and plant people*

Dear VNPSers

We had a very successful trip to Southwest Virginia in mid May. The mountains were a delight, and Shirley Gay filled our days with many interesting tour locations. We plan to repeat this trip, or at least organize a similar trip, in the future.

Our office is now equipped to take credit cards by phone, by mail or in person. We hope to be able to offer online credit card payments before too long. We are also working to make the service available to chapters for use at plant sales and other events.

Our longtime webmaster Sylvia Ori has stepped down from that position after many years of providing this special service to VNPS. Thank you so much Sylvia! The Executive Committee chose to present her with a gift certificate for the Potowmack Chapter plant sale on your behalf.

Meanwhile, our website redesign is under

way, and our web expert Kevin Hipps is running the site temporarily. I've asked one or more people from each chapter to evaluate our changes and make suggestions. If you have an interest in this, or experience with websites, we can use your help. If I did not invite you and you are willing to help, let me know.

Soon a group of us will be leaving for the Bruce Peninsula. I just received a report of a sighting of a large group of blooming ram's head orchid, *Cypripedium arietinum*, and I think we have an exciting week in store.

Go out and see wildflowers!

Your President, Sally Anderson



## Rare plants discovered and rediscovered in Virginia

The Virginia Department of Conservation and Recreation (DCR) announced in its recent newsletter about the newly documented presence of three plants by Natural Heritage botanists. Two of the plants owe their new celebrity to botanist Johnny Townsend. Recent exploration of lands along the Clinch River in Scott County, Virginia, by Townsend uncovered a population of *Symphyotrichum ontarionis*, otherwise known as Ontario aster or bottomland aster. This white-flowered species was previously unknown in Virginia but is distributed widely, being known from Quebec to Georgia and westward to Texas and the northern plains.

Despite this large range, Ontario aster is almost entirely absent from eastern seaboard states. This species is usually found in streamside or bottomland habitats and is often found in association

with limestone. There are several confusing species of white asters in the mountains of Virginia, making additional populations of Ontario aster a challenge to locate. Since suitable habitat seems abundant, it is not known whether Ontario aster is truly rare in the state or simply overlooked.

Harvey's beaksedge, *Rhynchospora harveyi*, has been rediscovered by Townsend, over 65 years after it was last seen in the state. This rare sedge was last collected by Harvard botanist M.L. Fernald in Sussex County in 1941. The species was rediscovered at Difficult Creek Natural Area Preserve in Halifax County, a Piedmont property known for its concentration of globally and regionally rare species of plants. Harvey's beaksedge is known from fire-maintained savannas of the coastal plain in the southeastern United States but is also known to inhabit glade-like habitats of the interior. Prescribed burns carried out

at Difficult Creek have no doubt benefited this species of open habitats.

In Botetourt County Natural Heritage Field Botanist Allen Belden located a new population of the rare shrub piratebush, *Buckleya distichophylla*, on Sheets Mountain. This globally rare species is found only in portions of the mountains of Virginia, North Carolina, and Tennessee. The habitat on Sheets Mountain is a narrow ridgcrest capped by sandstone.

The new population of piratebush consists of over 1,000 plants, making it one of the largest known concentrations of the plant in the world. It might be second only to DCR's Poor Mountain Natural Area Preserve in Roanoke County, Virginia. Piratebush is a hemiparasite and is known to utilize a variety of conifers as host species. At Sheets Mountain the host species is table mountain pine.

Flora Project update

# Clayton descendants involved in plants and history

Imagine Chris Ludwig's surprise last June when he got an e-mail from John Clayton. This John Clayton is a descendant of the colonial Virginia botanist upon whose descriptions and collections was based *Flora Virginica*, published in the mid-1700s and the only flora the state has ever had. That ancient book will soon be supplanted by the *Flora of Virginia*, of which Ludwig is a co-author. Clayton, who lives in Los Angeles, wrote to introduce himself and offer his help to the Flora of Virginia Project, which Ludwig also directs.

Fast-forward to March, when Ludwig got a call from Richard and Leonie Smith, of Forest Grove, Ore., near Portland. Richard, too, is descended from John Clayton. The Smiths were coming to Virginia and wanted to drop by Flora Project headquarters, in the Division of Natural Heritage of the Virginia Department of Conservation and Recreation, in Richmond. The renown of the Flora Project had twice echoed back from the West Coast.

The Smiths and Clayton share a love of history and interest in Clayton genealogy, but the science and nature gene seems to have been transmitted undiluted to the present-day members of the line.

"We live and breathe the environment, if you will," said Richard Smith. In addition to their garden, which includes natives, he and Leonie raise hazelnuts and walnuts, as well as Douglass firs, but they have woods as

well, "covered with native plants," she said. They are "custom farmers": in addition to their own orchards, they farm lands owned by next-door neighbors, for a total of 400 acres. They use just a minimal amount of pesticides. "There's no point in eliminating all the bugs," Richard says. "There are a lot of beneficial ones," Leonie adds. They also use natural controls, such as pheromones for trapping the moth of the hazelnut worm.

On his property in the Hollywood Hills, John Clayton is a grower too, albeit on a smaller scale, gardening and raising citrus fruits, apples, seedless grapes, and pomegranates. But "I have a twin love," he says, "fauna, and I raise macaws." Clayton has succeeded where the Los Angeles zoo has failed, in getting endangered macaws to breed in captivity. "I like to think of that as the continuation of the Clayton tradition."

It's important to look toward the future, Leonie says, but it's also important to look back. She unfolded a family tree branching back to her husband's famous forebear. They had with them a copy of the 1963 biography by Edmund Berkeley and Dorothy Smith Berkeley, *John Clayton: Pioneer of American Botany*, a compendium of just about everything known on the botanist. And they have collected some family letters from the period of the American Revolution. Clayton lived from 1694 to 1773.



**John Clayton, 1694-1773**

The extant John Clayton managed to find a copy of *Flora Virginica* "almost by accident in L.A. in a rare-book show." His grandmother, Lilyan Putnam Clayton, pursued the family's genealogy and owed much of her success to the Clayton longevity. Lilyan, born around 1883, received the family's oral history through her husband's great-uncle, who was born in 1808 and died in 1916. "His father had been in the Revolutionary War, and his last son was in the first World War," Clayton said. It must have been like time travel: she was back to John Clayton's time in just two generations.

The Smiths left Richmond bound for the Clayton homeland, Gloucester and Mathews Counties and the Piankatank River and environs. They birded the Chesapeake Bay beaches in Mathews and visited friends they had met on their first visit to the area several years ago. On that trip, they dropped by an archaeological dig at Clayton's home site, which lay on a 250-acre tract the Claytons owned. John, too, visited that dig, in 2003. When the relatives get together for the first time, they'll have a lot of common ground with which to break the ice.

*Bland Crowder  
Pocahontas & John Clayton Chapters*

The *Flora of Virginia*, expected in 2012, will be the first flora for the state since *Flora Virginica*. It will be a 1,400-page, illustrated manual of Virginia's 3,600 native and naturalized plant species, with the most modern taxonomic information available. To learn more about the Flora Project, or to make a donation or pledge, please visit our website at [floraofvirginia.org](http://floraofvirginia.org).

## *Native plants have much to offer in landscape design*

**Native Plants: In Design** was the focus of the 23<sup>rd</sup> annual Lahr Symposium at the U.S. National Arboretum in Washington, D.C. As the theme suggests, all speaker topics revolved around the idea of how and why to use native plants in the landscape.

The opening speaker was Claire Sawyers of the Scott Arboretum of Swarthmore College in Pennsylvania. Her Talk "The Authentic Garden: Five Principles for Cultivating a Sense of Place," highlighted topics she discusses in her book of the same title (Timber Press 2007). She began by exploring the influences of landscape design in America that range from English to Japanese gardens. The truly authentic American Garden Style, however, is deeply influenced by our natural surroundings. A sense of place is achieved when the landscape says you are in Virginia or you are in Colorado or California. Achieving sense of place is quite easy by keeping five principles in mind when planning the landscape: (1) Take note of the elements in natural areas surrounding you and work with what nature gives you. (2) Obtain beauty from the elements that serve a function in your landscape. (3) Use indigenous materials. (4) Join indoors and outdoors by blurring the line that exists between the two, and (5) Develop ways to engage visitors in the landscape by creating a physical "challenge" such as stepping over a log. This involvement makes the visitor slow down. It removes other distractions so that they are paying full attention to their surroundings.

The next presentation spoke of urban surroundings and the need to restore diversity to the urban forest. Richard T. Olsen, a Research Geneticist at the U.S. National Arboretum, began by saying "Urban Sprawl: Cut down all the trees and name the streets after them." Unfortunately, this is what we have done in urban areas – we have stripped the sense of place and diversity that once existed.

The 400-year-old idea of planting perfectly symmetrical trees along avenues in straight lines began in America with L'Enfant's vision of Washington, D.C. L'Enfant's inspiration was derived from French and Italian landscapes where avenues of trees were a sign of power. This old tradition destroys diversity and sense of place.

To move away from this view of the landscape, we need to create a market that gives the nursery industry incentive to "think outside the box" of perfectly symmetrical trees that are created via cloning. By cloning trees, we are losing the genetic diversity that occurs in nature. An example of this is red maple (*Acer rubrum*) where only the ones with red fall foliage are available and none of the ones with yellow fall foliage are being propagated. Another example is willow oak (*Quercus phellos*) that is currently grown from seed but nurseries are experimenting with cloning instead so they can achieve more uniformity.

Additionally, many trees are not available in the nursery trade. Nurseries need plants that are easy to propagate, easy to transplant and very adaptable. Many bottomland forest trees are easy to produce and adapt well to urban situations so there are many of these species in the trade. Xeric trees, on the other hand, present production problems and are not readily available in the nursery trade. Hickories, which are not available (except from some native plant growers), present an interesting challenge to the nursery industry because of their taproot. You are probably thinking oaks have a taproot too and they are available in nurseries. Evidently, nurserymen cut the root on an oak when it first grows out of the acorn. The oak will then produce a branching root system that facilitates nursery production. The hickory, on the other hand, will not form a branching root system. It will grow a taproot, and when cut will continue to grow taproots,

thus making it cost prohibitive for the nursery industry, which needs to have plants of a saleable size in two to three years. Ultimately, with the destruction of natural lands it will be up to the gardens of the 21<sup>st</sup> century and the nursery industry to decide what plant species will be here for future generations.

The third and final speaker of the day was Warren Byrd of Nelson Byrd Woltz Landscape Architects who spoke of gardens for the 21<sup>st</sup> century in "An Eye for the Natural and the Art of Design." His firm applies a sustainable approach to the landscape by incorporating site specific cultural and ecological characteristics. They emphasize regional native plants but will also use adapted non-native, non-invasive species. They recognize that water is an important resource so they minimize irrigation and impervious surfaces. Water is celebrated by incorporating rainwater collection sites that are often water gardens that provide habitat. Because all things are connected, Byrd's firm incorporates natural history into the landscape that attracts wildlife. Cultural history is another feature they always try to incorporate into a site. The firm's philosophy is simply knowing your region and knowing you are doing this to benefit all living things including people.

Along with these three presentations, there were three concurrent sessions to choose from and a native plant sale featuring nine nurseries. This symposium is held annually on the last Saturday of March and the organizers always do a wonderful job at choosing themes and accompanying speakers. I have attended the Lahr Symposium at the U.S. National Arboretum for quite a few years and always leave inspired by the new things I have learned.

*Kim Strader, VNPS Horticulture Chair*

# Rain garden book speaks to southern landscapes

If you have ever wondered about how your garden and landscape affect the environment, specifically your water supplies, then pick up a copy of *Rain Gardening in the South: Ecologically Designed Gardens for Drought, Deluge, & Everything in Between* by North Carolina State University horticulturists Helen Kraus and Anne Spafford. The truth is that home gardens and landscapes contribute substantial amounts to water pollution—but they also can be part of the solution. Rain gardens to the rescue! These specially designed gardens capture rainfall flowing through your yard (known as runoff), store that water to nurture its plants, and cleanse runoff, thus removing the pollutants it carries with it. Sounds good, doesn't it? Ready for more good news? Rain gardens are fairly easy and inexpensive to create having a defined structure made up of only five basic components. Learn about the next great gardening practice that will define a landscape as being both beautiful and water-wise. Be the first house in your neighborhood to create one!

Rain gardens maximize rainwater, enhance the landscape, and promote good environmental stewardship. Runoff contributes significantly to polluting our waterways. The rain garden, which functions as a miniature reservoir and filtration system, offers an effective, visually pleasing solution that dramatically reduces toxic runoff, resulting in cleaner rivers, lakes, and oceans.

The authors define the rain garden as “a garden slightly sunken below grade designed to capture rainfall, store that water to nurture the garden plants, and cleanse runoff, thus removing pollution.” Ironically, rain gardens are more drought-tolerant than conventional gardens. Because of their plant selection and ability to store water, rain gardens flourish during dry spells, as well as rainy seasons, making them particularly conducive to the South.

“Water-wise gardeners are conscious of both the need to limit their water use and the need to minimize runoff, thereby dramatically reducing water pollution,” write Kraus and Spafford. “Not only are rain gardens extremely effective in addressing water and pollution issues, they are gorgeous.”

*Rain Gardening in the South* addresses the specific environmental circumstances of southern gardens, such as climate issues, plant selection, and soil types. It details step-by-step instruction on constructing a garden, from the design stage to post-planting maintenance, including plant lists and troubleshooting tips.

*Rain Gardening in the South* is a user-friendly guide, offering a solid introduction to this important gardening movement, as well as an easy reference. Complete with design strategies, construction tips, plant selection guides, and even a troubleshooting section are included.

This book is a “must-have” on any environmentally responsible gardener's bookshelf. Published by Eno Publishers, a nonprofit regional publishing group, *Rain Gardening in the South* is a fun read, that specifically addresses problems that arise in southern gardens.

The book is illustrated, four-color, soft-cover, 144 pages, 7 ½” x 9 ¼”. Its retail price is \$19.95 (ISBN: 978-0-9820771-0-8). It is now available at local bookstores or you can visit Eno at [www.enopublishers.org](http://www.enopublishers.org).

## Goats tackle invasives



There's a new tool being used effectively across the country to control invasive species -- goats! In the Appalachian hill pastures of West Virginia goats have proven quite proficient at removing autumn olive, multi-flora rose, kudzu, brambles, thistles, English ivy, knotweed, privet, and other invasives. The animals are not bothered by thorns and because of their digestive process the seeds are so well digested that future growth of the plants is minimized.

Over the last decade the goat method has proven successful in such far-flung places as California, Washington state, Oregon, Nebraska, Arizona, North Carolina, Alabama and Maryland. In New Jersey, goats were used to help restore the wetland habitat of a rare bog turtle whose habitat had been compromised due to invasives such as common reed and Japanese stiltgrass.

### 'Exotic Workdays' in SNP

Help clear the Shenandoah National Park of invasive exotic plants. See which "Exotic Workday" works for you. All the removal days are Saturdays from 10 a.m. to 2 p.m.

**June 13** - Big Meadow - Garlic Mustard; **June 27** - Hogwallow - Mile-a-minute; **July 18** - Hogwallow - Mile-a-minute; **Aug. 15** - Swift Run - Wavyleaf Basketgrass; and **Sept. 12** - Big Meadow - Garlic Mustard. **September 26** National Public Lands Day; the time for this workday will be announced later.

If you are interested in coming out to volunteer your time to help get rid of invasive/exotic plant species from Shenandoah National Park, contact biological technician Sara Hall (540-999-3500 x3437 or [sara\\_hall@nps.gov](mailto:sara_hall@nps.gov)) and she will give more details about what will occur. Tell your friends and family. Just wear old clothes that can stand some dirt and bring water and a lunch. The park will provide the tools and gloves.



Marjorie Prochaska studies a fire pink (*Silene virginica*).



Fraser's sedge (*Cymophyllus fraserianus*, formerly *Carex fraseri*) in bloom.

## • Nature's extravaganza

(Continued from page 1)

*Cymophyllus fraseriana*, with its curiously showy flower, common in forests that have never been logged.

When the trail dipped down to a stream crossing, we invariably saw brook lettuce, *Saxifraga micranthidifolia*, in vigorous bloom, and we had one good sighting of umbrella leaf, *Diphylleia cymosa*. Then we stumbled upon a marvelous *Hexastylis arifolia* hiding dozens of little brown jugs under its leaves. Throughout the park nature conspired to give us the most glorious show of (what else?)

showy orchis, *Galearis spectabilis*, that any of us had ever seen. This tiny plant was in its prime, over and over again, reminding us of what beauty lies at our feet on the forest floor.

When we looked up, we saw the big trees and realized why biologist Ted Bradley called the southern Appalachians "the heart of the biome." The tulip poplars were twice the height of what I have seen in Virginia. We didn't know that yellow birch could grow so high or that red maple could become so gnarly. It was sad to see the dying hemlocks, giants still standing,

that will one day come crashing down, but high in the canopy we could see the Carolina silverbell, *Halesia carolina*, blooming. Carrie Blair measured the circumference of one and calculated a whopping 32 inches in diameter! One ought to plant this in the garden just to be able to see its charming blooms at close range.

I understand now why folks go back year after year. The Great Smokies quite capture you. Maybe we'll do this again next year. Stay tuned.

Marjorie Prochaska, Piedmont Chapter



Measuring the circumference of a large silverbell (*Halesia carolina*).



A rich slope with solomon's plume (*Maianthemum racemosum*) and maidenhair fern (*Adiantum pedatum*).

# Shenandoah uses many avenues to support native plants

To support the VNPS mission for education, advocacy and activities that promote appreciation, stewardship and appropriate use of native plants, members of the Shenandoah Chapter have been involved with several projects. Here is a summary of what they have done since the beginning of 2009.

- A presentation on biodiversity and how native plants are an integral part of an ecosystem was given in February to Augusta County Envirothon students. The students were learning about natural systems such as geology, soils, forestry and wildlife biology in order to design a site management plan for a Nature Conservancy area in southwestern Virginia. Envirothon is a national scholastic competition for high school students interested in the environment.

- The chapter was asked by Sandy Greene (Headwaters Soil and Water Conservation District) to contribute information and photos for a sign about native plants displayed at the Marl Creek Education Trail at McCormick's Farm. Photos illustrating native plants found at the site were provided along with a brief statement about each one. The sign

will hopefully be in place this fall.

- The chapter was contacted to support Blacks' Run Cleanup in Harrisonburg by helping work teams identify and remove invasive plants from three areas along Black's Run. The day did not go quite as planned as no work teams were allocated to the project. However, the interest is there, the need certainly is there and hopefully, next year will be more effective. Many people stopped at our information table.

- Earth Day in Staunton provided another opportunity for Shenandoah members to give out information and speak to people about native plants. The event was well attended and resulted in at least two new members! A slide show about native plants was presented to the Hill and Valley Garden Club of Luray. The program was very well received. They would like to see a more "native plants in the garden" oriented presentation at some future time.

- Invasive plants were removed from two locations: Deep Run Ponds Natural Heritage site in Rockingham County and Loft Mountain in Shenandoah National Park. At Deep Run Ponds, members started picking up

trash along the road in 2002 and pulling garlic mustard in 2005. Although the chapter no longer picks up the trash because the road was adopted by a local family, the annual garlic mustard removal is showing definite positive results in the two areas being concentrated on. The Loft Mountain project just started this April. There will be several more workdays scheduled this year for sensitive areas in the park including the wavy leaved basket grass site in Swift Run Gap.

- The George Washington National Forest Road Surveys for native and invasive plants continue through the efforts of a group of very dedicated botanists and data entry people. Since 2005, and sporadically before that, Forest Service roads have been monitored to identify and locate native species for protection from herbicide spraying. A coordinated effort is made to survey all the roads identified by the Forest Service as intended to be sprayed in their annual roadside maintenance program. Annual meetings with the Forest Service continue to help define and refine this project.

*From the Shenandoah Chapter newsletter*

See the address label for your membership expiration date  
**VNPS Membership/Renewal Form**

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\*Please designate one person as delegate for Associate membership

To give a gift membership or join additional chapters: Enclose dues, name, address, and chapter (non-voting memberships in any other than your primary chapter are \$5)

I wish to make an additional contribution to \_\_\_ VNPS or \_\_\_\_\_ Chapter in the amount of \_\_\_ \$10 \_\_\_ \$25 \_\_\_ \$50 \_\_\_ \$100 \_\_\_ \$(Other) \_\_\_\_\_

Check if you do not wish your name to be exchanged with similar organizations

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Which chapter do you wish to join? (See [www.vnps.org](http://www.vnps.org)) \_\_\_\_\_

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 The deadline for the next issue is **June 25**

## *Natural Treasures Hunt appeal continues*

Our 2009 Appeal letter went out this spring. Our goal is to raise money for a special project of the Natural Heritage Program. The funds will go toward searching for and documenting a group of plants that have incomplete records and have not been visited for many years. Thanks to those of you who have made contributions, and we hope the rest of you won't forget us. The more we raise, the more plants will be searched for in Virginia habitats across the state. Costs are estimated at \$500 per plant for a botanist to research a plant, find it, and document the work. The data will also help the Flora of Virginia Project, since the plants and information can be more accurately portrayed in the new book. Because we have switched to a spring appeal, we will spend this calendar year accumulating donations, but the project will be carried out by Heritage personnel in the 2010 growing season, when they will know what we can give them to work with.

*Mark you calendar: VNPS Annual Meeting, Sept. 25-27*

## **Come to Salem for the Annual Meeting**

The VNPS annual meeting will be in the mountains this September 25 to 27 in Salem, Va. Watch in the next newsletter for all the meeting details as well as a registration form. If you like mountains and a great diversity of habitats you will love this year's get together. Our featured speakers are Peter Heus of "Enchanters Gardens" in West Virginia. Peter will speak on propagation. He will be followed by Professor Doug Tallamy. He will talk about his book *Bringing Nature Home*. Put the two together and you will be able to make your yard wildlife friendly with lots of native flora.

There are walks for the brave to wetlands, mountains, The Nature Conservancy and Virginia Natural Heritage Preserves as well as visits to the Jefferson National Forest and Blue Ridge Parkway. We plan to show folks the Alleghenies and the Blue Ridge.

We understand that there is money needed for the Flora of Virginia project. Here is your opportunity to do your part and have fun at the same time. The Blue Ridge and New River Chapters are planning a silent auction to help with the project. See you in September.

*Butch Kelly, Blue Ridge Wildflower Society*