

THE POCAHONTAS CHAPTER OF THE VIRGINIA NATIVE PLANT SOCIETY

December 2004



Spiderwort
(*Tradescantia virginiana*)

DECEMBER MEETING

“Plans for The Upcoming Year”

Thursday, December 2, 2004 at 7:00 PM
Breakout Room in the Education and Library Complex
of the Lewis Ginter Botanical Gardens

For the December meeting we will have a planning session for the upcoming year. We need to discuss the election of new officers, future field trips and potential new projects for the chapter. We also plan to have some holiday refreshments so if you can, please bring finger food such as cookies, or anything one can eat with one's fingers.

CHAPTER NEWS

November 14 Walk at Zuni Pine Barrens lead by Darren Loomis.

The field trip to the Zuni Pine Barrens was attended by about 10 people and was very interesting. The Zuni Pine Barrens includes the Antioch Pines Natural Area Preserve and the Blackwater Ecological Preserve, two adjacent preserves, both in Isle of Wight County. We visited the Blackwater Ecological Preserve, a three hundred plus acre site which includes some of the rarest habitat types in the Commonwealth of Virginia. This area is the northernmost habitat for longleaf pine (*pinus palustris*). These trees were once more common in Virginia, but by the late 19th century, most of the trees had been removed for timber. Then came a brief period when the Preserve land was left alone because too few trees remained to make their harvesting commercially viable. But in the 20th century, a new threat arose: the era of fire suppression that began around 1920. Longleaf-pine communities are what are known as fire-maintained ecosystems which require regular fires to keep the ground from becoming so covered with litter and the understory so clogged with bushes that the pine seeds cannot germinate or grow to maturity even if they do manage to take hold. Fire suppression not only effects the pines, but also

other fire adapted understory plants are choked out by underbrush and litter. By the time the preserve was created in 1985 many species that had been described in the 1930's, before fire suppression, had disappeared. After the Preserves were created a series of proscribed burns were



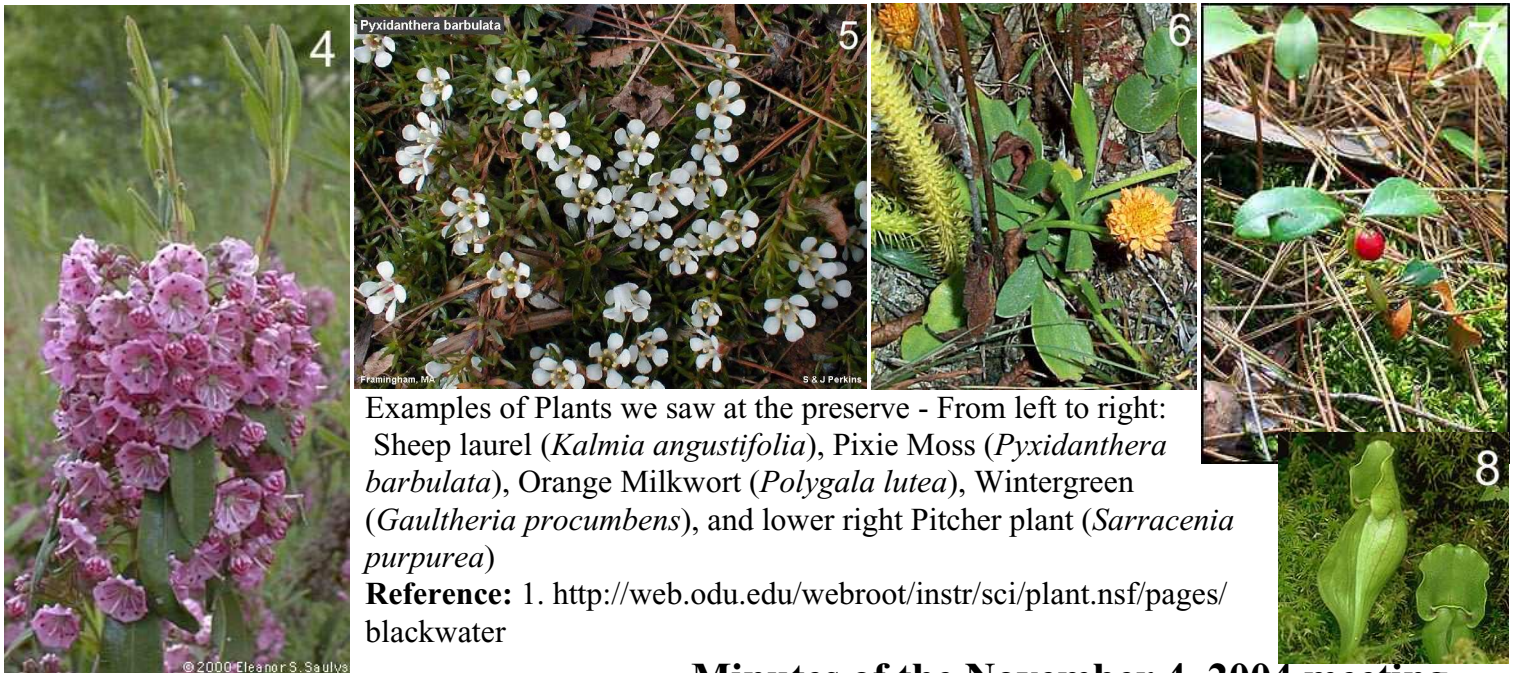
2



3

- Photos:** 1. Mature Longleaf pine
2. Proscribed burn in the Blackwater Preserve
3. Example of young “grass stage” of longleaf pine

started to simulate the natural fires that shaped the longleaf-pine ecosystem. This has changed the area from a scrubby brier infested forest to a more open forest. Once this program began, some plants like the white-fringed orchid, have begun to reappear, and others which were rare have become more common. (1)



Examples of Plants we saw at the preserve - From left to right: Sheep laurel (*Kalmia angustifolia*), Pixie Moss (*Pyxidantha barbulate*), Orange Milkwort (*Polygala lutea*), Wintergreen (*Gaultheria procumbens*), and lower right Pitcher plant (*Sarracenia purpurea*)

Reference: 1. <http://web.odu.edu/webroot/instr/sci/plant.nsf/pages/blackwater>

Note: The pixie moss was not in bloom for the field trip, the other plants were as depicted. Only photo 2 above was from Blackwater - see credits on page 3.

The Pocahontas Chapter of the Virginia Native Plant Society

serves the counties of: Charles City, Chesterfield, Goochland, Hanover, Henrico, King William, New Kent, Powhatan and the cities of Ashland, Hopewell, Petersburg, and Richmond. It meets the first Thursday of September through April at 7:00 PM in the Education and Library Complex of the Lewis Ginter Botanical Garden, unless otherwise stated.

Chapter Officers

President	Dean Walton
Vice President	-
Secretary	Peggy Furqueron
Treasurer	Bucci Zeugner
Membership Chair	Pat Brodie

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 VNPS Website - www.vnps.org

Minutes of the November 4, 2004 meeting of the Pocahontas Chapter of the VNPS

Dean Walton, President called the meeting to order. Dean welcomed any new members and guests to the meeting.

Old Business: Dean reminded the group that elections need to be held this next year so nominations need to be made for the Chapter officers. Anyone with nominations or interested in serving as an officer for next year to contact Dean or one of the other officers.

Richard Moss gave an overview of our last field trip to Dutch Gap Conservation Area. Only two members showed up for the walk. It was very windy on the trail by the James River. Most of the plants were in decline but they saw two eagles. Some of the plants seen were Jimson weed, goldenrod, climbing false buckwheat and flowering bladderwort in the swamp. The next field trip will be on November 14 at Zuni Pine Barrens south of Wakefield, Va. Everyone is to meet at Lewis Ginter Botanical Gardens at 8:00 a.m. to car pool down to the site.

The Field Trip committee is working on trips for next year probably starting in February. Notices will be in the newsletter.

New Business: None.

Program: Catherine Tucker gave a very informative lecture on the James River. The James River is 450 miles long and is half of Virginia's contribution to the Chesapeake Bay. Catherine had slides to illustrate the different ecological zones that the James River passes through.

Meeting adjourned.

Submitted by Peggy Furqueron, Secretary

Native Plant of the Month

Wintergreen (*Gaultheria procumbens*)



Wintergreen is an evergreen ground cover known for its red-tinted winter leaves and red winter berries. It has small (1/4 inch) bell shaped flowers with 5 petals. The oval shaped leaves are dark green in color and appear to be hard and brittle. The leaves have an obscure tooth pattern and when broken there is an unmistakable wintergreen aroma and taste. The pollinated flower turns into a bright red berry, also bearing the wintergreen flavor. This plant will reach heights of 2 - 6 inches and does not compete well in a heavy understory.

The wintergreen plant was the original source for wintergreen oil. It was once extracted from the plant to use in candies and as a spice. With the risk of over-harvest of this slow growing plant, a second source was found which was the Black Birch. It is now produced synthetically. If you enjoy the wintergreen flavor an excellent tea can be made from the leaves and/or berries of this plant.

The leaves and berries can be eaten as a trail nibble. They are both very flavorful, however the leaves can irritate the stomach if swallowed. The volatile oil of wintergreen is toxic, so one should never take the volatile oil internally. The active ingredient in the oil is methyl salicylate, which is a compound similar to aspirin. In fact the oil of wintergreen was used in some of the first commercially prepared aspirin tablets. The wintergreen plant was used by many civilizations in much the same way as we do aspirin today. Most often the chemical would be extracted in a tea, which would soothe sore muscles, calm a headache, and relieve general pain. For a more potent supply the tea would be left steeping for several days until it started to ferment. This fermented liquid was the preferred method for use as a medicine.

Wintergreen is found in the US in states east of the Mississippi River except Florida and Mississippi. The Range map for Virginia is shown below.

Reference for Plant of the Month:

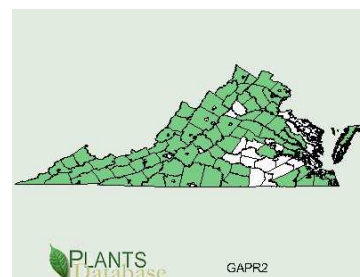
<http://www.laurentiancenter.com/plantkey/plants/wintergreen.html>

Photo credits:

1. <http://www.cnr.vt.edu/dendro/dendrology/syllabus/ppalustris.htm>
2. <http://web.odu.edu/webroot/instr/sci/plant.nsf/pages/blackwater>
3. http://www.sfrc.ufl.edu/4h/Longleaf_pine/longpine.htm
4. <http://www.ct-botanical-society.org/galleries/kalmiaangu.html>
5. <http://www.rosebay.org/chapterweb/gardeninwoodsgt17.htm>
6. <http://2bnthewild.com/plants/H419.htm> © James Henderson
7. <http://www.laurentiancenter.com/plantkey/plants/wintergreen.html>
8. <http://www.panix.com/~eshelton/wildflow/FLOWERS/pitcher/pitcher.html>

Plant of the Month:

<http://wisplants.uwsp.edu/scripts/detail.asp?SpCode=GAUPRO> (by James R. Sime)



Range of *Gaultheria procumbens* in Virginia.

**Virginia Native Plant Society Membership Application
Pocahontas Chapter**

**Make Check payable to VNPS and Mail to:
Membership Chair, Blandy Experimental Farm, 400 Blandy Farm Lane, Unit 2, Boyce, VA 22620**

Name: _____

Address _____

City _____ **State** _____ **Zip** _____

Phone: _____ **E-mail** _____

___ Individual	\$30.00	___ Sustaining	\$100.00
___ Family	\$40.00	___ Life	\$500.00
___ Student	\$15.00	___ Associate Groups	\$40.00
___ Patron	\$50.00	(Garden Clubs, etc.)	

**I wish to make an additional contribution to ___ VNPS or ___ The Pocahontas Chapter,
VNPS in the amount of:**

___ \$10 ___ \$20 ___ \$50 ___ \$100 Other _____

**Pocahontas Chapter
Virginia Native Plant Society
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