

THE POCAHONTAS CHAPTER OF THE VIRGINIA NATIVE PLANT SOCIETY

Spiderwort
(*Tradescantia virginiana*)

March 2011



March Meeting

Thursday March 3, 2011 at 7:00 PM

at the Education and Library Complex of the Lewis Ginter Botanical Garden in Classroom 2

The room is available at 6:30, come early and Socialize

This month's Presentation will be:

“The Land Conservancy and its Programs”

by Tara Quinn of the Capitol Region Land Conservancy

The Capital Region Land Conservancy is Central Virginia's only land trust dedicated solely to serving the City of Richmond and Chesterfield, Henrico, Hanover, Goochland, Powhatan, New Kent, and Charles City counties. Its mission is to promote the conservation of the capital region's historically significant land, scenic natural areas, and ecologically sensitive land, water, and wildlife resources. In its first five years, CRLC facilitated the conservation of over 4,500 acres of land, including over 30 miles of stream and river frontage. Protecting land in our region helps ensure safe drinking water, locally grown food, preservation of our historic resources and habitat for wildlife. For more information see their website at: <http://www.capitalregionland.org/>

Chapter Events:

March 26 - Field Trip along South Bank of James River.

We will meet at 10 AM at the Reedy Creek Entrance of James River Park off Riverside Drive. We will walk on the Buttermilk Trail to the Boulevard Bridge. We will return to the start of the trip by walking along the Riverside Trail. If the participants want we can eat together at a local restaurant afterwards. This trip is about three miles in length. The spring woodland wildflowers should be in bloom by this time. The trip will be cancelled in case of heavy rain but will happen if it is only drizzling. Contact Ernest Wilson at (804) 502-6346 or ewilson611@aol.com for information.

April 2: Field Trip along North Bank of James River.

Meet at 10 AM at Texas Court at the end of Kansas Avenue. Kansas Avenue can be reached by following Meadow Street south from the Fan. When you reach Kansas Avenue at the end of Meadow Street turn left. Turn right on Texas Court one block before end of Kansas Avenue. Go one block on Texas Court and turn right into parking lot which is our meeting place. We will walk along the north bank to the Pump House. We will return by way of Maymont and Kansas Avenue. The trip is about three miles in length and involves some walking on rail tracks. We will pass the best wildflower sites in the park. If the participants want we can eat together at a local restaurants afterwards. The trip will be cancelled in case of heavy rain but will happen if it is only drizzling. Contact Ernest Wilson at (804) 502-6346

April 7: Chapter Meeting - Catharine Tucker - “Flowers of the Blue Ridge”. There will be a field trip with date to be announced to follow up Catharine's talk.

April 13 - Field Trip to North Carolina Botanical Gardens.

We will meet at 9 AM at the Martin's parking lot in Bermuda Square Chester to go to the North Carolina Botanical Gardens in Chapel Hill, North Carolina. It will take three hours to get there. The gardens has one of the greatest collection of native plants in the east. We can bring our lunch or eat there. Contact Ernest Wilson at (804) 502-6346

May: Annual Chapter Picnic and Field Trip - Date and location to be announced.

Request for Help

Beth Monroe at Lewis Ginter Botanical Gardens suggested I contact the Virginia Native Plant Society. I am a member at Trinity United Methodist Church in Richmond (located at 903 Forest Avenue). We are having a Mission Footprint 5K race and community fair on Saturday, April 9th. The fair will last from 7:30am - 10:30/11am and will feature health screenings and organizations dealing with wellness and taking care of the environment.

I was wondering if anyone from VNPS would be able to staff a table and share information? Since April is a popular planting time, I would love for someone to share resources about planting native species. We expect around 200-300 people to attend. We could supply the table.

Let me know if this might be possible - I appreciate your help!

Thanks, Elisa Romans 918-0866

Please Contact Ernest Wilson (804) 502-6346 or ewilson611@aol.com if you are interested in helping

Minutes of the January 6, 2011 Meeting of The Pocahontas Chapter of the VNPS

The group was called to order by President Ernest Wilson who gave a brief run -down of the chapter's programs and then introduced the speaker, John Hayden, a professor in the Biology department of the University of Richmond.

Dr. Hayden's talk was on the Bignoniaceae, a mostly tropical family of trees, woody vines and shrubs. There is only one herbaceous species in the family. It is a rather small family of 125 genera and about 750 species distributed all over the tropics. The flowers are mostly large trumpet shaped ones with four stamens and open stigmas which immediately close up when pollinated.

The fruits develop into long bean-shaped pods which open to release the winged seeds. The wing on the seeds are unusual being made of tracheids a water conducting tissue which has been coopted in to building seed wings by plants of this family.

A few species have large heavy unpod-like fruits which never open and which drop on the ground around the plant. No animal appears to pick up the fruit and disperse the seed. Some botanists have theorized that the fruit were picked up and eaten by the large mammals which went extinct at the end of the Pleistocene. These animals would have dispersed the seed as introduced pasture animals do today and as elephants do for the seeds of the African Sausage Tree (*Kigleia africana*) today. The calabash tree (*Crescentia cujete*) has been dispersed mostly by humans who use the dry fruit to make dishes and jars.

In Virginia we have two species of native Bignonias, Cross vine (*Bignonia capreolata*) and Trumpet creeper (*Campsis radicans*) both vines are bird pollinated. Cross vine opens its flowers about April 15 when the first humming birds appear. Although both of our native species are bird pollinated, this is unusual for the family whose flowers are usually pollinated by bees. A few kinds such as the Calabash tree are bat pollinated.

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.

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The cross vine has an unusual distribution of phloem which penetrates into the wood to form the cross seen in cross section. Many of the lianas of the tribe Bignoniaceae have wood with phloem penetrating into it to form flexible and strong stems which are much used in the tropics.

Trumpet creeper flowers have a thick calyx at their base which prevents nectar robbing bees from penetrating into the flower to steal nectar without pollinating the flowers. This is a major problem in many tropical Bignonia flowers without the thick calyx.

Trumpet creeper climbs by producing adventitious roots which grab on to its support. Most bignonia lianas have tendrils as the cross vine does. The cat claw vine (*Macfadyena unguis-cati*) has modified tendrils which penetrate into its support like a claw.

Virginia also has two naturalized *Catalpa* species with trumpet shaped white flowers followed by bean-like capsules. The northern *Catalpa* (*C. speciosa*) which has larger flowers blooms two weeks before the Southern *Catalpa* (*C. bignonioides*).

There is one other Bignonia in the United States. The desert willow (*Chilopsis linearis*) has narrow leaves and gorgeous pink flowers. It grows in the desert south west and adjacent Mexico.

Dr. Hayden mentioned many interesting facts about the anatomy of the Bignons. The presence of unusual glands and hairs on many of the species can be used to identify plants even in the absence of flowers.

Lastly, Dr. Hayden talked about the big bang flowering in some *Tabebuia* species in which all the leafless trees in a certain locality generally at the beginning of the dry season mature their flowers. Since the flowers don't contain nectar as most Bignonia flowers do, this insures that the flowers get pollinated because the many flowered trees certainly attract pollinators who when tired out by finding no nectar in one tree will be attracted to a nearby tree to look for nectar there. The flowers generally last less than a week.

Field Trip to Appomattox Regional Park, February 19

It was a warm, for February, but windy day when our group



(A) started its annual pilgrimage to see skunk cabbage (*Symplocarpus foetidus*) in bloom. We saw lots of skunk cabbage in bloom



(B), and a few beginning to leaf out (C) in the swampy area between the canal and the River. We then walked along the canal tow path to see what we could find.



D. One of the grape ferns growing near the skunk cabbages.

E. American Hazelnut (*Corylus americana*) in bloom along the Canal.



F. Shagbark Hickory (*Carya ovata*) which is usually found in more western parts of Virginia.
 G. River birch (*Betula nigra*).
 H. Alder (*Alnus serrulata*) growing along the canal
 I. Turtles on a log in the canal.

J. **Odd frost on an azalea:** This photo was taken the morning of Jan. 29 when we had a freezing fog which even coated nearby trees up to their tops.

**Pocahontas Chapter
 Virginia Native Plant Society
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