

THE POCAHONTAS CHAPTER OF THE VIRGINIA NATIVE PLANT SOCIETY

May 2011

Spiderwort
(*Tradescantia virginiana*)



May Picnic

Saturday May 7, 2011 at 11:00AM

There will be no meeting at Lewis Ginter this Month, instead we will have our Annual Picnic at Richard Moss's house, 12565 Brook Lane, Chester, VA followed by a walk in Richard's the woods behind his house.

Our next meeting will be in September at Lewis Ginter.

Directions: Chester is about 15 miles south of Richmond near I95. From the North or South, take I95 to exit 61B, exit on to Route 10, Hundred Road West, to Chester. Turn left at the 3rd traffic light on to Curtis St., Turn left from Curtis St. on to Petersburg St. which is the second street on left. (If you cross the Railroad track on Curtis St., you have gone too far). Turn left on to Brook Lane (the Second Street on the left, just before a 25MPH speed limit sign). Richard's house is the 6th house on the left at the top of a small hill.

From the West you can take route 288 to Chester Rd. (The exit about 4 miles after Route 10), then follow Chester Rd. to Route 10, turn left on to Route 10 and go to Curtis St. which will be on the right, then follow the directions above
Please bring a dish to share!

Richard's Phone number is 748-2940.

Chapter Events:

Saturday, May 14: Blue Ridge Field Trip. This will be largely a "road trip" with minimal walking. There should be many wildflowers blooming in mid-May. See the Parkway's "Bloom Schedule" at: <http://www.blueridgeparkway.org/v.php?pg=77>. Meet at 8:00 AM in the commuter parking lot on Parham Road. This lot is 1 block south of I-64 (toward Regency Mall). There's a traffic light at this corner. Turn east (toward town) between the church and the lot and park near the side street.

We will leave promptly at 8:15 AM. Travel route is West on I-64 to Rockfish Gap at the top of the Blue Ridge (approx. 2 hrs). Then south on the Blue Ridge Parkway (toward Roanoke), stopping at Humpback Rocks Visitor Center and other parking areas along the 27 miles to junction with Rt. 56. Return home via 56 east to US29, north to I-64 to Richmond. Or return home via 56 west to I-81 to I-64 & back to Richmond. Please contact trip leader Catharine Tucker at 804-938-6941 or e-mail cath.tucker@gmail.com to let her know who to expect at the parking lot.

Saturday, May 21: Field trip to "Wilson's Folly" in Caroline County. Participants will need to meet at 9 am at North Park Library 8508 Franconia Road (just off Parham Rd.). The pitcher plants should be in bloom. Contact Ernest Wilson at 502-6346 for more information

Of Interest:

From Sally Anderson, VNPS President - There is a new Wildflower book out:

Wildflowers and Plant Communities of the Southern Appalachian Mountains and Piedmont

A Naturalist's Guide to the Carolinas, Virginia, Tennessee, and Georgia, by Timothy P. Spira

This richly illustrated field guide serves as an introduction to the wildflowers and plant communities of the southern Appalachians and the rolling hills of the adjoining piedmont. For more details see: http://uncpress.unc.edu/browse/book_detail?title_id=1872. Price: Cloth \$50.00 Paper \$26.00.

Minutes of the April 7 Meeting of the Pocahontas Chapter, VNPS

Welcome to our new members, Ray Barnett and Jayne Sander.

Our talk this month was given by the wonderful and talented Catherine Tucker. The photos she took covered an extensive array of the flora and fauna of the Blue Ridge Mountains. Her knowledge of this topic is quite extraordinary, and her attention to detail was just wonderful. The flame azaleas were just lovely. Thank you again, Catherine for a delightful and comprehensive talk.

I recently went to the North Carolina Botanical Gardens with our President and two other members and the trip was a pure delight. The gardens were very nice and the plant sale was worth the trip. If you go, be sure to see the gift shop for informative books on the plants and the area. They also have a nice picnic ground, and pets are also welcome on leashed on the paths inside the gardens!

I hope everyone has a great summer, and I look forward to our fall and winter seasons! Enjoy the picnic at Richard's Everyone!

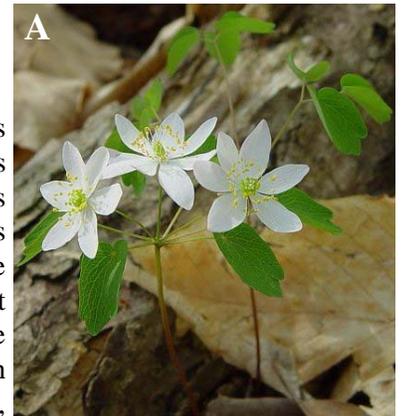
Last Note: If anyone has any thing they would like to add to press releases, or information for the trips that they are leading, please let me know. I will be able to do all information for TV, newspapers and radio and other publications.

Thanks for your support.

Recent field Trips - Ernest Wilson:

Laurus Park:

On a beautiful April day I walked trails in Lewis G. Laurus Park in South Richmond. As the reporter from the Times Dispatch says this is an undiscovered gem. At first one walks through a forest of Red Cedar full of invasives like Greater Periwinkle. This soon gives way to an open oak forest of White Oak, Chestnut Oak, and Southern Red Oak which is amazingly free of invasive plants. No English ivy or Japanese Honeysuckle cover the ground choking out other plants. In fact the understory is mostly free of plant life except for seedlings of the trees occupying the overstory. There are occasional clumps of the Crane-fly Orchid (*Tipularia discolor*) and stems of Running Strawberry-bush (*Euonymus obovatus*). Here and there are clumps of Deerberry (*Vaccinium stamineum*), Lowbush Blueberry (*Vaccinium pallidum*) and Running Cedar (*Diphasiastrum digitatum*) but that is all.



The trail descends to a small stream, Dancing Creek, crossing it on a bridge. Below the bridge the stream descends as a series of rapids over rocks. At this point there are large clumps of Rue-anemone (*Anemonella thalictroides*)[A] and Purple Wood Sorrel (*Oxalis violacea*). The Rue-anemone is in bloom but the Wood Sorrel will not bloom until the canopy is closed in late April- Early May. This is the largest concentration of Rue-anemone I have seen in the Richmond area and is well worth a visit. In a few weeks this little wildflower gem will set seed and disappear until next spring.

Continuing on the trail you climb up on a ridge to find Evergreen Wild Ginger (*Hexastylis virginica*) and a single plant of Common Bluet (*Houstonia caerulea*) in bloom. The Bluet is so small that it wouldn't have been noticed if it wasn't blooming. The trail descends down a staircase and enters a culvert under Chippenham Parkway, then continues to the junction of Old Holly Road and Oakleaf Road. This part of the trail passes through what must have been someone's garden.



Masses of Small Periwinkle (*Vinca minor*) and Forsythia (*Forsythia X intermedia*) are found here. Also masses of Mayapple (*Podophyllum peltatum*) occur as well as Great Chickweed (*Stellaria pubera*) [B] and a large patch of Yellow Forest Violet (*Viola pubescens*)[C]. By far the most



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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interesting plant found in this area is Skunk Cabbage (*Symplocarpus foetidus*), the first I had found in the Richmond area. A large patch was growing in a seep. They had ceased blooming but the foliage is present until June when it will disappear. Flowers appear in mid-winter when nothing else blooms.

Retracing my steps through the culvert and up the staircase I walked on what must be the main trail along a ridge. It is well worn with many branches going off to the right and left. This trail goes eventually to Stony Point Road. I followed one of the left branches which ran up and down over ridges and stream valleys. On one valley I watched a Carolina wren feed on the sides of a gorge. Along the edges of this grew Trout-lilies (*Erythronium americanum*) with their unmistakable brown mottled leaves which some compare to the mottling on the outside of a Brook Trout. These plants grow nowhere else in the park apparently but are certainly common elsewhere.

The temperature was close to ninety degrees and I had spent over two hours walking in the park which was much larger than I thought it was. I decided to walk out to my car by cutting across Dancing Creek at a place above the bridge. I found numerous ferns along the creek. Red-stemmed Lady-fern (*Athyrium asplenoides*) and Rattlesnake fern (*Botrypus virginianum*). A single plant of Hepatica (*Hepatica americana*) [D, shown in bloom] grew right next to the creek. It is one of our earliest wildflowers to bloom and had ceased blooming.

On the way back I passed two Wood Thrushes feeding on the ground. They were a pair and flew off together. This is a bird which has become less common as our forests are developed. Here is another reason why such places as Larus Park are important. One other aspect of the park is important. Even though it is surrounded by busy roads, there is virtually no traffic sound in the woods and few people. I saw one jogger in the two hours I was there. It is one place where you can get away from the world and be on your own. These places are increasingly rare in our world.

After consulting with John Coe of the Audubon Society, I think the thrushes were Hermit Thrushes which will soon be off to their summer home. They are common here in the winter.



Pony Pasture:

On Monday, April 18 three other members of our chapter joined me for a walk along Pleasant Creek at the Pony Pasture. After the Saturday rains the James was running high flooding lots of the low areas in this park. In fact we were unable to continue the walk due to high water covering the trail. Even so we were able to see several interesting plants. The Virginia Bluebells (*Mertensia virginiana*) planted by our members and several others people had stopped blooming for the most part but the plants were present still. They were well represented around the parking lot. I was surprised to see many Freesias (*Fressia alba*) in bloom around the parking lot in places where the invasive Amur River Honeysuckle (*Lonicera maackii*) had been removed. Unfortunately, Garlic Mustard (*Alliaria petiolata*) has moved in to these cleared areas. We removed many of these plants as we could but there are many more left.

We decided to move to the Wetlands which are below the Pony Pasture and try to resume our walk from the other side of park if we could. We drove there and parked. We thought we would try to walk the board walk through the swampy forest to the left of the main trail. It was not under water and we observed several wild flowers.

Spring Beauties (*Claytonia virginica*) were in bloom along the path as was the Great Chickweed (*Stellaria pubera*). Mayapple (*Podophyllum peltatum*) had started to bloom but Cut-leafed Toothwort (*Cardamine concatenata*) and Trout Lily (*Erythronium americanum*) had finished. Richard Moss spied a plant with a small yellow flower in swampy area. This proved to be the Coastal Plain Spearwort (*Ranunculus laxicaulis*) [G], which is quite rare in our area. We were unable to cross Pleasant Creek on the bridge as the area was underwater. On the other side of the creek we observed a large patch of Blue Phlox (*Phlox divaricata*) [F], but we were unable to get to it. We were fortunate enough to see a patch of this plant in the woods which we cut through to get back to main trail. Along the flooded Creek trail were several patches of Marsh Marigold (*Caltha palustris*) [E] still in bloom. We were thus able to see most of the wild flowers which are unique to this part of James River Park.



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Bryan Park:

On Tuesday morning I joined two other members for a walk through Bryan Park. The day was somewhat overcast and warm. All of the canopy trees of the oak-hickory forest were blooming. These included White Oak (*Quercus alba*), Southern Red Oak (*Quercus falcata*) and Pignut Hickory (*Carya glabra*). The newly opened foliage of these trees had golden or red colors making them almost fall-like but with softer more pastel-like colors. These pigments are thought to protect the chloroplasts of the newly forming leaves from light damage.



Ruby-Jane found an Oak Apple [H on p. 3]. This is a gall formed by a tiny gall wasp stinging an oak leaf when it has just started to unfold. It lays an egg at this spot. The sting causes the leaf to enlarge and enfold the wasp egg. The egg is now at the center of a soft mass of tissue which will serve both for protection and as food for the larva after it hatches from the egg. In effect the wasp can have its cake and eat it too. At this stage the gall is soft, moist, and white with reddish hairs. Later when the larva develops into an adult and drills its way out forming a small hole, the gall will turn brown and dry up. At this stage in the past people gathered the gall and extracted their tannins which when combined with iron salts forms a blue-black dye often used to form permanent ink.

The upland woods contained several interesting plants which specialize in living in dry acid woods. Multi-flowered Wood Rush (*Luzula multiflora*) and Carolina Pink (*Silene caroliniana*) [I] were in bloom. The later has the same pink color as many Phloxes have but it is a member of the Pink Family (Caryophyllaceae) rather than Phlox family (*Polemoniaceae*). Bluet (*Houstonia caerulea*) were also there especially in the open areas.



The park had planted several native shrubs not generally present in its wild areas. Black Haw (*Viburnum prunifolium*) and Red Chokeberry (*Aronia arbutifolia*) were in bloom but American Beautyberry (*Callicarpa americana*) had not even opened its leaves. The park also had planted many exotic ornamental trees including Red Horse chestnut (*Aesculus X carnea*) in full bloom, Live Oak (*Quercus virginiana*) and Metasequoia (*Metasequoia glyptostroboides*).

We walked into the natural area and crossed Jordan Branch on a log bridge improvised by Steve. The creek was lined by Sweet Pepperbush (*Clethra alnifolia*). An occasional Pinkster Flower (*Rhododendron periclymenoides*) enlivened the woods. Beautiful old trees filled these wet woods along Jordan Branch. Even the American Holly (*Ilex opaca*) had diameters over 6 inches indicated great age for these slow growing trees.

No spring visit to Bryan Park would be complete without a visit to the Azalea Garden. These oriental azaleas were in full bloom. The show was enjoyed by many since a steady stream of cars and light trucks passed by.

Photo Credits:

A - http://www.missouriplants.com/Whiteopp/Anemonella_thalictroides_page.html

B, E, F, G - Richard Moss

H - <http://www.lesjones.com/2005/04/26/oak-apple-gall-wasp-amphibolips-confluenta/>

C - Merel R. Black University of Wisconsin- Stevens Point

D - http://www.missouriplants.com/Bluealt/Hepatica_americana_page.html

I - Thomas G. Barnes @ usda-nrcs plants database

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