



THE POCAHONTAS CHAPTER OF THE VIRGINIA NATIVE PLANT SOCIETY

April, 2017



**Chapter Meeting 7:00 PM,
Thursday April 6, 2017**

**at the Education and Library Complex of the Lewis Ginter Botanical Garden
in the Lab**

The room is available at 6:30, come early to socialize

Our speaker, Robert Wright, will present

"Married to the Job: What's Not to LOVE About Environmental Science"

Robert Wright, is an environmental scientist who loves the animal and plant life of the Richmond region, and is fortunate enough to make a living exploring it. His talk, "Married to the Job: What's Not to LOVE About Environmental Science?" will provide a visual feast featuring Virginia flora and fauna found on projects that require environmental solutions.

Wright is a native Richmonder who grew up in Westover Hills and says he was weaned on the James River. He holds degrees in environmental science, environmental planning, and environmental engineering and is presently studying theology. He has worked as a park ranger at the Peaks of Otter, an auxiliary police officer in Richmond, and as a paralegal and transportation project planner in Fairfax. Since 7th grade, he has maintained a passion for natural sciences and has for the last 30 years been employed as an environmental scientist for engineering consulting firms in Gloucester, Williamsburg, Fairfax, Stafford, and Blacksburg. Despite having traipsed all over Virginia, the Eastern Seaboard, the Ohio Valley and upper Midwest and desert Southwest, he prefers the Richmond backyard.

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## **Chapter Meetings:**

**May 6, 2017** Picnic and walk at Camp Hanover. Details at the meeting. We will not meet at Lewis Ginter in May.

## **Chapter Events:**

Lewis Ginter work days have been scheduled for Sunday 3/26 from 2 to 5pm and Sat 4-8 from 10 to 1pm.

March 11 VNPS Goshen Pass Field Trip – registration opens 1/16.

May 20th Trip to Quarry Gardens at Skyler in Nelson County.

August 12 Field trip to Echo lake.

September 9 Field trip to R. Garland Dodd Park.

September 30 VNPS Annual Meeting.

## **President's Message:**

Hello All,

Hope this finds everyone well and excited for the Spring, assuming it is really here to stay. This seems to be the busy time of years in so many regards. Let's start off with Kudos. Big Thanks to Catharine Tucker and John Hayden for coordinating the arrangements for the Winter Workshop of UofR early this month. And to everyone on the TEAM that came out to setup up, prep, serve and clean up. It takes a village to put on an event. This past weekend, 9 folks volunteered at Lewis Ginter, in the Vale saving the rock borders from ivy and vinca and eradicating autumn olive and arum. Thanks to tried and true members Caroline Meehan, Joy Atrim, Larry

Bartenstein, Joe Arthur, newcomers Nancy Grove and Rhea Hurwitz (they drove up from Emporia) and 2 apples of my eye, Matt and Ben Orr. We put 27 hours in the bank J of volunteer hours. We will be returning on Saturday April 8th from 10-1. We will meet at 12:45 at the fountain behind visitor centers, just tell the desk you there to volunteer. Feel free to bring friends, neighbors, students over 16 and older looking for volunteer hours, or bribe your grown kids with homemade chicken and potato salad! More dates will be forthcoming via Email and our Facebook page. Upcoming events for our chapter is Picnic/Foray at Camp Hanover on May 6th and Field trip to Quarry Gardens at Schuyler on May 20th. At the state level, 3 day/2 night trip to the Northern Neck May 9-11 to view wetlands and orchids. I have booked a room and put in for vacation days. Hope some of you come out.

And just for fun, can you name the natives blooming in my garden? (See page 5 in the electronic version of the Newsletter. There isn't space in the printed version.) Hope you make the next meeting 4/6, it's our last of the season.

Natively yours,  
Leslie

## “In Search Of”: Botanical Adventures of a Plant Detective by Robert Wright. This month’s target:

This month’s target: *Ficaria verna* Hudson, Lesser Celandine

This month’s quarry is the source of conservation consternation and ecological concern to local RVA and botanists alike. It is equally interesting to me that this very showy, visually-striking alien spring ephemeral has gone

unnoticed and/or unreported in the literature for so long. I am referencing this month’s target, the lesser celandine (*Ficaria varia*).

Growing up along the banks of the James River, I never recall seeing this plant in my usual haunts. And I would have remembered it. It may be a relatively recent introduction in RVA region. However, some populations could be 40+ years old or more.

The lesser celandine has arrived in RVA with a vengeance. A Eurasian member of the buttercup family, this attractive yellow flowering ‘cushion plant’, while pleasing to the eye, and a favored garden specimen (how it initially came to be in the US), it is otherwise a



rampant

invasive. In early winter it forms a whorl of green spatulate leaves and throws up the characteristic yellow petals as early as late January. Later it produces tons of seeds that spread by water flow and animals, quickly covering open space and literally enveloping large swaths and gaps in no time. It grows best in moist and wet soils, and can tolerate dry areas and deep shade. Once in the garden, it rapidly migrates out, escaping into storm drains, rain gutters, lawns, roadsides, and waysides. It is particularly pestiferous in floodplains and natural areas, and is no friend to public park spaces (1). Because it emerges well in advance of many native species, it has a developmental advantage which allows it to overtake areas rapidly. The plant displaces other native spring ephemerals including bloodroot, wild ginger, spring beauty, harbinger-of-spring, twinleaf, squirrel-corn, trout lily, trilliums, Virginia bluebells, and mayapples. These more desirable plants provide critical nectar and pollen for native pollinators, and fruits and seeds for other native insects and wildlife species. The lesser celandine is the poster child of unbridled reproductive success. It also very closely resembles the native and desirable marsh marigold, *Caltha palustris*, which is not at present documented from around RVA(2).

Unfortunately it is well established in upper/middle James River Park System, and has been observed in large populations

### The Pocahontas Chapter of the Virginia Native Plant Society

serves the counties of Amelia, Charles City, Chesterfield, Dinwiddie, Goochland, Hanover, Henrico, King William, New Kent, Powhatan, Prince George and the cities of Ashland, Hopewell, Colonial Heights, 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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**Chapter Website**

pocahontaschapter-vnps.org



in the Powhite Creek and Rattlesnake Creek watersheds (Crestwood Farms, Bon Air), and in South Richmond (Oxford, Windsorview, Willow Oaks), and has been collected in Henrico in several places which have not yet been assessed for degree of establishment, which is likely best termed “entrenched”.

marsh marigold,  
*Caltha palustris*

If you have seen this plant, please report it. Happy Hunting !!

(1) <http://www.vaplantatlas.org/index.php?do=plant&plant=3357&search=Search>.

(2) <http://www.vaplantatlas.org/index.php?do=plant&plant=2584&search=Search>.



## Minutes of the Pocahontas Chapter Meeting, March 2, 2017

President Leslie Allanson called the meeting to order at 7 PM. A number of guests and new members were welcomed. One of our visitors won the door prize. Several copies of the Piedmont wildflower planting guide were sold, and Art Evans sold several guides, donating \$1 from each sale to our chapter. For our program, Berniece and Armand Thieblot described their adventures creating Quarry Gardens in Schuyler, VA. Armand noted that Schuyler was an industrial center from the 1890's with the soapstone quarries operating from 1955-1975 turning out tops for lab tables in high schools, laundry tubs and other items which took advantage of the soapstone's ease of working and heat-retention properties. With the development of plastics and other materials, the mines, now some 90 feet deep, closed, and then served as the town dump from 1975 to 1991. The Thieblots purchased the property and have spent 20 years learning about gardens, and learning the unique features of this soapstone-based area with soil pH of about 8, which is not typical of mountain soils. They spent months removing invasive vines and brush, cleaning up the invasive undergrowth and debris. Armand's amusing stories of their “discoveries” among the junk were delightful. They decided to feature the quarries instead of hiding them, and obtained a professional master plan for the 40 acres of the gardens focusing on native plants. Their surveys identified 550 species, 400 plants, 40 of them new to the county, and including 47 species of trees. There are 14 ecological zones and 7 conservation areas. These gardens, operating as a non-profit organization, are almost ready for visitors, and the new Visitors' Center will open in May. Our chapter has scheduled a tour of Quarry Gardens on May 20, 2017, leaving Richmond at 8 AM. Note: dogs are not allowed in the Quarry Gardens. Following a short question and answer session Leslie convened the business portion of the meeting. Treasurer Richard Moss reported a balance of approximately \$4900.

Membership Committee member Dabney Robinson reported our membership is now 140, quite an increase in the last year.

Field trips were announced for Saturday, April 1 to John J. Radcliffe Conservation Area in southern Chesterfield County, and Saturday, May 6 at Camp Hanover. The Camp Hanover field trip will be a mini-bioblitz in conjunction with our annual picnic, catered by the Camp Hanover staff. There will be a small charge for the lunch.

Catharine Tucker reported a successful kickoff to observance of National Invasive Species Awareness Week with information booth and short walks in the Pony Pasture section of James River Park conducted on February 25. Our chapter participation was our contribution as members of the James River Park Invasives Removal Coalition.

Other announcements included concerns about newsletters arriving late and torn, and the alert that the Capital Region Land Conservancy is seeking help in raising funds to purchase Malvern Hill. With no other business, the meeting was adjourned.

Catharine White Tucker

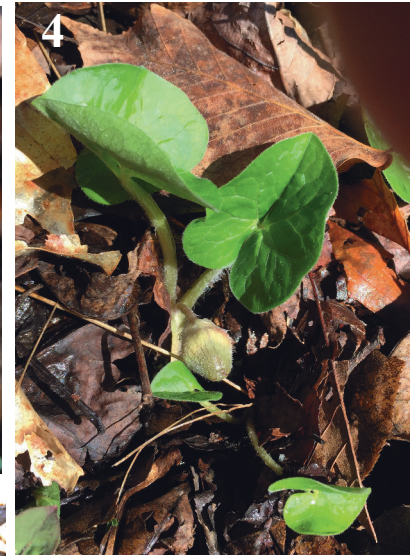
## Photos from the Field Trip to the John J. Radcliffe Conservation Area

1. Lake Chesdin dam which borders the conservation area.

2. Spring Beauty (*Claytonia virginica*)

3. Cut-leaved Toothwort (*Cardamine concatenata*)





**More photos from the Radcliffe Conservation Area field trip.**

1. Yellow trout lily (*Erythronium americanum*)
2. Yellow jessamine (*Gelsemium sempervirens*)
3. Star chickweed (*Stellaria pubera*) - Native to VA
4. Wild ginger (*Asarum canadense*), not evergreen.
5. The other wild ginger - the evergreen one - (*Hexastylis arifolia*), photo taken in my front yard.
6. Sessile leaf bellwort (*Uvularia sessilifolia*)

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Can you name some by just leaves and buds? Answers below!

**Leaves and buds left to right top to bottom**

*Monarda didyma*  
Beebalm



*Baptisia australis*  
Blue False Indigo



*Amsonia tabernaemontana*  
Blue Star

*Zizia aurea*  
Golden Alexander

*Pycnanthemum virginianum*  
Mountain Mint



*Mertensia virginica*  
Bluebells

*Polygonatum* sp.  
Solomon's Seal

*Aquilegia Canadensis*  
Eastern Red Columbine



**Flowers left to right, top to bottom**

*Zizia aurea*, Golden Alexanders

*Lonicera sempervirens*, Coral honeysuckle

Various Bryophytes Mosses

*Mertensia virginica* Bluebells

*Aquilegia Canadensis* Eastern Red Columbine

*Cercis canadensis* Redbud

