

THE POCAHONTAS CHAPTER OF THE VIRGINIA NATIVE PLANT SOCIETY



May 2012

Spiderwort

(Tradescantia virginiana)

Chapter Annual Picnic

Saturday May 19, 2012

Note: We will NOT meet at Lewis Ginter Botanical Garden this Month

Our Next Regular Meeting Will Be in September

Come join us for the Pocahontas Chapter Picnic on May 19, 2012 from 11 AM to about 3 PM at Huguenot Hundred Community Association at the end of the lane between 10800 and 10820 Cherokee Road, near the intersection of Cherokee Road and Old Gun Road in Chesterfield County. There will be a pole with a hanging basket at the lane entrance (can't guarantee native plants). Bring a dish to share and a folding chair. There are 8 acres to explore, some wooded, some open, with a fireplace, picnic table, benches scattered about, a portable potty, and trails through the woods.

Directions:

From Chippenham Parkway (VA-150, Willey Bridge), take exit for Huguenot Road (VA -147) and go East. Turn Left on Cherokee Road (fourth street on left). The lane into the parking area will be on the right 3 miles from Huguenot Road.

From Huguenot Bridge, turn right on Cherokee Road (third street) and follow directions above. Be aware of the construction on Huguenot Bridge limiting traffic to one lane.

From VA-288, take exit for Robious Road/Huguenot Trail (VA-711) and turn East. Turn left on Old Gun Road (VA-673) (fourth or fifth traffic). Turn left on Cherokee Road, where Old Gun Rd. takes a sharp turn to the right and starts uphill from river. The lane into the parking lot will be on your left between second and third houses.

Questions about directions? Contact Suzanne Jenkins (804-543-3981)

Chapter Events

Pocahontas Chapter Will Host VNPS Annual Meeting September 14, 15 & 16, 2012

“Then and Now Along the James: Changing Landscapes, Changing Plants” is the theme for the VNPS Annual Meeting to be held at Wyndham Virginia Crossings on September 14-16, 2012. On Friday evening Leonard Adkins will present “Wildflowers of the Blue Ridge.” On Saturday night, the keynote speaker will be Robert A.S. Wright, Senior Environmental Scientist at EEE Consulting, Inc. His presentation will tie in the Blue Ridge wildflowers with the Richmond landscape and the exciting restoration being done in Forest Hill Park. A wide variety of field trips is planned for Saturday during the day and on Sunday morning.

At least 25 members attended the April meeting for the program and to see the planned field trip schedule. It was great to have so many members sign up to accompany leaders on these field trips. These assistants will serve as “helpers” to make sure everyone gets to and from the field locations safely. We still have some opportunities to help for the trips to Lewis Ginter Botanical Garden, to Maymont, to the National Battlefield in

Henrico County, to private homes in Ginter Park and Henrico County, and at James River Park on Saturday morning.

If you would like to help with one of these trips, please call or e-mail me: Catharine Tucker, 804-938-6941 or cath.tucker@gmail.com.

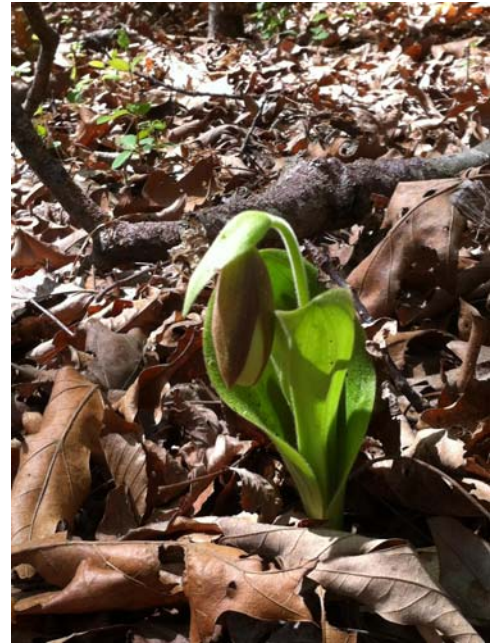
Catharine Tucker

Spring Has Sprung - Just a Little Early! A Message from our President, Catharine Tucker:

The spring beauty, rue anemone and mayapples are already finished blooming in my woods at Hanover. Two pink ladyslipper blooms are just reaching their prime, and the big rose-red rhododendron has just burst into bloom. When I look for migrating warblers in the treetops with binoculars, I can see that the tulip poplars are in bloom as well. I usually expect to see all that in mid-May, not mid-April! And blooms expected in April appeared in March!

The vireos and tanagers returned last week and dug into the remaining caterpillars that had munched out on the first new leaves. My tallest oak, hickory and beech trees have topknots of new leaves above bare branches. Lower branches leafed out first and were defoliated by the fall canker worms. Last year, these same trees had already leafed out when the caterpillars hatched as you can tell from the leaves left on the ground last fall. They resemble stiff brown lace!

Do you keep a log of when the flowers and shrubs leaf out or bloom in your yard? Or when the trees leaf out completely or hummingbirds and songbirds return? There are two national databases that would be glad to add your information to their data, no matter how much or how little you have.



Pink ladyslipper (*Cypripedium acaule*) in bud April 7. It turned deeper pink as it expanded.

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 USA National Phenology Network brings together citizens non-profit groups, educators and students of all ages to monitor the impacts of climate change on plants and animals.

Project Budburst is a network of people across the United States who monitor plants as the seasons change in a national field campaign designed to engage the public in the collection of important ecological data based on the timing of leafing, flowering, and fruiting of plants (plant phenophases). Participants make careful observations of these plant phenophases. The data are being collected in a consistent manner across the country so that scientists can use the data to learn more about the responsiveness of individual plant species to changes in climate locally, regionally, and nationally.

Thousands of people from all 50 states have participated. Project BudBurst began in 2007 in response to requests from people who wanted to make a meaningful contribution to understanding changes in our environment. The more people



who contribute, the more value their data has in research and in developing conclusions about effects of seasonal changes.

Here are the web sites so you can check them out for yourself:

- USA National Phenology Network at www.usanpn.org/
- Project Budburst at www.neoninc.org/budburst/phenology.php

Left: Spiderwort (*Tradescantia virginiana*) in full bloom March 19 -- way early!

Right: Azalea (*Rhododendron sp.*) blooming in Hanover March 19, before the hardwoods began leafing out.

Catharine White Tucker

Spring Flowering Trees.- Fringetree (*Chionanthus virginicus*)

Fringetrees (*Chionanthus* spp.) are small, deciduous ornamental trees. The botanical name translates as snow flower, an excellent description of the fluffy, white flowers that cover fringetrees in bloom. There are several species, most found in the tropics, but two species will grow on our area, the native white fringetree (*Chionanthus virginicus*) and the Chinese fringetree (*Chionanthus retusus*). The native fringetree, is also known as Grancy graybeard or old man's beard.

The native fringetree remains small, maturing at 12 to 20 feet in height and 12 to 20 feet in width. Trees in the wild may be taller. Fringetrees naturally grow with multiple stems, but can be trained to single trunks. The typical form is spreading with an open crown, but plant habit can vary.

The Chinese fringetree is somewhat taller than the native fringetree, usually growing 15 to 25 feet tall. The habit is similar to the native fringetree, with a rounded, spreading crown, but is usually less open. Both bloom at about the same time, but the flowers of the Chinese fringetree are held in smaller clusters, 2 to 4 inches wide and long and have shorter, somewhat wider petals, and the flower clusters are denser and held at the ends of the branches.

Large, 4-to 8-inch-long loose clusters of fragrant white flowers cover the our native fringetree in spring (April for the Richmond area) for about two weeks just as the leaves begin to emerge. Fringe trees are dioecious - male and female flowers are on separate plants - although occasional trees may have both kinds of flowers present on the same plant. Male flowers are showier due to longer petals, however, both male and female trees are striking in bloom. The fruit are blue-black, $\frac{1}{2}$ to $\frac{2}{3}$ inch long and shaped like olives, to which fringetrees are related.

The large, medium to dark green, oblong leaves of the native white fringetree are held oppositely on the stem. They range between 3 to 8 inches long. Native fringetrees seldom have showy fall leaf color in the southeast, generally fading to yellow-green or greenish brown, but occasionally they will turn bright, clear yellow in fall.





Fringetrees are excellent anywhere that a very small tree is needed, such as near a patio, in small yards, or under power lines. Like many white-flowered plants, they look especially nice planted in front of a dark backdrop. They can be used as individual specimens, in groups, in mixed shrub borders or in natural gardens. They are well suited to urban plantings due to pollution tolerance and adaptability to varied soils, however they are not salt tolerant.



Fringetree Fruit

Although fringetrees are adaptable and will grow in most soil types, they prefer moist, deep, well-drained, acidic soils. They grow well in full sun to partial shade. Leaf appearance is best in some shade, but flowering is heaviest in full sun. The ideal compromise would be sun through most of the day, but shade during hot afternoon hours. Fringetrees have low maintenance needs once established.

Due to a naturally strong branch structure fringetrees rarely need pruning. Pruning while young may be desirable if a single stem tree form is preferred.

As fringetrees do not transplant well, take care to choose an appropriate permanent location and use proper planting methods.¹

Chionanthus virginicus is native in the US from New York to Florida and west to Texas and is found in almost every county in Virginia

1. From <http://www.clemson.edu/extension/hgic/plants/landscape/trees/hgic1027.html>

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