

Northern Neck Chapter, Virginia Native Plant Society
President's April 2024 Native Notes
Betsy Washington

Happy Earth Day, 2024! Celebrate by Planting a NN Native Plant!



This famed White Oak, *Quercus alba*, in Nelson County is estimated to be around 400 years old. Shown with long time member, and Remarkable Tree enthusiast Hilda Wilson. Photos by Carole Hammer

Plant an Oak for Earth Day... "Oaks are the quintessential wildlife plants: no other genus supports as many species of Lepidoptera thus providing more types of bird food, than the mighty oak... The value of oaks for supporting both vertebrate and invertebrate wildlife cannot be overstated."

Doug Tallamy, *Bringing Nature Home - How Native Plants Sustain Wildlife in Our Gardens.*

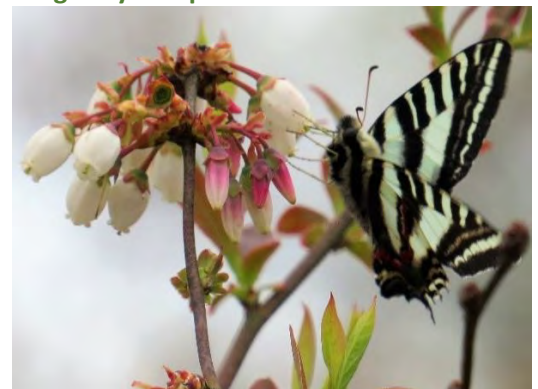
What can you do to promote Biodiversity on your own property? *Shrink your lawn, Plant native species* such as Oaks, native cherry, willows, or birches or herbaceous perennials such as asters, goldenrods or sunflowers that support hundreds of species of wildlife; *Plant for specialist* pollinators that are often dependent on a single genus or species of plant – like the Monarchs and milkweed, *Plant generously and in layers* – plant a dogwood or serviceberry under your Oak and surround this with shrubs and an herbaceous groundcover as a “living mulch”. Refer to our guide, *Native Plants for the Northern Neck* for more beautiful and ecologically rich plant choices.



American Lady on Aster



Monarchs nectaring on Swamp Milkweed
(photos by Betsy Washington)



Zebra Swallowtail on Highbush Blueberries

Asters and Goldenrods top the list of the best herbaceous perennials by supporting over 100 species of butterflies and caterpillars and 33 species of specialist bees. While Milkweeds don't top the list, they are a 'poster child' as a host for the endangered specialist Monarch butterfly. The blueberries in the genus *Vaccinium* support over 100 species of butterflies and moths (baby bird food!) and 33 species of specialist bees. Plant some of these high wildlife value species this spring!

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NN VNPS Outreach Booth A Hit at Earth Day Celebration at Heathsville, April 20th.

Outreach and Education Chair Nancy Garvey enthused: "We had a great day. I am so glad we went. The weather was perfect, there were hundreds of people there and it felt like hundreds of people visited our booth. We were busy all day and people took so many of our materials and loved our seed planting project. We gave away approximately 40 guides plus many of our other materials and our seed planting take home was popular with so many children and even more adults. People interacted with every part of our display from Kyle's I-pad with the Flora of Virginia, to our living native plant samples."

Thankfully our Board members stepped up at the 11th hour to accompany Nancy and make our Outreach possible. We depend on our members to volunteer and help make Outreach events like this possible. It often takes 3 or 4 volunteers to staff our booth, answer questions and help with Outreach activities like the seed planting effort for families and children (but also quite popular with adults!) A big thank you to Nancy Garvey (Outreach Chair) Kyle and Deb Langford, and Judy Lang for volunteering.



Nancy Garvey Answers Questions about Native Plants



Kyle and Deb Langford chat about the virtue of natives

(photos by Judy Lang)

NN VNPS provides Guides and Guidance at the Master Gardener Symposium on April 8.

Ellen Clarke reported that they were busy with dozens of visitors to the outreach table, admiring the display of wildflowers from Ted and Nancy's gardens. The crowd was enthusiastic about native plants, took many Guides and other brochures, and even vendors asked for Guides and native plants to sell and provide their clients! It is so much fun to share the enthusiasm and energy at our Outreach events! (Photos by Ellen Clarke)



Ted Munns welcomes visitors to our Outreach Table



Our lovely display shines with small vials of wildflowers

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Volunteers Needed at the **Strawberry Festival in Heathsville, May 25!** Next month we have one of our most influential and fun Outreach Events, the Strawberry Festival at St. Stephen's Church. This is a widely attended and popular event that attracts hundreds of visitors and is loads of fun. This is a great opportunity to make a difference and help spread our message to a different audience than usual about the importance of our Northern Neck native plants. **We Need YOU at our Next Outreach Event!!! Please Volunteer ... email me at bwash99@verizon.net.**

Native Plant Presentation at the Deltaville Maritime Museum:

Outreach and Education come in all flavors including giving a program at the Deltaville Maritime Museum by yours truly, Betsy Washington, last month. This was a great opportunity to reach a large and new audience that has not heard our message or seen our Native Plant Guide. Over 90 folks crowded into the Museum to learn about how *Native Plants Bring Your Garden to Life*.

The interest and excitement were wonderful, and we gave away dozens of Guides. Folks crowded around afterwards for an hour trying to find out how to turn their property into a native plant sanctuary for beauty and wildlife. You too can join our outreach efforts and volunteer at our Outreach Booth or give talks at local garden centers or garden clubs.



Betsy Presenting Native Plants Bring Life to Your Garden



Over 90 folks attended the Lecture and eagerly took Guides

Betsy Washington also taught a Class on Native Plants for the **Northern Neck Master Gardeners' Basic Training Program** on April 2nd for 27 trainees. This three-hour class was loaded with information on the ecological importance and adaptability of native plants as well as many examples of gorgeous gardens featuring locally native plants and the pollinators and wildlife they support. We look forward to future collaborations with these soon-to-be certified NN Master Gardeners in promoting the Go Native program and educating others on the value of native flora.

April 18th Shoreline Program by Carol Martin Was a Huge Success!

Many thanks to Carol Martin (Shoreline Steward and NN VNPS Board Member) for a superb presentation during our April meeting. Carol is a key member of the Northern Neck Master Gardener's Shoreline Evaluation Program (SEP), an educational program designed to help waterfront homeowners protect their property from erosion, control upland runoff, and reduce sedimentation, thus contributing to the restoration of the Chesapeake Bay. In Virginia, *living shorelines* are now the preferred method for treating shoreline erosion along the Chesapeake Bay Watershed unless

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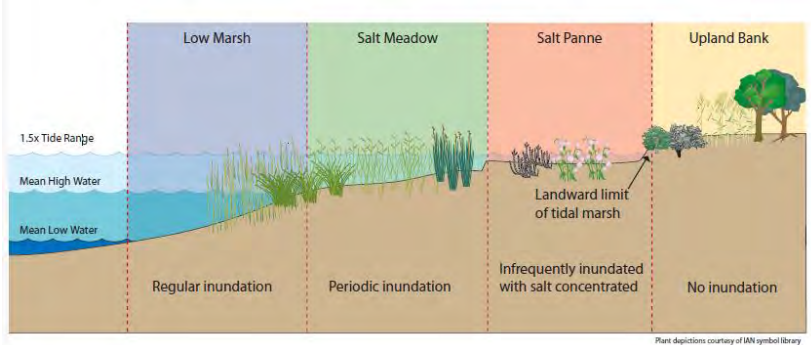
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there are mitigating circumstances. Living shorelines not only stabilize your shoreline but improve water quality and provide habitat for larval fish, oysters, crabs, and other important Bay organisms and preserve natural processes.

Carol explained that we must protect our shorelines from both the water side and the upland side. Shorelines themselves consist of low marsh, salt meadow, and high marsh or salt panne. Salt grasses are the main plants to use in the low and high marshes, with the additional introduction of salt bushes and salt tolerant perennials in the high marsh. In addition, there needs to be a viable riparian buffer planted above the shoreline with all types of native plants, including deep-rooted grasses, perennials, shrubs, and trees, even if (or maybe especially if) you have a hardened shoreline to protect your shoreline and the Bay from erosion. To learn more or to apply for a Shoreline Evaluation, check out: [Shoreline Evaluation Program](#) | [Northern Neck Master Gardeners \(nnmg.org\)](#) or [Brochure 1 \(vims.edu\)](#)



Carol Martin's beautiful shoreline garden in fall



Graphic from Carol's Talk and VIMS Shoreline Guide on shoreline zones

May 16th Meeting – field trip to Hickory Hollow Natural Area Preserve – meet in parking lot by 1:00 pm. Wear sturdy walking shoes and dress for the field with insect repellent, etc. Much of the walk will be on level ground on the White trail but the path down to Cabin Swamp is somewhat steep and narrow. A preview of some of the fabulous plants that should be blooming and flaunting their glory include the rare Kentucky Lady Slipper Orchid, Purple Twayblade, Green False Hellebore, Solomon's Seal, Wild Ginger, statuesque swamp ferns like Cinnamon, Royal ferns that can reach up to 4 or 5' tall in rich moist soils, as well as the diminutive Grape and Adder's Tongue ferns.



The globally rare Kentucky Lady Slipper Orchids In Cabin Swamp at Hickory Hollow



False Green Hellebore – HH hosts the largest colony in the Coastal Plain of the N.A. (photos by B. Washington)

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April Plant of the Month, Lyre-leaf Sage, *Salvia lyrata* (by B. Washington)

This beautiful plant is highly adaptable, growing in full sun to partial shade and in dry soils or those that are occasionally wet. It even tolerates mowing and foot traffic and can be used as a lawn alternative. During late April and May this beautiful wildflower can be seen growing in extravagant abundance in fields and along our roadsides creating a lovely sea of soft -lavender blue blooms. This is a testament to the sheer adaptability and rugged nature of this native wildflower. Its tubular flowers attract a variety of long-tongued bees, hummingbirds and hummingbird moths to its nectar and is deer and rabbit resistant as well. Read more at www.nnvnps.org



Lavender blue tubular flowers in whorls



Snowberry Clearwing Moth Nectaring on Lyre-leaf Sage

VNPS Plant of the Year, White Turtlehead, *Chelone glabra*

The 2024 VNPS Plant of the Year is the beautiful White Turtlehead, *Chelone glabra*. This fall blooming wildflower graces wet areas around the Northern Neck and Middle Peninsula. Read more about this beautiful plant at [Wildflower of the Year 2024 White Turtlehead \(Chelone glabra\) - Virginia Native Plant Society \(vnps.org\)](http://www.vnps.org).

You can order the new VNPS 2024 White Turtlehead Tee shirts at: <https://www.bonfire.com/store/vnps/>

Tentative Schedule of Meetings and Field Trips for Spring 2024

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|---------------------|---|
| May 16 | Meeting & Field Trip to Hickory Hollow/Cabin Swamp to see Orchids and Spring Wildflowers in bloom. Look for updates. |
| May 25 | Outreach Tent at the Strawberry Festival in Heathsville |
| Late May-early June | Potting Party when new Plugs are ready |
| May - Aug. | Monthly Plant Sale Meetings as well as several "Potting" and Planning Parties to propagate plants for the Plant Sale. Dates and Times TBD. |
| Aug. - Sept. TBD | Zoom Presentation by Betsy Washington on <i>Notable Plant Sale 'Gems' and Their Landscape Value</i> – This will be open to the public and held before the annual native plant sale. |
| Fall Programs TBD | We have some great ideas and invitations out for more dynamic programs! |

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What's Blooming Around the Neck and in the next few weeks? Here's a few faves!



Wild Columbine & Hummer



Fringetree



False Indigo-bush, a great shoreline shrub



Cinnamon Fern



Blue Flag Iris



Pinxterbloom Azalea



Common Pawpaw



Sundial Lupine



Pink Lady Slipper



Showy Orchid



American False Hellebore

(Photos by Betsy Washington)