

Native News

Newsletter of the Maryland Native Plant Society

November/December 2009

Volume 9 Number 6

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Upcoming Monthly Meetings

“Last Survivors of Magnolia Bog Flora in Maryland, D.C., and Virginia”

Tuesday, November 24, 7:30 pm

White Oak Library – Large Meeting Room

Join Greg Zell, Arlington County Natural Resource Specialist, and Rod Simmons, plant ecologist, for a presentation on globally-rare Fall Line Terrace Gravel Magnolia Bogs of the greater Washington-Baltimore region, with most of the finest remaining examples occurring in Maryland. Their characteristic flora, including numerous rare species such as Red Milkweed, Bog Fern, Long's Rush, and others; geohydrology; and distribution and global range will be discussed. Management guidelines and future implications for conservation will also be discussed.

Directions: Exit the Washington Beltway at New Hampshire Ave (exit 28). Go north about 2 miles. The library is the first building on the right, once you have passed under Route 29, just after the Sears store.

“Annual Holiday Social & Members Share Night” Plus Annual MNPS Business Meeting

Tuesday, December 15, 6:30 pm

Kensington Park Library – Meeting Room

Please bring a PowerPoint presentation (on a disc or portable drive) or slides to share or photos to display to the group. A slide projector (Vivitar) and carousels will be available. Do share the images or stories of your local or distant adventures experienced within the past year. Also being an annual business meeting, our 2009 election results will be announced. Please bring holiday cookies or other treats to share. Beverages will be provided. Please also consider joining us early (6:00) for the *Native News* mailing party!

Directions: Exit the Washington Beltway at Connecticut Ave (exit 33). Take Connecticut Ave North about 2 miles. Turn left onto SR-547 (Knowles Ave). Library is on the right in .2 miles.



Beech Tree at Chapman Forest, 2007 MNPS
Winter Solstice Walk, Photo by Jim Long

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President's Letter

Dear Members,

Those of you who attended the conference in September know that it was a great success. Both Jim Gallion (Board member and Catoctin Chapter leader), and Karyn Molines (Conference Chair) deserve our thanks. I'm happy to say we had record attendance and wonderful field trips despite the rain on Saturday. Our two speakers, Elizabeth Byers and Woody Bousquet, complimented each other beautifully. Elizabeth took us on a tour of the unique characteristics of high mountain flora in various mountain ranges throughout the world and she explained why conservation of high mountain ecosystems is essential for the survival of species as the climate grows warmer. Woody concentrated on the geology of the eastern mountains and we all came away with an appreciation of geology as the underpinning of botany. In fact, on a recent trip to upstate New York, snippets of both their talks kept popping into my head as we consciously traversed from our home in the Piedmont Plateau, across the Blue Ridge, through the Valleys and Ridges of Pennsylvania, and up onto the Appalachian Plateau. There the hillsides were orange, green and red, and the meadows were yellow, purple and white with goldenrods, asters and snakeroots.

Back home, it's suddenly time for our annual Board elections and I'm delighted to report that most of the Board is continuing on for at least another year. Unfortunately, Brady Hartley has decided not to run for re-election. We're sorry to lose her, and we thank her for her years of service on the Board.

The spread of invasive plants is an ongoing concern for all of us, as we see beloved natural areas decline visibly from year to year. At the September Board meeting we decided to adopt a policy not to conduct field trips or invasive removal off trail during the fall when Stiltgrass is in seed, and to warn participants to clean their shoes before venturing into relatively pristine areas. We don't want to add to the problem by spreading seeds ourselves. It's especially sad if volunteers who work so hard to remove invasives inadvertently become carriers. We do what we can . . . but thinking about this awful problem, I can't help focusing on the role of deer in the destruction of our forests. Walking through woods, I look for seedlings and sapling trees. I see very few. When mature trees fall, creating open spaces, those spaces are filled with invasives. A large proportion of the few native herbaceous species remaining in many of our Maryland forests are simply the species that deer don't eat. We have to venture farther and farther away to find quality natural areas and even those are declining. Just look at the woods around Cunningham Falls. When I consider the small chance of an herbaceous native plant surviving the voracious appetite of herds of deer, I wonder whether the valiant efforts of invasive removal teams are essentially futile. Should we as a Society be doing more to educate the public about the lethal impact of deer? I would appreciate your thoughts.

Kirsten Johnson

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MNPS Announcements

Native News Would Love to Hear From You!

Have you had a memorable time on a MNPS field trip recently? Discovered a new book about native wildflowers? Enjoyed a woodland walk? The *Native News* would love to hear from you! We invite MNPS members to submit short articles and photographs to the *Native News* for publication. Essays about field trip experiences and book reviews are welcome! Please send your submissions to Melanie Choukas-Bradley at choukas@erols.com or 7100 Oakridge Ave, Chevy Chase, MD 20815 and put "Native News" in the subject heading of your email. Be sure to give us your name, phone number, and mailing address. Articles may need to be edited for space. We hope to hear from you!

Not receiving our monthly emails?

Lately, member emails have been bounced back from the monthly email, especially Yahoo, Comcast, and Verizon accounts. Check your spam folders and make sure that mnps@chesapeake.net is in your address book or list of approved emails. You can also send an email to mnps@chesapeake.net to verify that we have your correct email address.

Do you know when your membership expires?

To tell when your membership expires, (and what type of membership you have) take a look at your mailing label. For example, if your label reads 11/1/2009 your membership expires at the end of November. If it's time to renew, please use the form on the back of this newsletter or download one from the website. Mail your dues to MNPS Membership, PO Box 4877, Silver Spring, MD 20914. If your label does not include a date (example E-54) you are receiving a newsletter as part of our exchange program with other native plant (and similar) societies. Memberships or donations to support this service are appreciated.

Native Plant Professionals

One of the Society's many services is providing a list, available on the website, of our current members who have told us that they are native plant professionals. This list is different than the list of nurseries found on the website, since it includes professional gardeners and landscapers as well as native plant propagators and suppliers. If you wish to receive a copy of this list, or if you wish to be included on the list, please contact Karyn Molines, kmolines@chesapeake.net or 410-286-2928.

The Maryland Native Plant Society's mission is to promote awareness, appreciation, and conservation of Maryland's native plants and their habitats. We pursue our mission through education, research, advocacy, and service activities.

Chapter Events and Updates

Greater Baltimore Area Chapter Meeting

"Tree Anatomy Basics"

Date: Wednesday, November 18 **Time:** 7:00 – 9:00 pm

Location: Irvine Nature Center, 11201 Garrison Forest Rd, Owings Mills, MD 21117

Richard C. Murray, arborist and MNPS member, will present a talk on tree anatomy. Trees are prominent members of our native plant community. The public is now interested in planting and preserving trees. Richard believes that, to be effective, we need to know more about them. This is one of the reasons that he recently published a book, *Tree Biology Notebook: An Introduction to the Science and Ecology of Trees*. Tree dissection samples will be used to help convey concepts. Please bring a hand lens!

LOOKING FOR A FIELD TRIP? Check the MNPS website (mdflora.org) for field trips and chapter events that didn't make the *Native News* publication deadline.

General Announcements

Ongoing Moss Study Group

We're a mix of beginners and advanced beginners, and we take our time looking closely at a moss or two each meeting. Led by Charlie and Linda Davis and sponsored by the Natural History Society of Maryland, we meet from 10:00 am until noon on the last Saturday of the month (September 26, October 31). **Location:** Benjamin Banneker Historical Park and Museum, 300 Oella Avenue, Baltimore, MD 21128 **For a map:** <http://tinyurl.com/6h6dvh> **Bring:** Any moss books, hand lenses, and microscopes that you can. If you have a local specimen you'd like the class to look at, bring that, too. **Contact:** Linda lm.davis@verizon.net or 410-252-4154.

Olmsted Woods Walk, Washington National Cathedral Massachusetts & Wisconsin Ave, Washington, DC 20016

BRILLIANT FALL COLOR WITH NATIVE PLANTS
Thursday, November 5 at 10:00 am

This walk will feature native plants such as: American Serviceberry, American Yellowwood, Virginia Sweetspire, Spicebush, Fragrant Sumac, and native ferns and grasses. Come and admire the brilliant borders of native plants that surround the edges at this colorful time of year. Plants' ornamental value, folklore, and landscape uses will be discussed. Participants meet at the George Washington Statue on Pilgrim Road, which is on the south side of the Cathedral. Visitor parking is available in the Cathedral garage accessible off Wisconsin Ave. No reservations are required and all programs are free. Programs will be cancelled in the event of heavy rain. Woodlands Information Line: 202-537-2319. Please wear sturdy waterproof shoes.

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Late Autumn Field Trips

Unless otherwise indicated, MNPS field trips are generally geared to adults. Please see the information provided for individual field trips, some of which may welcome children. If you have questions, feel free to contact the field trip leader.

Civil War Fort Sites in the Washington, D.C. Region (85th in Series) – Fort Stanton

Leaders: Mary Pat Rowan and Lou Aronica

Date: Sunday, November 1 **Time:** 10:00 am – 2:00 pm
We will return to FORT STANTON.

Directions: In Southeast Washington, D.C., get onto Martin Luther King Blvd SE traveling south and take Morris Road east. Go 5 or 6 blocks to where the road curves north and changes name to Erie Street. Go 5 blocks and turn right onto 18th Place (a block after 18th St) and park on street alongside park and Anacostia Museum.

Bring: Water and lunch. **Note:** Easy to moderate walk. A light drizzle is fine but cancelled if pouring rain.

Contact: Mary Pat Rowan blair-rowan@starpower.net or 202-526-8821. Date: Sunday, November 1, 2009

Tree Anatomy Walk

Wheaton Regional Park, Silver Spring

Leader: Richard Murray, arborist and author of the *Tree Biology Notebook*

Date: Saturday, November 7 **Time:** 10:00 am – 2:00 pm
To understand trees, we need to study how they grow in a natural setting. Our walk will look at tree architecture (parts and structure), branching patterns, and contrast how trees adapt to environmental influences; i.e. woods, edge, and open settings. Aging stages (young, mature, declining), defect patterns, and how trees compensate for wounding will be explored. We will also look down into leaf layers for non-woody roots, including mycorrhizae.

Directions: From Georgia Ave or University Blvd, take Arcola Ave to Orebaugh Ave. Turn into Wheaton Regional Park Athletic Complex and drive ½ mile to the parking lot at the Dog Park/Open Air Hockey Rink.

Bring: Light lunch, notepad, and hand lens.

Note: Moderate to easy walk, rain or shine, limited to 20 participants. Registration is required.

Contact: Richard Murray at richardmurray@shannontree.com. Richard will have books available for signing after the walk.

Civil War Fort Sites in the Washington, D.C. Region (86th in Series) – Fort Totten

Leaders: Mary Pat Rowan and Lou Aronica

Date: Sunday, December 6 **Time:** 10:00 am – 2:00 pm
We will return to FORT TOTTEN, to see well-preserved earthworks and investigate the forest which has returned to this site.

Directions: Fort Totten Drive from which you enter FORT TOTTEN PARK is parallel to North Capitol Street between Riggs Road and Hawaii Ave in NE Washington, D.C. Street parking is available on the west side of Fort Totten Drive between Hamilton Street and Allison Street. We will meet on the Park site near the National Park Service sign.

Bring: Water and lunch. **Note:** Easy to moderate walk. A light drizzle or snow is fine but cancelled if pouring rain.

Contact: Mary Pat Rowan blair-rowan@starpower.net or 202-526-8821.

Winter Solstice Walk at Chapman Forest, Charles County

Leader: Rod Simmons

Date: Sunday, December 20 **Time:** 11:00 am – 3:00 pm
The old-age section of Chapman Forest is always a great place to celebrate the winter season and see a remarkable diversity of native trees, including many species of oaks, 4 hickory species, 2 hackberry species, basswood, white and pumpkin ash, ancient sassafras, Virginia hop-hornbeam, bladdernut, wafer ash, southern bayberry, and many others.

Directions: Take Indian Head Highway (Rt. 210) south from Capital Beltway (495) for app. 15 miles. Continue on Rt. 210 past Bryans Rd intersection and start looking for Chapman Landing Rd on right. Take half right on Chapman Landing Rd and proceed a couple of miles to entrance to Mount Aventine on right. Park and meet in parking lot.

Bring: Wear sturdy shoes. Bring lunch, snacks, and water.

Note: Moderate walk, mostly on trails. Cancelled in the event of pouring rain, sleet, or snow.

Contact: Rod cecropia13@msn.com.

Civil War Fort Sites in the Washington, D.C.

Region (87th in Series) – Fort Slocum

Leaders: Mary Pat Rowan and Lou Aronica

Date: Sunday, January 3 **Time:** 10:00 am – 2:00 pm
We will return to FORT SLOCUM, where we haven't been in a long time, to explore a Terrace Gravel forest in the central part of Washington, D.C.

Directions: Take Military Road NW in Washington, D.C. east to where it becomes Missouri Ave NW (after Georgia Ave NW), travel a few blocks and turn left onto Kansas Ave. Travel north for a few blocks and park on Kansas across from the park at the intersection with Nicholson Street NW.

Bring: Water and lunch. **Note:** Easy to moderate walk. A light drizzle or snow is fine but cancelled if pouring rain.

Contact: Mary Pat Rowan blair-rowan@starpower.net or 202-526-8821.

Native News Deadlines:

Nov 25 January/February Winter Issue

Jan 25 March/April Early Spring Issue

March 25 May/June Late Spring Issue

Next Mailing Party Date (Kensington Park Library):

Tuesday, December 15 at 6:00 pm

~ Wildflower in Focus ~

POKEWEED (POKEBERRY)

Phytolacca americana L.

Pokeweed Family (Phytolaccaceae)

Written by
Melanie Choukas-Bradley

Illustration by
Tina Thieme Brown



Pokeweed or pokeberry is a tall plant with a branched, reddish stalk and showy purple-black late summer and autumn berries. Many people assume that pokeweed is a noxious weed. However, it is a native plant of tremendous value to wildlife. My friend and consummate birder Wendy Paulson says that pokeweed has been planted and encouraged in New York City's Central Park as an important food source for birds. And although many gardeners hack away at its tall branched stalk, artist Tina Thieme Brown considers pokeweed a thing of beauty and an artist's inspiration. "I am mesmerized by the deep crimson/blue/purple colors in Pokeweed's berries," she writes. "So I often find myself daydreaming near or under the trailing canopy of the berries and vibrant scarlet stems. Nature often displays elegant examples of artist color theory. The plant's cool green leaves are the perfect complement to the scarlet alizarin stems, creating simultaneous contrast. I hope to capture it in my painting one day." Pokeweed certainly demonstrates the saying: "Beauty is in the eye of the beholder." I now see the plant through Tina's and Wendy's eyes. **Flowers:** Small, creamy white, greenish-white or pinkish-white, with 5 petal-like sepals that are rounded at the tips. Each flower $\frac{1}{4}$ " or so across in clusters (racemes) up to several inches long. **Fruit:** Round but slightly flattened, shiny purple-black berries (green when unripe) in terminal clusters; berries much showier than flowers. **Leaves:** Alternate, simple, ovate to oblong-lanceolate, with entire (sometimes slightly wavy) margins and green or reddish petioles. Glabrous, 3 - 12" long. **Height and Growth Habit:** 3 - 10'; branched. **Habitat and Range:** Fields, fence-rows, woodland clearings; Maine to Minnesota, south to the Gulf of Mexico. **Herbal Lore:** The young shoots are a popular spring green (must be boiled in 2 changes of water) but mature plant and berries are toxic. Native Americans did use berries, roots, and leaves for a number of medical conditions, however, both internally and externally (as a poultice). **Wildlife Lore:** Although toxic to humans, pokeberries are an important food for mourning doves and many songbirds. They are also eaten by raccoons, foxes, and opossums. **Similar Species:** The mature plant is not likely to be confused with any other species, but pokeweed has been confused with the extremely toxic false hellebore or Indian poke (*Veratrum viride*) in the early spring. False hellebore grows in wet areas. Its leaves are heavily ribbed and its flowers are star-shaped and 6-parted. **Blooming and Fruiting Time:** Summer - fall. **Locations:** Throughout Maryland; Rock Creek Park; Potomac River near the Tidal Basin.

**Maryland Native Plant Society**

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