

Marilandica

Spring 2013

A Publication of the Maryland Native Plant Society

Volume 4, Issue 1



Melanie Choukas-Bradley

MOUNTAIN LAUREL

MOUNTAIN LAUREL
Kalmia latifolia L.
Heath Family (Ericaceae)



As the Maryland Native Plant Society celebrates the Year of the Heath during 2013, *Wildflower in Focus* opens with one of our most beloved native heath family members: mountain laurel (*Kalmia latifolia*). During abundant blooming years, the white and pale pink flowers of mountain laurel adorn wooded hillsides and rock outcrops throughout Maryland. The flower clusters appear just as springtime blooming is winding down and summer is warming up. I think of the flowering of mountain laurel as the spring season's dramatic farewell. Mountain laurel is the state flower of both Connecticut and our northern neighbor, Pennsylvania.

In the words of Carole Bergmann, MNPS board member and forest ecologist for Montgomery County Parks: "*Kalmia latifolia* is a lovely plant all the way around. Beautiful flowers, and evergreen foliage that shines in the winter sun. It often forms huge thickets, and when it gets old, it has an open sprawling habit with a peeling strip cinnamon colored bark. It lives in acidic soil. It will tolerate very dry conditions. Down in the North Carolina Smokies, it will get as big as a small tree." Carole adds: "Even though the *Kalmia* trunk may look not that large/impressive/important to the average person, the plant itself may be relatively old (50+years)." She says: "In my job as Forest Ecologist for Montgomery County Parks, I always take a minute to tell trail staff/volunteers/contract crews that the *Kalmia* (continued page 4)

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Letter from the President

Dear Members,

You've heard me say it: "Field trips are the core of the Maryland Native Plant Society." Think about all that we do. We present programs with speakers and what they talk about is what you would see if you went outside and looked around. We advocate for the conservation of so-called natural areas that we have personally explored and know. We hold an annual conference with programs and, of course, field trips. We're about to begin awarding grants for research on Maryland's native plants, which grow where? OUTSIDE!

We're not just about finding pristine places or rare species. We're about looking around and understanding what we see wherever we are. I'm sure most MNPS members have favorite or familiar places. Behind my house in Baltimore is an alley that extends a good distance up Stony Run. I happen to dislike the activity known as "going for a walk," but I walk up that alley pretty frequently on my way somewhere, or even just for the purpose of seeing what's growing out there. I've even thought about leading a field trip in my alley. So convenient not to have to carry water and to be able to bring specimens home fresh for examination with the help of Brown & Brown, *Weeds of the Northeast*, and the rest of the library.

This brings me to my point. Wouldn't it be fun to have a field trip in your favorite place—maybe a local park? Trust me when I say you have more knowledge of that place than you think. And if we schedule it, people will come and explore as a group. You don't have to be an expert botanist. All you have to do is send an email with your idea to fieldtrips@mdflora.org. If you include your phone number we'll call you to talk about it.

We want to publish your Heath Family photos. We plan to publish 2 more issues during the Year of the Heath, and we would love to include more photos from members. They need not have been taken in Maryland, but must be species native to Maryland. Resolution at least 300 dpi. Send to editor Carolyn Fulton, fultoncarolyo@gmail.com

It's spring. See you soon.

~ Kirsten Johnson

New Research Grant Program

We are pleased to announce that beginning later this year MNPS will begin making grants available for research on Maryland's native plants and plant communities. Students, teachers, and independent researchers will be able to apply for grants ranging from \$500 to \$2000, with applications to be evaluated by a committee of professional botanists. This new program, developed by board member Brett McMillan of McDaniel College, was just approved by the board in January. Details, including how to apply, will be posted soon on our website.

Want to Dig Deeper?

Access to academic journals isn't easy for those of us who are not affiliated with an institution. Here are a couple of tips.

The Botanical Society of America offers an "Amateur Botanist" membership for only \$25, which gives you on-line (printable) access to the *American Journal of Botany*, plus the *Plant Science Bulletin*. See www.botany.org.

JSTOR (www.jstor.org) is a digital library that contains academic journals and other content. Full subscriptions are very expensive and are primarily held by institutions. But recently JSTOR began to offer a free on-line subscription for independent researchers. All you have to do is register, and you get on-line (not printable) access to three articles (excluding the most current) every two weeks.

Maryland Heaths (Family Ericaceae)

The decision to declare 2013 the Maryland Native Plant Society's Year of the Heath was easily accomplished over food and drink one July afternoon. Defining precisely which plants we're talking about proved not so simple, but here is our best effort. Chris Puttock, Rod Simmons, Wes Knapp, Charlie Davis, Gary Fleming, Joe Metzger, Kirsten and Dwight Johnson, and others contributed to compiling this list, which was distributed at Chris Puttock's February program in Montgomery County.

Do you believe there are other heaths native to Maryland? Do you think the scientific names are not up to date? Do you use a different common name? Any other dispute? All quarrels with a reasonable basis will be published in our next issue.



Epigaea repens



Rhododendron calendulaceum
and *Kalmia latifolia*



Monotropa uniflora



Rhododendron calendulaceum

Scientific name ¹	Common name ²	Status ³
<i>Arctostaphylos uva-ursi</i> (L.) Spreng.	bearberry	G5 S1
<i>Chamaedaphne calyculata</i> (L.) Moench	leatherleaf	G5 S1
<i>Chimaphila maculata</i> (L.) Pursh	striped prince's plume (FNA) striped prince's pine (USDA) spotted wintergreen (B&B, FVA)	G5 S5
<i>Chimaphila umbellata</i> (L.) W.P.C.Barton	pipsissewa (FNA, USDA, B&B, FVA) prince's pine (DNR, B&B, FVA)	G5 S3
<i>Epigaea repens</i> L.	trailing arbutus	G5 S5
<i>Eubotrys racemosus</i> (L.) Nutt. syn. <i>Leucothoe racemosa</i> (L.) A.Gray	deciduous swamp fetterbush (FNA) swamp doghobble (USDA, FVA) fetterbush (B&B, FVA, NWG)	G5 S5
<i>Gaultheria hispidula</i> (L.) Muhl. ex Bigelow	creeping snowberry	G5 S1
<i>Gaultheria procumbens</i> L.	eastern teaberry (FNA, USDA, FVA) wintergreen (B&B, FVA, NWG) checkerberry (B&B, NWG)	G5 S5
<i>Gaylussacia baccata</i> (Wangenh.) K.Koch	black huckleberry	G5 S5
<i>Gaylussacia bigeloviana</i> (Fernald) Sorrie & Weakley syn. <i>G. dumosa</i> (Andrews) Torr. & A.Gray var. <i>bigeloviana</i> Fernald	bog huckleberry	G5 S1
<i>Gaylussacia brachycera</i> (Michx.) A.Gray	box huckleberry	G5 S1
<i>Gaylussacia frondosa</i> (L.) Torr. & A.Gray	dangleberry	G5 S5
<i>Kalmia angustifolia</i> L.	sheep laurel	G5 S3 S4
<i>Kalmia latifolia</i> L.	mountain laurel	G5 S5
<i>Leucothoe axillaris</i> (Lam.) D.Don ⁴	coastal doghobble	G5 SNA
<i>Leucothoe fontanesiana</i> (Steud.) Sleumer	mountain dog hobble (FNA) highland doghobble (USDA, FNA)	G5 SNA
<i>Lyonia ligustrina</i> (L.) DC.	maleberry	G5 S5
<i>Lyonia mariana</i> (L.) D.Don	piedmont staggerbush (USDA) staggerbush (B&B, FVA, NWG)	G5 S5
<i>Menziesia pilosa</i> (Michx.) Juss.	hairy minniebush (FNA) minniebush (B&B, USDA, FVA)	G4G5
<i>Monotropa hypopitys</i> L. syn. <i>Hypopitys monotropa</i> Crantz	pinetop	G5 S5
<i>Monotropa uniflora</i> L.	Indian pipe	G5 S5
<i>Monotropis odorata</i> Schwein. ex Elliott	pygmypipes (FNA, USDA, B&B) sweet pinetop (DNR, FVA)	G3 S1
<i>Orthilia secunda</i> (L.) House syn. <i>Pyrola secunda</i> L.	sidebells wintergreen (FNA, USDA) one-sided pyrola (B&B, DNR, NWG) shinleaf (B&B)	G5 SH
<i>Oxydendrum arboreum</i> (L.) DC.	sourwood	G5 S1
<i>Pieris floribunda</i> (Pursh) Benth. & Hook.f. ⁵	fetterbush (FNA) mountain fetterbush (USDA) evergreen mountain fetterbush (FVA)	G4 S-



Scientific name ¹	Common name ²	Status ³
<i>Pyrola americana</i> Sweet syn. <i>Pyrola rotundifolia</i> L. var. <i>americana</i> (Sweet) <i>Fernald</i>	American wintergreen (FNA, USDA) wild lily-of-the-valley (B&B) round-leaved pyrola (NWG, FVA)	G5 S5
<i>Pyrola chlorantha</i> Sweet syn. <i>Pyrola virens</i> Schweigg. & Körte	green-flowered wintergreen (FNA, USDA, FVA) green pyrola (FVA) greenish-flowered pyrola (NWG)	G5 S5
<i>Pyrola elliptica</i> Nutt.	waxflower shinleaf (FNA, USDA, FVA) shinleaf (B&B, FVA)	G5 S5
<i>Rhododendron arborescens</i> (Pursh) Torr.	smooth azalea	G4 G5 S4
<i>Rhododendron atlanticum</i> (Ashe) Rehder	dwarf azalea	G4G5 S4
<i>Rhododendron calendulaceum</i> (Michx.) Torr.	flame azalea	G5 S1
<i>Rhododendron maximum</i> L.	rosebay (FNA, B&B) great laurel (USDA, FNA, FVA)	G5 S5
<i>Rhododendron periclymenoides</i> (Michx.) Shinners syn. <i>Rhododendron nudiflorum</i> (L.) Torr.	pink azalea (USDA, NWG) pinxterbloom azalea (FNA, FVA) pinxterflower azalea (FNA, FVA, NWG)	G5 S5
<i>Rhododendron prinophyllum</i> (Small) Millais syn. <i>Rhododendron roseum</i> (Loisel.) Rehder	early azalea	G5 S5
<i>Rhododendron viscosum</i> (L.) Torr.	swamp azalea	G5 S5
<i>Vaccinium angustifolium</i> Aiton	early lowbush blueberry	G5 S5
<i>Vaccinium caesariense</i> Mack.	New Jersey blueberry	G4? S-
<i>Vaccinium corymbosum</i> L.	highbush blueberry	G5 S5
<i>Vaccinium formosum</i> Andrews	southern blueberry	G5 S5
<i>Vaccinium fuscatum</i> Aiton	black highbush blueberry	G5 S5
<i>Vaccinium macrocarpon</i> Aiton	cranberry (FNA, USDA, FVA) large cranberry (B&B, DNR, FVA)	G4 S3
<i>Vaccinium myrtilloides</i> Michx.	velvetleaf blueberry	G5 S3
<i>Vaccinium oxycoccos</i> L.	small cranberry	G5 S2
<i>Vaccinium pallidum</i> Aiton syn. <i>Vaccinium vacillans</i> Kalm ex Torr.	Blue Ridge blueberry (FNA, USDA) hillside blueberry (FVA) mountain blueberry (B&B)	G5 S5
<i>Vaccinium stamineum</i> L.	deerberry	G5 S5

¹ Scientific names follow FNA = Flora of North America, with exceptions for narrower species concepts in *Gaylussacia* and *Vaccinium*. Authors' names are standardized to Brummitt and Powell (1992) abbreviations. One orthographic nomenclatural change was discovered and made for *Eubotrys racemosus*.

² Common names used by local field naturalists. Where several names are used their sources are indicated: Newcomb's Wildflower Guide (Newcomb 1989: NWG), Woody Plants of Maryland (Brown & Brown 1972: B&B), Herbaceous Plants of Maryland (Brown & Brown 1984: B&B), Flora of Virginia (Weakley et al. 2012: FVA), Flora of North America North of Mexico (2008: FNA), USDA PLANTS Database (USDA NRCS 2013: USDA), Rare, threatened and endangered plants of Maryland (Maryland Dept. Natural Resources 2010: DNR). We note that at least 4 species are known as "fetterbush;" at least 12 species as "wintergreen;" and at least 8 species as "staggerbush."

³ Status follows NatureServe rankings (2013), and DNR rare, threatened and endangered species status (2010).

⁴ Definitely introduced.

⁵ Possibly introduced.

Photos by Kirsten Johnson

(*Mountain Laurel*, continued from cover page) are an important part of the ecosystem, and even though they may not be TREES, they should not just be cleared away ‘as something that will grow right back’ when constructing a trail.”

MNPS vice president, master gardener and habitat steward Marney Bruce adds: “Mountain laurel is adapted to low light levels in the forest, but will have more blooms in open, sunnier areas. On Sugarloaf Mountain I was struck by the long-limbed, spreading form of the mountain laurel at forest edges. The picturesque twisting trunks reminded me of dancers! But on the top of the mountain in more sunny areas, the shrubs were full of blossoms and more compact—sometimes beautifully spilling over the rocks.” Marney says: “When conditions are right, *Kalmia latifolia* can form dense thickets. But many gardeners have a hard time growing this lovely shrub because of the requirement for acidic, sharply drained soil.”

Flowers: White or pink, 5-lobed, ¾–1” across, with a deep pink ring at the center. Ten stamens are initially arched and inserted into the corolla, and there are purple dots at the insertion points. MNPS board member and McDaniel College professor Dr. Brett A. McMillan explains a characteristic mountain laurel pollinating trick: “The stamens of the flowers of *Kalmia* are neat because the anthers on them are held in little pockets on the petals and the filaments of the stamens are flexed and under tension when the flowers first open, so that when the first few insects visit, the stamens spring out, mousetrap-like, and dust them with pollen.” Individual flowers are borne on long sticky-hairy flower stalks in roundish, terminal, snowball-sized clusters. The flower buds are intriguing looking and they remind me of Christmas mints or mini meringues.

Leaves: Alternate (or nearly opposite), simple, evergreen. 2–6” long, elliptic or lanceolate, tapered to both ends, on (sometimes reddish) petiole.

Height: 3–20 feet.

Habitat and Range: Usually acidic (and often rocky) woods; eastern US west to Indiana and Louisiana (where I recently saw it growing in a wooded stream valley). According to plant ecologist and MNPS board member Rod Simmons: “Throughout much of the greater Washington, DC area along the fall line and inner coastal plain, dry to seasonally-moist, weathered, acidic summits, hilltops, terrace tops, and upper slopes of hills and ridges are typically vegetated by Oak-Heath Forest. Terrace and ridge summits and north facing upper slopes are typically characterized by a mixture of Chestnut Oak (*Quercus montana*), Mountain Laurel (*Kalmia latifolia*), Red Maple (*Acer rubrum*), Black Gum (*Nyssa sylvatica*), and/or lesser concentrations of deciduous heaths. Often co-dominant and intermixed with the above on mid to lower north facing slopes—especially on very steep slopes and above streams—are Witch Hazel (*Hamamelis virginiana*) and Northern Red Oak (*Quercus rubra*).” Rod adds: “Also intermixed in Oak-Heath Forest with Chestnut Oak and Mountain Laurel across flat, broad terraces and rolling uplands of the region are White Oak (*Quercus alba*), Black Oak (*Quercus velutina*), Southern Red Oak (*Quercus*

falcata), Scarlet Oak (*Quercus coccinea*), and occasionally Post Oak (*Quercus stellata*) and Blackjack Oak (*Quercus marilandica*), as well as dense and nearly continuous colonies of deciduous heaths like Black Huckleberry (*Gaylussacia baccata*), Lowbush Blueberry (*Vaccinium pallidum*), Deerberry (*Vaccinium stamineum*), and other plants.

All Oak-Heath Forest in our area is classified as Central Appalachian/Northern Piedmont Low-Elevation Chestnut Oak Forest: *Quercus montana* (*Quercus coccinea*, *Quercus rubra*)/*Kalmia latifolia*/ *Vaccinium pallidum* Forest (USNVC: CEG006299). It can be represented by the

‘evergreen Mountain Laurel type,’ which is perhaps best developed on cool, steep, mossy north-facing slopes above streams and stream valleys (photo left), or the low-growing ‘deciduous heath type,’ or a mixture of the two.”

Rod continues, “The ‘Terrace Gravel Forest’ characteristic of uplands of our region that are “capped” by tertiary gravels (cobbles) and sands is included within the broad category of Oak-Heath Forest and is somewhat similar to the vegetation atop sandstone ridges in the mountain province. These communities are naturally low in species diversity, but are old-age systems, have never been farmed, and usually remain in mostly pristine condition owing to the highly weathered, acidic, and somewhat harsh growing conditions. Unfortunately, most of the broad, flat upland forests throughout Alexandria, Arlington, DC, Fairfax County, and elsewhere in the region have been cleared for development.

Mountain Laurel is also a somewhat rare component among a predominance of deciduous heaths of the extensive Pine-Oak-Heath Forest types growing on the dry to mesic, acidic, deep Cretaceous sand deposits of the Potomac Formation that extend from the Beltsville Agricultural Research Center eastward through the Odenton area to the Magothly River region between Annapolis and Baltimore. *Pinus rigida*-*Quercus falcata* (*Quercus prinoides*)/*Gaylussacia frondosa* Woodland (USNVC: CEG006329) largely encompasses this globally rare natural community type in our area (photo page 8).”

Herbal and Wildlife Lore: Mountain laurel is a toxic plant, which once was used medicinally. According to Steven Foster and James Duke’s *Field Guide to Medicinal Plants and Herbs of Eastern and Central North America*: “American Indians used leaf tea as an external wash for pain, rheumatism, in liniments for vermin. Historically, herbalists used minute doses to treat syphilis, fever, jaundice, heart conditions, neuralgia, and inflammation. Warning: Plant is highly toxic; even honey from flowers is reportedly toxic. Avoid use.”

According to Alonso Abugattas, Natural Resources Manager for Arlington County, mountain laurel’s toxicity has led to other names for the plant “such as Lamb-kill, Calf-kill, and the catchy Kill-kid. Even the honey is poisonous to people (but I think not to the bees themselves). Having said that, the wood was sometimes used to make spoons, leading to another common name for it (Spoonwood), and burls were made into tobacco pipes. Yet other names are Clamoun, Ivywood, and Calico Bush. It was named by Linnaeus for Finnish botanist Peter Kalm. According to folklorist Laura Martin, in the Victorian age language of flowers it signified ambition.” (continued page 7)



Central Appalachian/Northern Piedmont Low-Elevation Chestnut Oak Forest on rugged, north-facing slope above Rock Creek in Rock Creek Park, Washington, D.C.

R.H. Simmons

Portrait of Our Artist



Tina Thieme Brown
in her studio.

For many years, a signature feature of the Maryland Native Plant Society's publications has been the beautiful botanical artwork by Tina Thieme Brown, accompanied by Melanie Choukas-Bradley's lively and carefully researched descriptions of the illustrated plants. Tina and Melanie are both longtime and active MNPS members. Their collaboration and friendship encompass more than 10 years of studying and working on Sugarloaf Mountain, during which time they have created two art-filled Sugarloaf Mountain guides: *Sugarloaf: The Mountain's History, Geology and Natural Lore*, and *Illustrated Guide to Eastern Woodland Wildflowers and Trees: 350 Plants Observed at Sugarloaf Mountain, Maryland*.



Rhododendron periclymenoides

Wild Hyacinth

In this edition of Marilandica we would like you to get to know Tina Thieme Brown and her Morningstar Studio in Barnesville, in the shadow of Sugarloaf Mountain. In addition to having the mountain for her neighbor, she is surrounded by the Montgomery County Agricultural Reserve, in which she is an active board member of two civic organizations.



Lobelia cardinalis Cardinal flower

Solidago bicolor

Silver-rod



CUTLEAVED-TOOTHWORT - DENTARIA LACINIATA



Phlox divaricata



Monarda didyma Lamiaceae



Blue Lobelia *Lobelia siphilitica*
Campanulaceae

Tina's academic and artistic career includes fieldwork at *Finca La Selva*, a field station of the Organization for Tropical Studies located in the Costa Rican rainforest. There she focused on cryptic coloration in the understory of the rainforest and worked with a team studying the prey/predator relationships of pit vipers. Her field drawings and research informed the environmental art installation *Finca La Selva* which depicted species at risk, ecosystem relationships and scientific research in the Costa Rican rainforest by scientists at Washington University and the Missouri Botanic Garden. Tina also volunteered at the Sea Otter Rescue Center in Seward, Alaska, following the Exxon Valdez oil spill. She used that experience to inspire the *Exxon Valdez Environmental Impact Installation* and to work with the Sierra Club staff on Capitol Hill to defeat legislation that would have opened the Alaskan National Wildlife Refuge for oil drilling. Tina also has been a botanical art instructor at the US Botanic Garden, workshops at the Walden Institute at Walden Pond in Concord, Massachusetts, and teaches botany and garden sketching for the Brookside School of Botanical Art.

Tina's artwork reflects a commitment to sharing her love and understanding of nature. She knows firsthand that experience with the natural world is personally enriching and that it inspires a passion for conservation. At art workshops in her Barnesville studio, Tina teaches art as a way of seeing nature. And she leads hikes on Sugarloaf Mountain, teaching about its plants and plant communities to bring participants into direct contact with the natural world.

For the time being the many demands on Tina's time and talent require her to take a sabbatical from her gorgeous contributions to Marilandica. Stay in touch with her website —www.tinathiemebrown.com—to see her work and for information about scheduling a studio visit appointment. Morningside Art Studio is also open three times a year on the Country-side Artisans Studio Tour.

- Carolyn Fulton

(*Mountain Laurel, continued from page 4*)

Alonso goes on to say: “Ethnobotanist Daniel Moerman reports that the Cherokee used it for rheumatism, as a skin liniment, insecticidal wash, and to treat cuts and scratches. He also reported it was used by the Mahuna as a body deodorant. The Cree used it for diarrhea, a dangerous prospect, but some country folks also used it to treat syphilis and heart disease. Some tribes supposedly even used it for suicide, although no specific tribes are mentioned.”

Regarding wildlife, Alonso reports: “Although not a high value wildlife plant, small birds such as chickadees and titmice pick through it, especially in winter, to get scale insect eggs. The seeds are eaten by several other birds (although the seed capsules contain tiny, dust-like seeds, each can hold over 500 seeds) and white-tail deer can eat small amounts of the plant also, although that often means desperation food and over population issues. It serves best as cover, especially in winter due to its evergreen nature, and several bird species have been known to nest in it too. You rarely find a plant that doesn’t show evidence of either scale insects under the leaves or leaf stippling by rhododendron lace bugs. Stems often are scarred from azalea longhorn stem borer beetles too.”



Mountain Laurel in old-age woodland, a globally rare Pine Barrens community, Beltsville Agricultural Research Center near the headwaters of Beaverdam Creek, Prince George’s Co.

Alonso says: “We have nice stands of healthy mountain laurel at my old haunt of Long Branch Nature Center in Arlington, VA. I used to demonstrate the spring-loaded pollen anthers to kids, showing how it would land on a pollinator’s back or maybe even land on another flower. I would either pop the flower myself or use a twig so they wouldn’t get any of it on themselves, although such small amounts likely would be of no consequence.”

Similar Species: Sheep laurel or lambkill (*Kalmia angustifolia*) is far less common in Maryland and has thinner-textured, paler leaves, and flowers not in terminal clusters. According to MNPS board member, teacher and author Cris Fleming: “*Kalmia angustifolia* occurs at Suitland Bog in Prince George’s County (it is usually flowering there in early June) and at Cranesville Swamp in Garrett County...probably some of the other bogs in Garrett County as well.” Kerry Wixted, biologist and Project Wild State Coordinator with Maryland DNR tells *Wildflower in Focus*: “We have *Kalmia angustifolia* ranked as a Watchlist (S3) species in Maryland. It is supposed to be common on the coastal plain, but some piedmont populations are known. I looked really quickly, and it seems we have records for it in Anne Arundel, Cecil, Charles, Caroline, Prince George’s, Worcester and Wicomico counties. So, I would assume it is probably present throughout the coastal plain of Maryland.”

Mountain Laurel Blooming Time: Late May—early June. Often blooming on Memorial Day at Sugarloaf Mountain in Frederick County.

Locations: According to MNPS board member and landscape designer Mary Pat Rowan: Mountain laurel “is found in almost all of the Forts

in Washington, DC [On our MNPS field trips] we are traversing upland slopes of terrace gravel forests, and mountain laurel is always somewhere on these slopes. It does not occur at the caps but almost always on the slopes. It seems to occur where good drainage is the rule and the soils are acidic. It occurs in large patches in Fort Dupont in many parts of the park and in Fort Chaplin, Fort Stanton, Fort Totten, Fort Slocum, Fort Mahan, and Fort Bunker Hill. These are the forts we visit most often.” According to Carole Bergmann, “Speaking for Montgomery County, many parks have populations of *Kalmia*. The following parks have relatively LARGE populations of *Kalmia latifolia*—and in most cases, there are many *Kalmia* individuals that are at least 50—60

years old in these Parks (I counted rings on several downed plants): Rachel Carson Conservation Park and Blockhouse Conservation Park, (both of these have areas considered “laurel thickets”), Northwest Branch Stream Valley Park (SVP), Upper Paint Branch SVP, Little Paint Branch SVP. We also have sizable populations in Little Bennett Regional Park, Black Hill Regional Park, Cabin John Regional Park, Rock Creek Regional Park, Patuxent River Watershed Conservation Park, Watts Branch SVP, North Branch SVP and more!” Cheverly naturalist, forest steward and new MNPS board member Dr. Matt Salo reports: “Cheverly has two parks with thriving *Kalmia* populations. One is the Cheverly Nature Park, the other Woodworth Park.” Calvert County Natural

Resources division chief and MNPS board member Karyn Molines tells *Wildflower in Focus*: “Through my studies at Jug Bay Wetlands Sanctuary, *Kalmia* was found only along hillsides. Often it was associated with the upper reaches of drainage valleys...not quite ephemeral streams, yet a small valley cutting down the hillside. At Flag Ponds Nature Park in Calvert County, the entrance road goes through some beautiful *Kalmia* thickets, that will be in bloom in June.” According to MNPS vice president and conservation biologist Dr. Marc Imlay: “It is very abundant in Swann Park in Charles County on ridges and in valleys near the Potomac and Pomonkey tributary.” Kerry Wixted tells us: “I have spent most of my time working on the western shore and in western Maryland, so I can definitely vouch for *Kalmia latifolia* being in most Maryland counties. However, I don’t have much eastern shore experience. We do have a record for *Kalmia latifolia* in Wicomico Co, on the lower eastern shore.”

One last mountain laurel tribute from Marc Imlay: “My mother asked us to name our daughter Laurel because she loved mountain laurel. So we did.”

- Melanie Choukas-Bradley

Thank you to everyone who contributed to Wildflower in Focus: Alonso Abugattas, Carole Bergmann, Marney Bruce, Cris Fleming, Dr. Marc Imlay, Dr. Brett McMillan, Karyn Molines, Mary Pat Rowan, Dr. Matt Salo, Rod Simmons, Kerry Wixted and other friends and members of the Maryland Native Plant Society.

Conservation Watch Robert E Lee Park Update



Cutting Virginia Pines at RE Lee Park in late February. Thanks to Jeffrey Budnitz for use of his gator.

There has been much activity at RE Lee Park since 2010 when Baltimore County took over stewardship of the park and a group of citizens formed the RE Lee Nature Council. The park's infrastructure has been improved, including repair of the old railroad trestle across Jones Falls, and a new boardwalk, picnic pavillion, and dog park. Heavily used by dog walkers, RE Lee Park is now the only park in the county that employs rangers to enforce park rules, including leash laws. Several local garden clubs are planning to install a native plant garden in an area close to the Lake Roland dam. With advice from MNPS, they have compiled a list of suitable species and expect to begin planting this year.

From a naturalist's perspective, the park's most interesting features are the wetlands around Lake Roland, beloved by birders, and the serpentine barren, home of several rare and uncommon plant species including *Phemeranthus teretifolius* (Fameflower). Over the last several decades this grassland/prairie community has been impacted by the spread of Virginia Pine. With the full support of park staff and the Nature Council, a project has begun to find out whether quality prairie community

can be expanded by removal of pines. This project is under the leadership of Dwight Johnson of MNPS and the RE Lee Nature Council, Charlie Davis of the Natural History Society of Maryland, and paleobotanist Bill Hillgartner, who has maintained a serpentine study plot in the park for over 10 years. They selected an experimental area of about one acre that still retains a healthy prairie plant community despite scattered trees. This spring, members of the Nature Council Trails Committee will cut the trees in that area and they will be removed by a group of boy scouts as part of an Eagle Scout project. The hope is eventually to expand this quality area outward. The preferred tool would obviously have been fire as is used in Soldiers Delight, but that is not possible given the proximity to a residential area. Dwight, Charlie and Bill plan to perform a complete biological survey of the experimental area this year, and then to observe changes over the next several years.

Starting in 2012 Dwight Johnson is conducting a plant survey of the entire park, which includes over 320 species so far. Participants in MNPS field trips will undoubtedly add to this list.



September 21-22, 2013 at Frostburg University in Allegheny County **The Threatened Natural Communities and Rare Plants of Maryland's Mountains**

The Allegheny Plateau and the Ridge & Valley regions of Maryland harbor many unique natural communities and rare, threatened, and endangered plants. Human threats include forest fragmentation and non-native invasive species as a result of timber harvesting, housing development, and energy development including coal mining, industrial wind energy development, and natural gas extraction. In 2013 we

will explore the unique flora and efforts to mitigate the impacts of land use change in Maryland's mountain region. The conference committee, headed by Sunshine Brosi of Frostburg U and Liz McDowell, our Western Mountains Chair, are busy lining up speakers and field trips. Details will be posted on the website, and an email announcement will be sent to members and friends when registration opens.

SPRING FIELD TRIPS

These are the field trips scheduled at press time. For up to date news of MNPS field trips and activities please see our website, www.mdflora.org and find us at meetup.com. 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.

April 7, Sunday, 10:00 AM – 2:00 PM

Civil War Fort Sites in Washington, DC: Fort Dupont

Leaders: Mary Pat Rowan and Lou Aronica

Please check the MNPS website, www.mdflora.org, for information on the Fort Dupont trip.

April 13, Saturday, 10:00 AM – 4:00 PM

Invasive Removal and Plant ID at Swann Park

Leader: Marc Imlay.

Sponsored by MNPS and the Sierra Club

On the second Saturday each month, we remove invasive non-natives from the 200-acre Swann Park. There will be time for plant identification and a beautiful beach lunch. We will spend half our time enjoying and identifying native plants and half our time protecting them from non-native invasive species. See mdflora.org for more information.

Contact: Marc Imlay, 301.442.5657.

April 21, Sunday, 10:00 AM – 1:00 PM

Leakin Park, Baltimore

Leader: Dwight & Kirsten Johnson.

Sponsored by MNPS and the Natural History Society of Maryland

We'll explore a large urban park in West Baltimore that has quality deciduous forest. We expect to see spring wildflowers and we will also identify trees and shrubs. See mdflora.org for more information.

Contact: Dwight Johnson, dwrightmjohnson@comcast.net or 551.486. 8518.

April 27, Saturday, 10:00 AM – 2:00 PM

Carderock Area Woodlands and Towpath

Leaders: Marney Bruce

This is a wonderful time to get out to see spring wildflowers, and keep our eyes out for plants of the Heath family. This popular recreational area is wedged between the C & O Canal and the Potomac River. We will be walking in the woods, on the towpath, and occasionally crossing streams and climbing hills. See mdflora.org for more information.

Contact: Marney Bruce, marney@simplicity-matters.org or 301.652.0492.

April 27, Saturday, 1:00 – 3:00 PM

Gems of the Forest, Savage River State Forest

Leaders: Sunshine Brosi, FSU Assist. Professor & Liz McDowell, MNPS
Spring wildflowers are the focus during this moderate walk through a unique natural area. A species list will be recorded and shared with forest staff and participants. The number of participants is limited to protect the resource so reservations are required. *This field trip is for MNPS members only.* See www.mdflora.org for more information.

Contact: Liz McDowell, 301.895.3686 or lmcnativeplants@hughes.net.

May 5, Sunday, 10:00 AM – 2:00 PM

Civil War Fort Sites in Washington, DC: Fort Slocum

Leaders: Mary Pat Rowan and Lou Aronica

Please check the MNPS website, mdflora.org, for more information about the May Fort Circle field trip.

May 18, Saturday, 10:00 AM – 3:00 PM

Gunpowder State Park Wildflower Hike, Hereford Area

Leader: Dwight Johnson.

Sponsored by MNPS and the Natural History Society of Maryland.

Explore late spring wildflowers and heaths on the Gunpowder in Hereford including Nodding Trillium, Miterwort, and Greek Valerian. We will explore down stream in the morning, come back for lunch at our cars, then go upstream in the afternoon. See mdflora.org for more information.

Contact: Dwight Johnson, 551.486.8518 or dwrightmjohnson@comcast.net.

June 2, Sunday, 10:00 AM – 1 PM

Mountain Laurel and Other Heaths of Sugarloaf Mountain

Leader: Melanie Choukas-Bradley

Witness the blooming mountain laurel at Sugarloaf Mountain, the botanical event of the year. We will leisurely hike to the summit of Sugarloaf identifying the mountain's other heath family members: blueberries, huckleberries, mountain laurel, pinxter, trailing arbutus and wintergreen, striped or spotted wintergreen, and Indian pipe. Other woody plants will be noted, including black jack oak and table mountain pine, as well as early summer wildflowers and ferns.

Online registration at mdflora.org is required. Deadline is May 31st. Limited to 25 participants.

June 8, Saturday, 9:00 AM – 11:00 AM

Exploring the Heaths, Elk Ridge Native Plant Preserve

Leaders: Liz McDowell & Ron Boyer, MNPS Western Mts Chapter

We'll take a closer look at the various members of the heath family growing throughout this 70 acre private native plant preserve. Naturally occurring populations of heaths as well as planted specimens will be examined. Participants should wear trail shoes and carry their own water. The number of participants is limited to protect the resource and reservations are required. *This field trip is reserved for MNPS members only.*

Contact: Liz McDowell, 301.895.3686 or lmcnativeplants@hughes.net

June 9, Sunday, 10:00 AM – 2:00 PM

Civil War Fort Sites in Washington, DC: Oxon Run Bog

Leaders: Mary Pat Rowan and Lou Aronica

Please see www.mdflora.org, for more information.

June 9, Sunday, 10:00 AM – 3:00 PM

Ferns on the Gunpowder

Leader: Dwight Johnson.

Sponsored by MNPS and the Natural History Society of Maryland

Learn to identify some common and less common ferns along the Gunpowder River just north of Perry Hall. We will explore three different areas located along two paths approx. one mile each. Both paths are flat easy walking with a few small stream crossings but could be muddy if there was recent rain. See mdflora.org for more information.

Contact: Dwight Johnson, 551.486.8518 or dwrightmjohnson@comcast.net.

MONTHLY PROGRAMS

Many MNPS members have thought of the monthly programs in Montgomery County—usually at the Kensington Library, Knowles Avenue, in Kensington—as the regular meetings of the Maryland Native Plant Society. MNPS's other chapters hold monthly meetings as well; all the meetings known at press time are listed chronologically. Please see www.mdflora.org for details.

March 26, Tuesday – 7:30 PM, doors open at 7:00

The Ecology of Wavyleaf Basketgrass

Montgomery County, location: Kensington Library

Speaker: Vanessa Beauchamp, PhD

Based on the results from the research her lab has been conducting for the past three years, Vanessa will discuss habitat preferences, dispersal mechanisms and competitive ability of this species. Her research involves forest succession and invasive species.

April 16, Tuesday – 7:00 PM

Urban and Suburban Meadows, Bringing Meadowscaping to Big and Small Spaces

Western Mountains Chapter, location: Appalachian Laboratory, Frostburg
Video by Catherine Zimmerman

This is a must see video for home gardeners, professional landscapers and native plant enthusiasts. It brings into focus the amazing diversity of life inhabiting meadows and prairies, and the beautiful imagery inspires meadow and prairie creation.

April 30, Tuesday – 7:30 PM, doors open at 7:00

Heath Diversity

Montgomery County, location: Kensington Library

Speaker: Rod Simmons

May 16, Wednesday – 6:00 PM

The Native Plant Gardens of the Friends School of Baltimore

Greater Baltimore Chapter, location: Friends School of Baltimore on North Charles Street

Leader: Kay McConnell

Kay McConnell will lead a tour of the native plant gardens, which she was instrumental in creating. See www.mdflora.org for more info.

May 28, Tuesday – 7:30 PM, doors open at 7:00

Cultivating Heaths and Heathers

Montgomery County, location: Kensington Library

Speaker: Donald Mackay

Donald Mackay speaks to the cultivation of heaths and heathers plus lots of interesting tidbits about this widespread family.

June 18, Tuesday – 7:00 PM

Topic to be announced

Western Mountains Chapter, location: Appalachian Laboratory, Frostburg
The program will begin follow a brief MNPS chapter meeting.

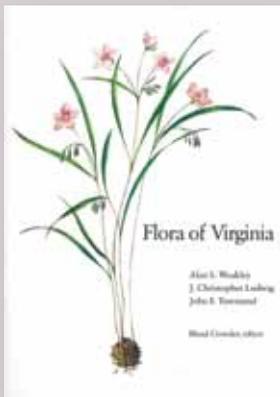
June 25, Tuesday – 7:30 PM, doors open at 7:00

Topic to be announced

Montgomery County, location: Kensington Library

Flora of Virginia—Now in Print

Alan S. Weakley, J. Christopher Ludwig, and John F. Townsend, *Flora of Virginia*. Fort Worth, TX: BRIT Press, 2012. 1572 pp. \$79.99



The first Virginia flora since 1762's *Flora Virginica*, the new *Flora of Virginia* is a guide to nearly 3,200 plant species, native or naturalized in Virginia. It is quickly becoming an important reference for Maryland botanists as well. The Flora can be purchased from the publisher, BRIT Press (<http://www.brit.org/brit-press/books/virginia>) and Amazon.

The Virginia Environmental Endowment is funding transformation of Flora content into a digital database that will be the foundation of an app for

tablet computers and smartphones. The goal is to connect data from the Digital Atlas of the Virginia Flora (vaplantatlas.org) and the Virginia Natural Heritage Program's plots database.

The Flora Project had many partners and contributors including the Virginia Division of Natural Heritage, Virginia Botanical Associates, Richmond's Lewis Ginter Botanical Garden, Virginia Academy of Science, and the Virginia Native Plant Society. Maryland Native Plant Society contributed \$2000 to the project.

We want to hear from you!

Do you have reactions—critical or otherwise—to articles in this issue? Do you want to share your thoughts about native plant conservation? Do you have photos—especially of heaths—that we might publish? Have you read a good book lately that our readers would like to know about?

Tell the editor, Carolyn Fulton, fultoncarolyno@gmail.com.

**we are
ALWAYS
LOOKING
for GOOD
IDEAS**

Answers to Plant ID Quiz from back cover:

1. *Chimaphila maculata* (Spotted Wintergreen)
2. *Rhododendron perichlymenoides* (Pinxterbloom Azalea)
3. *Vaccinium stamineum* (Deerberry)

Plant ID Quiz

Let's begin the Year of the Heath by identifying three members of the Family Ericaceae. Each of them is common in the dry acidic forests of the piedmont.

1. A small, evergreen subshrub, whose deep green leaves are striped white or pale green along the major veins. Pictured right.
2. A shrub, up to 6 or 7 feet tall, with showy pink flowers that appear well before the leaves, often found along stream banks.
3. Shrubs of the *Vaccinium* genus can be hard to distinguish. This one is recognized by its campanulate (bell-shaped) flowers with exserted (protruding) stamens and berries that never turn blue. When it's not in flower or fruit, the presence of leaves of greatly varying sizes on a single twig provide a clue.

Answers on page 10.



Year of the Heath

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