## **Newsletter of the Maryland Native Plant Society**

November/December 2008

Volume 8 Number 6

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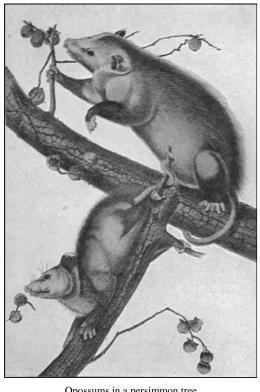
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Opossums in a persimmon tree

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.

## **Upcoming Monthly Meetings**

### "Travilah Serpentine Barrens: A Globally Rare Natural Community"

Tuesday, November 25, 7:30 pm White Oak Library – Large Meeting Room

Join Carole Bergmann, M-NCPPC Forest Ecologist and MNPS past president, for a presentation on one of Maryland's rarest natural communities. The Travilah Serpentine Barrens in Montgomery County is probably the largest and best remaining example of the globally rare Ultramafic Woodlands community in the mid-Atlantic region. "These naturally rare woodlands are only known from scattered locations in the mountains and piedmont of Georgia, North Carolina, Virginia, Maryland, and Pennsylvania." (Virginia DCR, Division of Natural Heritage). The woodlands at the Travilah site occur on fairly flat to gently rolling, rocky uplands and are underlain closely by ultramafic rock, which produces a shallow, very dry soil high in magnesium and iron that can inhibit plant growth. Oaks, hickories, short leaf pine, and various ericads thrive in these conditions, comprising a "flatwoods" intermixed with grassy glades and colonies of plants such as Leonard's skullcap and wild crabapple.

### "Annual Holiday Social & Members Share Night" **Plus Annual MNPS Business Meeting**

Tuesday, December 16, 7:00 pm White Oak Library – Large 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 2008 election results will be announced. Please bring holiday cookies 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 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.



P.O. Box 4877 Silver Spring, MD 20914 www.mdflora.org

#### **Contacts:**

Botany..... Rod Simmons cecropia13@msn.com Conservation......John Parrish info@mdflora.org Field Trips.....Meghan Tice cecropia13@msn.com 301-809-0139 Flora of Maryland......Joe Metzger jmetzger50@hotmail.com Habitat Stewardship......Marc Imlay ialm@erols.com Membership......Karyn Molines kmolines@chesapeake.net 410-286-2928 Monthly Meetings.....Rod Simmons cecropia13@msn.com Outreach......Carolyn Fulton cofulton@chesapeake.net President......Cris Fleming cifleming@aol.com **Publications:** Marilandica..... Rod Simmons cecropia13@msn.com Native News..... Meghan Tice cecropia13@msn.com Website.....Iris Mars info@mdflora.org

#### **Executive Officers:**

Cris Fleming, President Marc Imlay, Vice President Linda Keenan, Vice President John Parrish, Vice President Carolyn Fulton, Secretary Gary Steele, Treasurer

#### **Board of Directors:**

Lou Aronica, Emeritus

**Brady Hartley** Beth Johnson Matthew Bazar Carole Bergmann Kirsten Johnson Joe Metzger, Emeritus Marney Bruce Melanie Choukas-Bradley Amy Doll Karyn Molines

Jim Gallion Mary Pat Rowan Albert Hartley Roderick Simmons

### **President's Letter**

Although the daytime temperatures still hover in the 70's as I write, the later sunrise and earlier sunset, as well as the golden colors of the trees, tell me that it is really autumn. It is also the autumn of my term as your president and, like the season itself, this is a bittersweet time for me. Bitter only in that I will miss guiding this wonderful organization, but sweet in that I feel we have accomplished much during the past two years and that I am leaving MNPS in the very capable hands of the next president, Kirsten Johnson.

Each January, the MNPS board has an all-day planning meeting in which we set out goals for each of our programs and also our personal goals for the year. As I prepared to write this farewell letter to you, I reviewed my personal goals for the last two years and thought I'd share with you some of the things I did accomplish and

One of the first things I did as president was to create an orientation meeting for new board members. I also started a governance committee and asked Kirsten to be the chair. During the January 2007 planning meeting, I proposed several other personal goals I had as the new president, including keeping members informed of board actions and activities via my letters in *Native News* as well as re-establishing the president's annual report. In my role on the botany committee, my personal goal was to set up a process for making lists of species seen on MNPS field trips with the objective of putting these lists on the web page.

In reviewing those goals in January 2008, I was pleased to see that I had accomplished the goals of my role as MNPS president, but disappointed that I had not gotten the field trip list-making project activated.

At the 2008 planning meeting, my new personal goals as president included having the governance committee tackle the revision of the by-laws and the mission statement, having the annual budget finalized by the March meeting, establishing cooperative programs with other like-minded organizations, and exploring possibilities for weekend or extended field trips. I also made a personal commitment to get some field trip lists up on the web page.

As I look at these goals in mid-October, I am proud that the governance committee did achieve a long-needed revision of the by-laws and mission statement. Kirsten's legal background and Beth Johnson's financial background were vital to this project and I really appreciate all the research, meetings, draft writing and revising that the committee struggled through for this accomplishment. Gary Steele, MNPS treasurer, had the budget ready for approval in March. More enjoyable projects were cooperative programs and extended field trips. A small group of MNPS members established a good relationship with the BCC chapter of the Izaak Walton League whereby we identified plants on their property and they offered the use of their large preserve for us to use for meetings or field trips (which we will do next spring).

My own favorite project this year was organizing the weekend of field trips in Garrett County in late June. Over 30 MNPS members had a wonderful time being together exploring the incredible botanical richness of Maryland's western mountains and we helped The Nature Conservancy survey plants at their new preserve, North Cherry Creek Bog. That accomplished two of my goals at the same time. As for the field trip lists, I did get five lists onto the web page and I'm so pleased that MNPS members have caught on to this project by keeping species lists from field trips and sending them to me. I have many lists waiting to be reviewed, organized, checked with leaders, and put on the web page, and this is what I intend to do once my duties as president are over.

I look forward to seeing you all at MNPS meetings and field trips in the coming years. Best wishes for a wonderful holiday season.

~ Cris Fleming

## **Autumn Field Trips**

## Civil War Fort Sites in the Washington, D.C. Region (76<sup>th</sup> in Series) – Fort Dupont Connector

Leaders: Mary Pat Rowan and Lou Aronica

**Date:** Sunday, November 2 **Time:** 10:00 am – 2:00 pm We will return again to a different spot on the Fort Dupont Connector. This spot is located south of Fort Dupont. It will be an exercise, as always, in plant identification as well as geology guesswork.

**Directions:** Take Pennsylvania Ave SE to Branch Ave SE and turn south (right turn from the city) on Branch. The first street on your right is Park Drive. Turn right on Park Drive and park on the street there about where 32<sup>nd</sup> Place comes into Park Drive.

Bring: Water and lunch.

**Note:** Easy to moderate walk. Light drizzle is fine but

cancelled if pouring rain.

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

202-526-8821.

## Civil War Fort Sites in the Washington, D.C. Region (77<sup>th</sup> in Series) – Fort Chaplin

Leaders: Mary Pat Rowan and Lou Aronica

**Date:** Sunday, December 7 **Time:** 10:00 am - 2:00 pm We will return to Ft. Chaplin, this time to observe an autumn woodland.

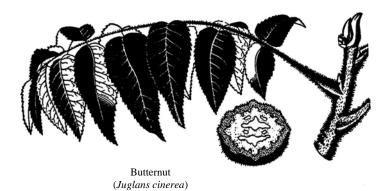
**Directions:** Meet on East Capital Street at 41<sup>st</sup> Street NE in Washington, D.C. Traveling east on Benning Road from Minnesota Ave NE go all the way to where Benning curves to the right and intersects with East Capital Street. Take a right on East Capital and head west a few blocks until you get to 41<sup>st</sup> Street NE on your right. Take a right and park on 41<sup>st</sup> or park on East Capital.

Bring: Water and lunch.

**Note:** Easy to moderate walk. Light drizzle or snow is fine but cancelled if pouring rain.

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

202-526-8821.





### Rock Creek Park, Boundary Bridge

**Leader:** Melanie Choukas-Bradley (author, *City of Trees*) **Date:** Saturday, December 13 **Time:** 10:00 am – 2:00 pm Leave holiday stress at home and explore some of the most magnificent woodlands of the Washington, D.C. area. We'll walk along a scenic stretch of Rock Creek beginning at Boundary Bridge on the Maryland-D.C. line. Sycamore, ashes, maples, American elm, ironwood, river birch, black walnut, bitternut hickory, tulip-tree, and bladdernut are among the woody plants we'll encounter, many of them large specimens. We'll pass a skunk cabbage swamp and switchback into an upland forest where extremely old oaks grow. If it's warm enough, we'll picnic on a dramatic rocky ledge crowned with American beech, witch-hazel (probably still blooming), pinxter, mountain laurel, striped wintergreen, and partridgeberry. We'll also see butternut and hophornbeam on the hike.

**Directions:** From the Beltway (I-495) take Connecticut Avenue south. Turn left on East-West Highway (east), turn right on Beach Drive (south) and take Beach Drive to the District line where the Rock Creek Park gate blocks the road on weekends. Park in the parking lot at the gate or along the road.

**Weather:** Trip will be cancelled if weather is hazardous or miserable (such as heavy cold rain). Weather questions: 301-502-7410.

**Contact:** Trip leader, Melanie Choukas-Bradley, would like to know if you're planning to come (choukas@erols.com; 301-652-8799 or cell: 301-502-7410).

### Winter Solstice Walk at Chapman Forest, Charles County

Leader: Rod Simmons

**Date:** Sunday, December 21 **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. We will mainly walk the lowland areas along the Potomac River below the ravines and bluffs from historic Mount Aventine to Glymont. This area along the river is a fascinating and regionally unique meeting ground for plants with a primary range in the inner piedmont and mountains and those of the coastal plain. Along the way we will see many species of oaks, including ancient pagoda, chinquapin, and northern red 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. We will also look for butternut and Shumard's oak. We should see a variety of birds such as red-headed woodpecker, yellow-bellied sapsucker, hermit thrush, wood duck, and bald eagle.

**Directions:** Take Indian Head Highway (Rt. 210) south from Capital Beltway (495). Proceed south on Rt. 210 for app. 15 miles. Continue on Rt. 210 past Bryans Road intersection (McDonald's, Burger King, and shopping center on right) and start looking for Chapman Landing Road on right. Take half right on Chapman Landing Road 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 (78<sup>th</sup> in Series) – Bald Eagle Hill

**Leaders:** Mary Pat Rowan and Lou Aronica **Date:** Sunday, January 4 **Time:** 10:00 am – 2:00 pm

We will return to Bald Eagle Hill, located at the extreme southeastern edge of the District of Columbia. Bald Eagle Hill is not a Civil War Fort but is part of the preserved corridor that connects the Fort Circle to Oxon Cove. This site includes both upland forest and streamside vegetation.

**Directions:** From the north, take the Anacostia Freeway (I-95) south to the South Capital Street exit. Proceed about one mile to First Street SE and turn right (just after Galveston St). Soon after, make a right onto Joliet Street. Proceed up the hill about 2 blocks and park on the street in front of the Bald Eagle Recreation Center.

**Bring:** Water and lunch.

**Note:** Easy to moderate walk. 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 May 25 July/August Summer Issue

July 25 September/October Early Autumn Issue

Sept 25 November/December Late Autumn/Holidays Issue Last 2008 Mailing Party Date (preceding regular Monthly

Meetings at White Oak Library):

Tuesday, December 16 at 6:00 pm

### ~ Wildflower in Focus ~

## GREAT BLUE LOBELIA (GREAT LOBELIA)

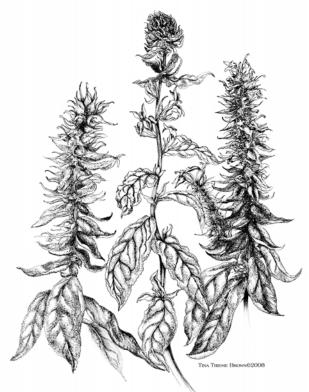
Lobelia siphilitica L.

Bluebell or Bellflower Family (Campanulaceae)

Some taxonomists place this plant in the separate Lobelia Family (Lobeliaceae)

Written by Melanie Choukas-Bradley

> Illustration by Tina Thieme Brown



BLUE LOBELIA - LOBELIA SIPHILATICA

Great blue lobelia blooms along Maryland streams, rivers, and ponds from late summer through autumn. Like the related cardinal flower (L. cardinalis), great blue lobelia is a wildflower of uncommon beauty. Native Americans used the root of this plant to treat syphilis – giving rise to the Latin name: Lobelia siphilitica. Flowers: Deep sapphire or violet, irregular, two-lipped, the upper lip two-lobed, the lower lip three-lobed. Lips are joined to form a tube, which is striped white on its lower side. Flowers ¾ - 1" long, in a dense upright raceme. Leaves: Alternate, simple, lanceolate elliptic, oblong or oblanceolate, shallowly and irregularly toothed, sessile, 2 - 5" long. **Height:** 1 - 3". Habitat and Range: Swamps, springs, streambanks, riverbanks, pondsides, and wet ground; Maine to Manitoba and Colorado, south to North Carolina and Texas. **Herbal Lore:** As well as employing the root as a syphilis treatment, Native Americans used the leaves of this plant to treat a number of internal ailments, including coughs, croup, worms, and nosebleeds. The leaves were also used as poultices for persistent sores. Similar Species: There are several other members of the *Lobelia* genus indigenous to Maryland. See Brown & Brown's Herbaceous Plants of Maryland. Blooming Time: August – November. Locations: Wet areas along Mount Ephraim Road, Sugarloaf Mountain; C&O Canal; Rock Creek Regional Park; Soldiers Delight. See Finding Wildflowers in the Washington-Baltimore Area (Fleming, Lobstein & Tufty) for more locations.

"Wildflower in Focus" is adapted from *An Illustrated Guide to Eastern Woodland Wildflowers and Trees: 350 Plants Observed at Sugarloaf Mountain, Maryland* (Choukas-Bradley and Brown, University of Virginia Press, 2004, 2008).



**Maryland Native Plant Society** P.O. Box 4877 Silver Spring, MD 20914

Dated Material: **Please Deliver Promptly** 



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