

# On The Fringe

## NATIVE PLANT SOCIETY OF NORTHEASTERN OHIO



Founding Chapter of  
**THE OHIO NATIVE  
PLANT SOCIETY**

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Native Plant Society of Northeast Ohio  
ANNUAL DINNER  
SATURDAY, NOVEMBER 9, 1996  
CLEVELAND BOTANICAL GARDEN  
11030 EAST BOULEVARD  
CLEVELAND, OHIO 44106

Cocktail Hour	5:30 PM
Dinner	6:30 PM
Dr. Forsyth's Presentation	8:00 PM

Even though we've had an increase in the cost for both use of the room at the Cleveland Botanical Gardens and for the catered dinner we are keeping the price of the dinner at \$12.00 per person. We will not, however, charge more for guests. Anyone wishing to attend only our guest speaker's presentation will be allowed to do so for a fee of only \$2.00 per person.

Please send your check and reservation form to Tom Sampliner, 2651 Kerwick Road, University Heights, Ohio 44118. Please make your check payable to the Native Plant Society of Northeast Ohio. Be sure to indicate the total number of people coming with you.

Name\_\_\_\_\_

Address\_\_\_\_\_

Phone\_\_\_\_\_

Dinners @ \$12.00 each\_\_\_\_\_

Speaker Only @ \$ 2.00 each\_\_\_\_\_

**1996 PROGRAM SCHEDULE**  
**by Dr. George J. Wilder**  
**Program Committee Chairman**

It is advised that all participants bring a brown-bag lunch on all field trips and to all workshops. Also please call the trip leader to let him or her know you will be coming. This is very important in case of any last minute changes which participants may need to know about. A trip leader and their phone number will be listed for each event. Please feel free to invite guests. Please note that the days of the last two field trips of the year have been changed from Saturdays to Sundays and the times from 9:00 AM to 1:00 PM.

**SUNDAY, OCTOBER 6, 1:00 PM - THE OAKS AND HICKORIES OF CUYAHOGA COUNTY.** George Wilder, Professor of Biology at Cleveland State University (CSU), will lead the day's activities. There will first be a demonstration of herbarium specimens of native oaks and hickories, in the CSU botany teaching laboratory. Participants will then travel by automobile to various locations to observe up to ten species of oaks (plus one hybrid) and five species of hickories. Activities may continue until late afternoon. Participants should meet in Room 226 of the Science Building (at the northeast corner of East 24th Street and Euclid Avenue) of CSU. Please call George Wilder at 687-2395 (days) or 932-3351 (evenings), to tell him you will be coming.

**SUNDAY, NOVEMBER 3, 1:00 PM - LAST-FLING WILDFLOWER WALK.** George Wilder will lead this trip in, or near downtown Cleveland. Encountered will be species of Compositae (Sunflower Family), Gramineae (Grass Family), Chenopodiaceae (Goosefoot Family), and of numerous other families. Participants should meet in Room 226 of the Science Building (situated at the northeast corner of Euclid Avenue and East 24th Street) of CSU. Please telephone George Wilder at 687-2395 (days) or 932-3351 (evenings) before this trip to let him know you will be coming.

**SATURDAY, NOVEMBER 9. ANNUAL MEETING AND DINNER. CLEVELAND BOTANICAL GARDEN, 11030 EAST BLVD. CLEVELAND, OHIO.** We are extremely pleased to announce that Dr. Jane L. Forsyth, Professor Emeritus of Geology at Bowling Green State University, will be our speaker for evening. She has long been interested in the relationship between Ohio's bedrock and flora and she will speak to us about this relationship. Her presentation is entitled "GEOLOGY'S CONTRIBUTION TO PLANT DIVERSITY IN OHIO." In addition to numerous books and articles on geology, Dr. Forsyth has served on Ohio Natural Areas Council since being appointed by the governor in 1975. The ONAC advises the Ohio Department of Natural Resources in purchasing and managing the state's natural areas. The evening will begin with a social hour starting at 5:30 PM. A buffet dinner will begin being served at 6:30 PM and Dr. Forsyth will begin her presentation at 8:00 PM. Members are encouraged to bring guests. The Cleveland Botanical Garden is located along Cleveland Oval, across from the Cleveland Museum of Natural History. Additional details on cost and reservations will be included in the next newsletter.

**MESSIN' WITH MINTS**  
**by Tom Sampliner**  
**Part II of II**

Under the no petiole (sessile) species, spearmint (*Mentha spicata*) can be found. It was brought over from Europe and has always been widely cultivated, now frequently naturalized; I have no idea how it arrived years ago into my gardens, but it is welcome. This perennial can attain a meter in height with a glabrous stem growing sessile, serrated, opposite lanceolate leaves. Florets are small along interrupted or terminal spikes in colors from purple to pink to white. To distinguish this species from the very similar peppermint (*Mentha X piperata*) expect the latter to have petioled leaves of 5 mm or more while the flowers will be either in terminal heads or spikes. For those who do not know, the "X" following the genus signifies a cross or hybrid.

An even more distinct species is the field mint (*Mentha arvensis*) which has flowers in axillary clusters subtended by full sized leaves. Other traits for this species are pubescent stems and leaves petioled 5 mm. or more.

Be forewarned, that in the case of spearmint, peppermint, and the earlier mentioned germander, they have thick, extensive root systems, rhizomes, that meander beneath the earth all over the place. Therefore, if you plant them or already have them, be prepared for a monster job to remove them. If you fail to get some of the rhizomes they will keep coming back and even spread. I have found that both germander and spearmint enjoy open sunny areas, forming thick colonies under total neglect.

A dozen species of a group called horsemints, the monardas, comprise one of the showiest most popular genus among the mints. This is a North American genus of 12 species featuring very tall, erect showy flowered perennials. A look at the numerous common names as well as the extensive herbal, medicinal, fragrance and culinary purposes this mints are used for further attests to their popularity. In fact, this year the International Herb Association has selected monarda as plant of the year. A trip to any garden center attests to the many cultivars. The genus recognizes the contributions of one Dr. Nicola Monardes from Seville, Spain who wrote many tracts regarding medicinal and other uses for plants of the new world during the 1500's.

Monardas flower in terminal or axillary clusters. Each corolla tube is bilabiate. Stamens are usually exserted. If you plant these, they will come — I refer to butterflies and hummingbirds which find the odor and pollen irresistible.

Perhaps the showiest is called either bee balm or Oswego tea (*Monarda didyma*). It can reach 1.5 meters. Leaves are petioled with a shape that can vary considerably. Leaf margins are serrated with the under surface along principal veins manifesting hairs. The bright red beacon we call a flower calls out to onlookers from rich woods, thickets, and wet bottomlands. Wouldn't this be an outstanding addition to any semi-shaded moisture retentive portion of your yard? It not only attracts pollinators, but the show lasts all during summer well into the fall. I often find them in our area where rich woods opens to a clearing which has water including a wet ditch near the opening.

The species called wild bergamot is *Monarda fistulosa*. The corolla parts of pink. Otherwise, this and most of the monardas, are very similar in plant overall appearance and growth habit to bee balm. These last just as long into the fall. Perhaps, they tolerate a slightly drier habitat.

One of the last bloomers among the mints is obedient plant or false dragonhead (*Physostegia*). This North American genus makes things easy for us with only one local representative, *Physostegia virginiana*. These erect perennials attain 1 meter on glabrous stems with only sessile leaves. The leaves are rather narrow lances with sharp marginal serrations and a tapered leaf base. Flowers are in dense terminal racemes. Flower colors are rose or white. Prairies, moist fields and ditches harbor these fall bloomers until a good hard frost. They have wonderful growing companions in our area such as the large fringed gentian (*Gentianopoulous crinita*) and gray goldenrod (*Solidago nemoralis*); a most handsome trio these three make.

Even in seed, these make an interesting exhibition with visible dark seeds standing out against the greenery of the remnant calyx. They seem to do best in full sun as long as they can be kept moist. In nature and hopefully your yard as they do in mine, they colonize in tight colorful packs.

The common name obedient requires a comment. You may be able to duplicate the feat whereby you move the stalk of a plant to a new position and it should stay there for quite a while.

I hope this brief sojourn among the native mints inspires you to try some out at your place. Hopefully it will also inspire you to read more about these fascinating and useful members of our local flora.

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## **THE FISHERMAN & THE GATOR** by Tom Sampliner

In Myakka River State Park there is a spit of land narrowing the river beyond the concession stand parking lot. At these narrows, an artificial dam provides fishermen with a desirable and convenient access. I frequent the site to view the long legged wading shorebirds. Always with a mind to photograph, I approach with heavy back pack, tripod with legs already extended and longest lens affixed to a camera atop the tripod. I am ready for action; however, this incident I now describe took me completely my surprise.

A fisherman was standing atop the dam half way across the river. He had one of those extremely long bamboo rods and was obviously not having any luck. I knew that from his unhappy expression and colorful expletives that spewed forth. His anger was at first directed at the snowy egret astride the dam on one side and the great blue heron to his other. Then from the shallows came a gator that had to be 12 to 15 feet long. It seems this was the last straw for the fisherman who was not about to share with any of this trio. He now directed his wrath at the gator. He stormed off the dam pole in hand and approached the bank nearest the gator. He loudly cursed as he began to rain blows with his long pole down on the gator's head.

As a naturalist, I knew a gator can move much more quickly than the fastest human. I was shocked. I had been photographing the gator during this lucky close approach. Now I was torn between bursting out laughing and attending to my photography. I was too mesmerized to get pictures of the beating.

The gator took the blows for a few seconds then calmly turned and swam away into deeper water. I think the fisherman finally felt better.

**A WALK UP LITTLE MOUNTAIN**  
**(most came down again)**  
**by Tom Sampliner**

On a pleasantly cool day for an August 17th in these parts, a very small group of NFS members followed our guide, Tom Yates, up Little Mountain.

A mixed forest drapes itself over rugged, deeply creviced, conglomerate heights. Down at the base, I particularly enjoyed seeing a generous display of that citrus smelling, yellow flowered horsebalm (*Collinsonia canadensis*). Other common names include richweed and stoneroot. This mint family member displays a loose cluster of irregular 1/2 inch long tubular florets with stamens protruding. The lower lip is fringed and seems surprisingly long for a small flower. The overall effect is that of a miniature orchid. The leaves are opposite and coarsely toothed. These robust plants can reach 2-5 feet high in their rich woods home. A break of a leaf should quickly acquaint you with their pleasant citronella smell; wonder if the bugs are appreciative.

Also quite common in the lower elevations were the whorls of 5 leaves, actually a palmate compound leaflet, denoting Virginia creeper (*Parthenocissus quinquefolia*). These climbing vines grow small white to greenish flowers in branching clusters which ripen into blue-black berries. Tendrils similar to those of grape vine are tipped with discs that aid in securing hold as they climb. Remember to distinguish from those leaflets in three define poison ivy (*Toxicodendron radicans*) the latter of which has white to green berries rather than dark. Some of the creeper was already showing red fall finery.

Little creeks and rivulets comb the mountain. In all the wet areas, the touch me not or jewel weed was plentiful; mostly the spotted variety, (*Impatiens capensis*). In not quite so wet substrate we saw numerous attractive patches of Canada mayflower (*Maianthemum canadense*). This spring bloomer in the Lily family has two or three alternating, entire, prominently veined ovate to lanceolate leaves somewhat heart shaped at the base. Even now out of flower they were showy exhibiting their pink to red speckled fruit. They sure make a handsome ground cover. One of the main features of Little Mountain would have to be the abundant variety of ferns. No doubt the varieties evident are due to the quick change in microhabitats available under rugged highland topography. Near the parking circle, a colony of those double tapered New York ferns (*Thelypteris noveboracensis*) showed off their haphazard growth pattern. The double tapered fronds purportedly represent the lifestyle of the denizens of the big apple.

Nearby were colonies of the more triangular shaped fronds in darker greens representing the woodland fern group, *Dryopteris*. Chaffy or scaly lower rachis along with pinna that are not equally divided along each side of each midvein help identify one of this group. Identification to species can be difficult due to extensive hybridization. If you are lucky enough to find a classic example, and perhaps if the fern has read the literature, if the lowermost pair of pinnae are longer than the next higher pair, you are looking at the spinulose wood fern, now (*Dryopteris carthusiana*) formerly (*Dryopteris spinulosa*). If that lower pair is consistently shorter than the next higher pair, call it the evergreen or intermediate wood fern (*Dryopteris intermedia*).

Mixed in with all these ferns, and considering that I was along, we had to look at mushrooms too. Can I help it if I'm a fun-guy? One noteworthy finding was a sinuously spaced cluster of deadman's fingers (*Xylaria polymorpha*). As the common name

suggests, the impression can be of fingers seeming to arise from the earth as if the body lay buried beneath. In spring, these fruiting structures arise as short thick stalked white to buff clubs covered with asexual spores. Through summer they mature and turn black. The carbon-like appearances announce their time to broadcast spores; the imprint of which on paper is dark brown to black. It would be fun to take some kids to the colony at Halloween and watch the reaction.

Another species I found was the rooted or raddish mushroom (*Oudemansiella radicata*). This tall, slender off-white to light gray or tawny species is distinguished by having a long tap root along with the odor for which it acquired the common name. The stalk and gills are brittle, spore printing white. It may be found on deciduous tree roots and stumps, particularly beech. Our group unanimously agreed the odor matches the name.

As we attained more height, we encountered the broadly triangular broad beech fern (*Phegopteris hexagonoptera*). A diagnostic central rachis wing of tissue goes from the highest to lowest pair of pinna. The long beech fern (*Phegopteris connectilis*) will lack the connective tissue along the central rachis where the lowermost pair of pinna ends and before the next highest begins.

Occasional remnant stumps of American Chestnut (*Castanea dentata*), the former king of the eastern forest, is visible only as sprouts. On a happier note, it is so pleasant to find mature trunks in slate gray marking the presence of American beech (*Fagus grandifolia*) which are absent the graffiti. Still higher, a couple good sized patches of lustrous dark green ground hugging leaves catches the eye. Here, moisture is sufficient to grant Goldthread (*Coptis groenlandica*) a perch in these cool areas. In late spring they must put on a fine show with their solitary stalks; this is the member of the buttercup family home in moist woods as well as bogs.

The higher we walked, the greater the exposure to the deep fissures and rock walls. It seemed like most heights were carpeted with rock cap or rock polypody (*Polypodium virginianum*). This evergreen hugs the escarpments and rock tops in tight colonies. The large round sori are among the most handsome of any I know of.

For those who appreciate the delicate lacery of finely cut ferns, you would enjoy the display of lady ferns (*Athyrium filix-femina*) here. Fronds can attain two meters in length spring up from a stout erect rhizome. Stipes are brittle and scaly near the base. Blades are finely cut mostly tripinnate. Sori are generally horseshoe-shaped with indusia which are attached from the inner side to a veinlet. Of special interest were the red stemmed clusters which are quite striking in appearance.

The slopes were well peppered with members of the infamous Amanita mushroom group. The fruiting body in this group arises from a white egg like sack, which is called a volva or the universal veil. When the cap parts company with the upper portion of the volva, tissue remnants are often left behind on the cap top, leaving a patchwork of white; however, they can weather off. When you combine gills free of the stem, a white spore print, and the tell-tale lower half of the sack still in the soil with the stalk growing right out of it, you probably have one of this group. Some are desirable edibles, while others are deadly toxic; best to nibble on something else. One specimen I found deserves comment. This mushroom is one of the Grisette's. The two most likely candidates of this confusing Amanita subdivision would be the tawny grisette (*Amanita fulva*) or the grisette (*Amanita vaginata*). Both are said to be edible, both lack a partial

veil (ring on the stem) and arise from a rather elongate white sack. Color descriptions vary according to the source. This specimen was a most beautiful chocolate brown cap with half still covered by a pure white remnant of the universal veil. The stout stalk was the same white as was the sack.

As we meandered through the height, Tom pointed out a trait of the yellow birch that none of us knew before. We were told the roots above ground we so often see snaking in and out of the rocky crevices of embankments can also penetrate right through fallen logs and stumps. As time progresses and the other wood has become soil and powder, the birch root remains as if suspended in mid-air.

Atop the heights, peering down into the deep fissures, it was evident a system of caves as well as running water lie below. Tom informed us that both dry and wet caves form an extensive honeycomb. What a pleasant refuge they must make on those sticky 90 degree days. Being a pet owner, I was touched by Tom's anecdote from some years ago of the time he had to go down into the coves to rescue a large dog that had fallen in, become exhausted and unable to get out. Way to go Tom.

A brief recounting of our walk does not begin to do justice to this magnificent spot, now under protection of the Holden Arboretum. I hope the description is enough to encourage you to visit whenever the Arboretum hold another venture on this exciting property.

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## **GARDENING THOSE WASTE AREAS**

**by Tom Sampliner**  
**Part I of II**

So what do you do with those waste areas anyway? You know what I mean. Those trampled, compacted areas where things were stored, those unauthorized pathways cut across yards by delivery folk or neighbor children, circular areas around trees, edges along fence rows, patio and sidewalk and the like.

You need something tough to withstand such abuse but you also want something attractive as well. I have just the solution for you. Why not make use of plants from your local native flora. Natives are tough. They have to be to withstand the harshest conditions your local climate can throw at them. They also need to have evolved methods to deal with the hoards of insects during growing season onslaughts.

About the only thing the natives may not stand up to would be browse by deer and other problem herbivores. However, even from this attack, many bounce back more dependably than the cultivars. In short, natives can withstand what brings most cultivars to their knees, er stems. Oh you know what I mean.

For waste areas with an eye to what blooms very early in the spring, I like that dandelion look alike called Colt's foot (*Tussilago farfara* } . Perhaps along a roadside or creek on the bare waste areas you have noticed a single yellow composites with mostly pistillate ray florets making up the compact head. A scaly scape the same size as dandelions, about 6 inches or less, seems to rise from naked ground since the leaves do not appear until after flowering. Leaves fill in quite nicely, they are heart shaped and attaining 6 inch widths. With the onset of leaves these plants can fill in mat like and

tolerate a variety of soil conditions. Open waste areas including those in harsh sun may deter other plants, but do, not seem to bother this tough little early spring bloomer. Colt's foot will also get a jump start on attracting pollinators as early as late March or early April in the Great Lakes area depending on how the year is progressing. The seed heads will make you and the neighbors think you are growing the pest, dandelion, since the seed dispersal appears identical, a globose head of seeds covered with hair that help dispersal in the wind. Maybe you or your neighbors already have enough of the real McCoy so as to not want it's double, let's look at some more candidates.

Another early spring bloomer that goes from early April here in northern Ohio shutting down when the forest canopy removes most of the penetrating light, would be spring beauties (*Claytonia virginica*). These delicate looking ephemerals of the Purslane family can be pink or white, veined with darker pink lines running the length of each of the five petals. A loose raceme often droops from the scape which has only one pair of opposite leaves which are very grass-like nearer the lower portion of the scape. Another species with oval smaller leaves and darker overall flower colors called Carolina spring beauties (*Claytonia caroliniana*) is found farther to the east and north. Both species tolerate a wide range of soil and moisture conditions. However, they need a little more water and shade than that wasteland pioneer Colt's foot. These are great for semi-shaded borders of fences, patios, tree perimeters, creek and wood edges and certainly slopes along wet ditches.

If you need an aggressive rapid mat forming ground cover for any soil and water condition you offer, full sun to deep shade, blooms from April even past the first frost, than herb robert, or robert's geranium (*Geranium robertianum*) is your candidate. These guys are so tough that you will have to weed them out of your lawn, any cracks in the patio,, all your flower pots and gardens. That is the bad news. The good is nothing kills them except Roundup. The five petals show dark pink lengthwise lines on predominantly lighter pink background. The foliage looks like you have gone for ferns in a big way with 3 to 5 leaflets palmately divided and further deeply cut for that frilly appearance. The scape and leaves are pubescent. Sun turns some of the leaflets fire engine red to contrast with the predominant green of most. You'll have Christmas colors all year. If an under shrub ground cover is required, this will do it. The lengthy bloom season is also a plus. They only attain 6 to 12 inches height, but the pink flowers and contrasting leaves will create more notice than usually attributed to short plants. I have even seen new growth during winter thaws. If you do take them inside, voluntarily or not, watch them hop into every vacant space. The cranesbill look of the seed container is also intriguing. The native woodland geranium (*Geranium maculatum*) is a larger, showier flower but require rich woods humus to be at it's best. Unless in very damp soil, constant open sun would not serve the more handsome woodland species. These really want and need the rich humus with at least partial shade.

If you want to attract a lot of pollinators, want a white lace-doily appearing flower that most people would call a weed, try the wild carrot or Queen Anne's lace (*Daucus carota*). The bristly haired stem can attain between 1 to 3 feet in height. Bracts beneath the flat umbel are deeply lobed. One lonely purple floret sits center of the 2 to 4 inch umbel. In fruit, the head closes up to resemble a bird's nest; hence another of the plant's many common names. This common member of the parsley family was brought over by the. early settlers and it has become a well established plant of dry fields, waste places

and the harshest open areas within cities. The flower heads can be placed flat on cardboard or strong paper and topped with wax paper and heated by an iron to melt the wax to form an artistic dried design. Little bees and various wasps, flies and other insects seem to enjoy this plant as well as a nice assortment of moths and butterflies. So tall are these plants that they can in groups screen an air conditioner or other equipment. The bad news is if your patio or driveway has cracks, count on this guy to pop up as an uninvited guest. At least they last until hard frost, though as perennial they return again in the spring.

Another happy resident of bare or waste areas that you can easily adopt is the sky blue coffee substitute, chicory (*Chichorium intybus*); here is another alien originally but long since well established into local flora. This member of the Composite family features blue ray flowers toothed at the tips, measuring up to 1 and 1/2 inches wide. The alternate leaves range from entire to toothed to lobed. Plant height goes from one to four feet. These make nice contrast to the Queen Anne's Lace. If you tire of them, pull out the roots, dry and grind them up and spice up your coffee with a Cajun influence. One caution, however, a loose, often lax, growth habit many not appeal to everyone.

If your open area in need of ground cover is sandy or rocky but well drained like beaches of the upper Great lakes and farther north as a circumpolar plant even in wet areas, you can't improve upon bearberry (*Arctostaphylos uva-ursi*). This evergreen member of the heath family is a trailing mat forming shrub with small ovate leaves of 1 inch or less, mostly dark glossy green but turning orange to brown with age. From the creeping mat arise short clusters of white bell shaped 5 lobed florets prominently pink along the outer margins of the lobes. They have such a delicate character.

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