

# MNPS 2006 Annual Fall Conference

## Weekend Field Trips

Field trips will be held Saturday afternoon and Sunday.

**SIGN UP FOR FIELD TRIPS SATURDAY MORNING AT THE CONFERENCE.**

[Saturday Trips](#) . [Sunday Trips](#) . [Resources](#)

### Saturday Trips and Lectures

- [Blockhouse Point Non-native Invasive Plants of the Piedmont](#)
- [Edwards Ferry Diabase](#)
- [Non-native Invasive Plants of the Piedmont](#)
- [Potomac Gorge - Great Falls](#)
- [Serpentine Barrens Conservation Park](#)
- [Wild Uses of Plants](#)

#### Blockhouse Point Non-native Invasive Plants of the Piedmont

**Leader:** Carole Bergmann

Blockhouse Point Conservation Park is a 650 acre preserve along the Potomac River. We will explore the high quality, contiguous Piedmont forest and a hike out to a bluff above the Potomac. In all we will cover 2 to 4 miles, with some uphill and downhill.

#### Edwards Ferry Diabase

**Leader:** Rod Simmons

This mature oak-hickory forest along the C&O Canal National Historical Park was recently discovered by MNPS members. It is the only diabase community on the Maryland side of the C&O Canal NHP, and also contains upland depressional swamps.

#### Non-native Invasive Plants of the Piedmont

**Leader:** Paul Carlson

**Time:** 2:00-3:30 p.m.

Many of us are fairly knowledgeable about native plants and their habitats, but we may not know much about the non-native invasive plants—vines, shrubs, forbs, and grasses—that are impacting Piedmont ecosystems. At this workshop we will spend some time inside looking at plant samples and key i.d. points, then take a walk around the Shady Grove campus and see if we can find some of the problem plants in the wild.

**Note:** Maximum 15 people.

## Potomac Gorge - Great Falls

**Leaders:** Cris Fleming and Tony Fleming

This walk will illustrate several aspects of the morning talks on the Potomac Gorge. Great Falls, the head of the Potomac Gorge, contains diverse geology, bedrock terrace plant communities, and several rare species. We will walk a portion of the Billy Goat Trail and some off-trail areas so wear sturdy shoes.

## Serpentine Barrens Conservation Park

**Time:** 1-5 pm

**Leaders:** John Parrish & RG Steinman

This forested “barrens” is underlain with a mosaic of shallow acidic and circumneutral soils. We will see old age oak/hickory forest composed of mockernut and pignut hickories, post, white and chestnut oaks as well as mature oak/pine forest composed of blackjack, post, shingle, red and black oaks. Yellow and Virginia pines co-dominate with the oaks. The under-story is variable. The acid soils support blueberries, deerberry, juneberry and black huckleberry, while the sweeter soils support white ash, juniper, blackhaw, hawthorns, redbud, fringetree, wild plum, and native wild crab. The herbaceous flora is rich in grasses and represented well by species in the aster and legume families. Over twenty species of rare plants occur in the forest. Many of these grow only in forest openings called glades. A powerline opening bisects the parkland and is composed of beautiful little bluestem and indian grass meadows filled with many wildflowers. Two small streams (Greenbrier and Sandy Branch) originate and flow across the park. A unique upland depression wetland supports several species more common to Maryland’s Coastal Plain including swamp white oak, red chokeberry, maleberry, swamp leucothoe, and bartonia.

**Directions:** From the conference center, exit via Gudelsky Way and go right on Shady Grove Rd. In a mile at the stop sign intersection, Shady Grove Rd. becomes Piney Meetinghouse Rd. Go one mile on Piney Meetinghouse and turn left on Boswell Rd. Park on the edge of Boswell Road.

**Bring:** Water and protective clothing. Ticks can be a big problem at this site.

## Wild Uses of Plants

**Time:** 2:00 - 3:30 pm

**Leader:** Karyn Molines

Throughout human history plants have provided us with food, shelter, fiber for clothing and vessels, medicines, cosmetics, dyes and colors, decorations and furniture. Comparisons of different cultures will be highlighted by examples of native American uses of wild plants. Myth and fact in symbolism, folklore and medicine bring the plant-people relationship out of the domain of economic and into cultural history and art. This will be an indoor lecture, with a possible short field excursion on the Shady Grove Campus.

**Group Size:** Unlimited for lecture; field excursion - will be determined by enrollment.

## Sunday Trips

- [Chilton Woods](#)
- [Hoyles Mill Conservation Park](#)
- [Potomac Gorge - Chain Bridge Flats](#)
- [Subway to Subduction](#)
- [Sugarloaf and Montgomery County's Agricultural Reserve](#)

### Chilton Woods

**Time:** 10 am - 3 pm

**Leader:** Rod Simmons

Located near White's Ferry on the C&O Canal National Historical Park, this is one of the best examples of Piedmont forest. We'll hike through ravines and rolling forests and view the Potomac River from siltstone cliffs.

### Hoyles Mill Conservation Park

**Time:** 10:00 am - 3:00 pm

**Leaders:** John Parrish and RG Steinman

This forested park sits atop the largest outcrop of diabase bedrock in Maryland. Over 2,000 acres of this rare ecosystem were recently acquired and preserved in perpetuity, much of it as public parkland. About 1000 acres are privately held in a conservation easement. Up to 500 acres of parkland are to be added in near future. Scenic Little Seneca Creek, a trout stream, runs through the park. This diabase ecosystem supports the second highest concentration of rare plant species in Montgomery, second only to the Potomac River Gorge. We will observe some of the rarities including: Shumards red oak, prickly-ash, bottle gentian, black ash, pipsissewa, long-

awned hairgrass, and dwarf chinquapin oak. A powerline opening abuts the southern portion of the parkland. This swath supports beautiful indian grass and little bluestem meadows. Late blooming composites are blooming among the grasses. Sweet soils prevail throughout the landscape. The fertile rocky land supports a forest rich in botanical diversity. Red cedar, white ash, shingle oak, redbud, and hickories are primary components of the oak dominated forest.

**Bring:** Binoculars, camera, lunch, and long pants.

**Directions:** From I-270 take Exit 10, Rt 117/Clopper Road west. Go 6-7 miles until the road ends at the Boyds MARC station. Turn left onto White Ground Road. Within a mile, you will see a gravel parking area on your left opposite St. Marks Church. Meet here.

## Potomac Gorge - Chain Bridge Flats

**Time:** 10 am - 12:30 pm

**Leader:** Cris Fleming

Chain Bridge Flats, at the lower end of the Potomac Gorge, contains an unusual plant community called a riverside prairie. Frequently flooded and scoured, the open rocky shoreline supports prairie vegetation, stunted trees, and many rare species.

**Note:** Wear sturdy shoes as there are no trails and we will be scrambling on the rocks. Maximum 15 people.

**RSVP:** Call Cris Fleming to register, 301-657-9289.

**Directions:** From I-495 in VA, cross the river in the right lanes and take first exit, exit 41, the Clara Barton Parkway, south toward Washington. From I-495 in MD, take exit 40, the Cabin John Parkway which merges into the Clara Barton Parkway or pick up the southbound parkway elsewhere in MD (such as in Cabin John). From I-495, it is 5 1/2 miles to a large parking area on the right side of the parkway just north of Chain Bridge. This parking area is about 1 mile south of the parking lot for Lock 6. We'll meet at the south end of the parking area near the stairway to Chain Bridge. If approaching from DC, take Canal Road to the northbound lanes of the Clara Barton Parkway. However, the Chain Bridge parking area cannot be accessed directly from the northbound lanes of the parkway. Go north a few miles past the exit for Glen Echo and then take the crossover road to get to the southbound lanes and follow above directions.

## Subway to Subduction

**Time:** 10 am - 3 pm

**Leader:** Tony Fleming

A 4-mile walk in southern Rock Creek Park contrasting mafic/ultramafic rocks, soils, and plants with more acidic bedrock and terrace-gravel landscapes. The walk showcases the whole microcosm of DC geology along a major regional fault zone, and includes several geologic sites of historical importance as well as rich forests with a rare stand of native sugar maples. We'll picnic at the zoo - bring lunch or buy one at the Panda Café. Plan to walk about 5 miles.

**Directions:** Meet at the sidewalk by the UDC METRO station on the west side of Connecticut Ave. Free parking should be available.

## Sugarloaf and Montgomery County's Agricultural Reserve

**Time:** 10:00 am - 3:00 pm

Join Melanie Choukas-Bradley, author of *Sugarloaf: The Mountain's History, Geology, and Natural Lore* and *An Illustrated Guide to Eastern Woodland Wildflowers and Trees: 350 Plants Observed at Sugarloaf Mountain, Maryland* for a field trip to Sugarloaf Mountain and the surrounding Agricultural Reserve. The trip will include a short steep slow hike to the summit of Sugarloaf, a monadnock and the only real mountain in Maryland's historic Piedmont. The black birches and tupelos along the way will be showing early autumn color. Table mountain pines, several species of oak, American chestnuts and witch-hazels grow near the trail as well as many shrubby members of the heath family. We will then explore the springs and creeks along the western side of the mountain looking for fall wildflowers such as great blue lobelia, two species of jewelweed, asters, Eupatoriums, goldenrods and silverrod. We will talk about the history and geology of this National Natural Landmark and Montgomery County's Agricultural Reserve, a national model for farmland preservation. Time permitting we will explore native plant habitat on a farm near the mountain base and we may visit the new vineyard and winery near Sugarloaf after the field trip.

**Directions:** From I-270 take Route 109 (Barnesville, Hyattstown exit) south, turning right off the highway. Drive three miles to the intersection of Comus Road, just past the Comus Inn. Turn right on Comus Road (west) and drive just under 2 ½ miles to the base of Sugarloaf. At the mountain base turn right and drive through the open gate and up the mountain (note: there are other roads intersecting at the base). Take the mountain road all the way past East View to the West View parking lot. We will meet at the wooden shelter. Portable toilets located at West View. Please carpool if you can.

**Bring:** Lunch, water and snacks, binoculars, and hand lens if you wish.

**Note:** The summit is a bit cooler and breezier than the surrounding countryside.

## Resources

The US Botanic Garden in Washington, DC, has an exhibit, [Protecting America's Wildest Urban River: From Floods to Flowers in the Potomac Gorge](#).