

# THE TURK'S

THE NEWSLETTER OF THE DELAWARE NATIVE PLANT SOCIETY AUTUMN 2005

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## NATURAL QUOTES

If I knew I should die tomorrow, I would plant a tree today

Stephen Girard

## The DNPS Vision

The purpose of the Delaware Native Plant Society (DNPS) is to participate in and encourage the preservation, conservation, restoration, and propagation of Delaware's native plants and plant communities. The Society provides information to government officials, business people, educators, and the general public on the protection, management, and restoration of native plant ecosystems. The DNPS encourages the use of native plants in the landscape by homeowners, businesses, and local and state governments through an on-going distribution of information and knowledge by various means that includes periodic publications, symposia, conferences, workshops, field trips, and a growing statewide membership organized by the DNPS.

## A SPICY APPLE PIE WELCOME TO OUR NEWEST MEMBERS

### July through September

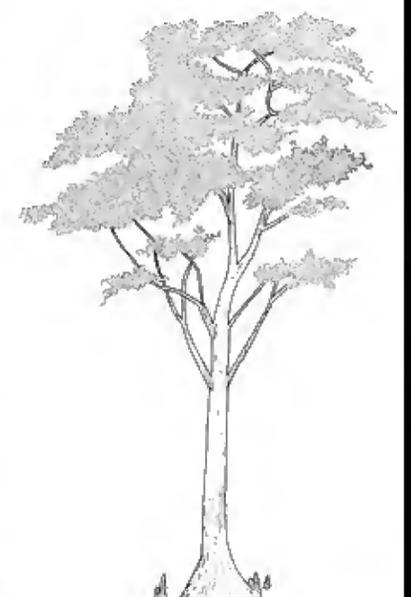
Lisa Ginder  
April & Bruce Hubbard  
Herb & Kate Meire  
Theresa Plummer  
David Vineberg

## HOW CAN I GET INVOLVED?

The Delaware Native Plant Society is open to everyone ranging from the novice gardener to the professional botanist. One of the primary goals of the society is to involve as many individuals as possible.

The DNPS is working on some significant projects at this time. We are undertaking reforestation projects at Prime Hook National Wildlife Refuge, at Blackbird Creek in New Castle County and Cedar Creek in Sussex County where we have installed tree tubes around newly sprouted seedlings. Help is also needed at our native plant nursery at the St. Jones Reserve with the monitoring and watering of plants along with many other nursery activities.

For more information, E-mail us at [dnp@delawarenativeplants.org](mailto:dnp@delawarenativeplants.org). Or visit our website at [www.delawarenativeplants.org](http://www.delawarenativeplants.org). Our website will have all of the past issues of *The Turk's Cap* along with a large section on native plants, as well as links to other environmental and plant related organizations.



## ***THOUGHTS FROM THE EDGE OF THE GARDEN*** ***A NEW LOOK FOR THE TURK'S CAP***

In the last issue of The Turk's Cap, there were some proposed changes to the newsletter. A handful of responses were received and they helped quite a bit in deciding what changes to make. As a result of those comments and some rumination on the topic, this is the result. The newsletter will be kept at 8 pages, with some formatting changed around, removal of some columns, and changed fonts. In upcoming issues there will also be reprinting of past articles.

### ***NURSERY UPDATE***

The nursery is looking really good right now. A lot of the plants look very healthy and grew quite a bit this growing season. We did have some die off from the lack of natural rainfall and heat over the past couple of months, but the loss rate was much lower than previous years.

We want to remind all of our members, that if you purchase some plants from the plant sale to remember to protect them with some chicken wire, or other type of wire mesh to keep the deer and rabbits away from your new plants. Many people buy some great native plants at sales, then lose them to the critters. Chicken wire and wire stakes are a great thing for the first two or three years of a saplings life.

Also, I have had numerous people ask about what we use to protect our plants in the winter. These are frost blankets, which are poly woven fabric type materials that insulate the plants from the cold temperatures. If you do a search on the Internet for "frost blankets", you'll find numerous vendors. They are easy to install and will even hold moisture in during those periods of dry, cold winter winds.

### ***PLANT RESCUE UPDATE***

The DNPS is actively working on entering into an agreement with state, county, and local authorities to be able to obtain permission to enter plots of land that are going to be developed. This plan would involve language in environmental reviews that would encourage agencies to contact the DNPS prior to bulldozing to give us the opportunity to come out to dig out plants and rescue them. The plants would eventually make their way back to the nursery to add to the inventory for future sales. This is a great way to enhance the nursery inventory because we get plants that might otherwise be difficult to obtain seed from, and we are preserving some of these species from destruction. We are very excited about this plan, and hope it works out. Our president, William McAvoy, is currently drafting a letter to send to the state, county, and local officials with all the details of the proposal. Hopefully we will be able to begin this next year.

### ***REFORESTATION PROJECTS***

The DNPS is also actively working on four reforestation sites. Three sites are in Sussex county and one is in New Castle County. The sites were all visited this summer and all of them are doing just fine. We removed tree tubes from the first site we did at Prime Hook Wildlife Area to give the plants some more room to grow. We also planted 20 additional seedlings into the Blackbird Creek site. During the summer of 2006, we'll be doing some non-native and invasive species removal as part of the ongoing management of the sites. Stay tuned for workday announcement about that next year. 

## **Resources & Reviews**

### ***Wild Flowers of North Carolina***

The Second Edition of this very popular book was published in May 2005 and is authored by William S. Justice, C. Ritchie Bell, and Anne H. Lindsey. It contains 376 pages, 553 color photos, 6 tables, 1 chart, bibliography and appendix. A generation has passed since the original edition of the book and this second edition includes 100 additional species, as well as expanded information on each species. It is a guide to propagation, an aid in plant identification, a bounty of knowledge about conservation, and a beautiful collection of photos. More information at [www.uncpress.unc.edu/books](http://www.uncpress.unc.edu/books).

## Resources & Reviews

### *Botany in a Day: The Patterns Method of Plant Identification*

Authored by Thomas J. Elpel. Instead of trying to identify plants one-at-a-time, *Botany in a Day* gives you a way to learn them by the hundreds, based on the principle that related plants have similar patterns for identification, and they often have similar uses. The one-day tutorial included in the text teaches you seven key patterns to recognize more than 45,000 species of plants worldwide. Most plant books cover only one or two hundred species. *Botany in a Day* includes more than 100 plant families and over 700 genera--applicable to many thousands of species. By the end of the day you will have a functional knowledge of botany.

### **FEATURE ARTICLE**

#### *UNUSUAL USES OF PLANTS*

The most common use of plants is that of ornamental use in backyard gardens, in native, natural looking plantings, or for medical or cooking use. But many plants have numerous unusual uses that can be quite astounding and interesting.

The use of plants in the medical treatment of disease is very common, but some of these medical treatments are quite unusual, such as the use of *Adiantum capillus* (maidenhair fern) as a treatment for hard tumors in the spleen, liver and other viscera, *Anacardium occidentale* (cashewnut) as a prevention for scurvy, *Asclepias curassavica* (Curassavian swallow-wort) to expell or destroy parasitic worms of the intestines, *Chenopodium ambrosioides* (Mexican tea) to treat amoebic dysentery, *Citrus aurantifolia* (lime) root bark to reduce fever, and *Jatropha gossypifolia* (bellyache bush) roots to treat leprosy, and as the common name implies, bellyaches.

Most candles are made from bees wax, but there are numerous species of plants that yield a wax or an oil that can be formed directly into candles, some yield an oil that can be burnt, and others can be used as wicks. Wax-bearing plants, such as bayberry and wax myrtle (*Myrica* spp.) have a quantity of wax deposited upon their fruits, leaves and catkins. The wax is obtained by boiling the plant (usually only the fruit, which tends to have the greatest quantity of wax), allowing the liquid to cool and then removing the wax as it solidifies. The wax can then be re-heated and formed into candles. Some plants in the cashew family (such as *Rhus* spp.) have an oil that solidifies. The oil, extracted from the fruits and seeds, assumes the consistency of tallow if allowed to stand, so it can be formed into candles. Many plants produce seeds that are rich in oil, and this oil

can be extracted under pressure and burnt. Some examples of these plants are *Brassica napus* (rape), *Cannabis sativa* (hemp), *Carthamnus tinctoria* (safflower), and *Helianthus annuus* (sunflower). There are two species of plants, *Eriophorum angustifolium* (cotton grass), and *Verbascum thapsus* (Aaron's rod) have tissue that can be made into wicks for candles.

People have been using plant fibers for thousands of years in order to make clothing, rope, paper etc. While all land plants contain fibers, they are usually too short or too weak to be used for anything other than paper-making, but there are well over 100 species suitable for growing in temperate climates that produce long and relatively strong fibers. These fibers vary greatly in their physical properties and can supply cloths ranging from fine and silky to coarse sackcloth, or ropes strong enough to berth large ships. Some examples of plants that are used to make fibers are *Urtica dioica* (stinging nettle) used for cloth, *Spartium junceum* (Spanish broom) used for coarse fabrics, cordage paper, and basketry, and *Apocynum cannabinum* (Indian hemp) used for sails, twine and garden nets.

Commercially produced soaps are made by mixing an alkali (wood ashes or the ashes of other plants can be used) with an oil (usually palm oil) and then often adding substances such as herbal extracts or essential oils to give it a scent. Many plants contain substances called saponins which are toxic glycosides and can be found, usually in low concentrations in many different parts of a plant. Fortunately, the saponins are poorly absorbed by the human body and are harmless. One of their unique properties is to form a lather in water that is a gentle but effective cleaner. A number of plants such as *Saponaria officinalis* (soapwort), *Pteridium aquilinum* (bracken), *Aesculus hippocastanum* (horse chestnut), and *Chlorogalum pomeridianum* (soap lily) contain

quite high concentrations of saponins and have been used as an alternative soap.

Ethnobotany is a discipline that examines the cultural uses of plants. Ethnobotanists have discovered a vast array of unusual uses of plants by many cultures. Some of the more interesting ones are the use of the Bodhi tree as a place of enlightenment, the use of various plants by Atharveda and Rgveda healers in conjunction with mantras to enter a trance-like state to battle disease-causing demons, the use of dried leaves of *Azadirachta indica* (nim or neem tree) to preserve books and clothes, and the use of neem tree twigs as toothbrushes.

And then of course, there is *Humulus lupulus* (hops) that is used to flavor one of the worlds favorite beverages; beer!

The next time you use a common household product or medicine, think about where it came from because the origin might be surprisingly botanical. 

— Eric Zuelke, Editor

## **GARDENING WITH NATIVE PLANTS**

### **BLACK GUM (NYSSA SYLVATICA)**

#### **NATURAL HISTORY**

It's early fall and from the forests and forest edges throughout Delaware the sounds of woodpeckers, robins, catbirds, mockingbirds, and many others signal the ripening of the dark black fruits of *Nyssa sylvatica*, or commonly known as black gum. This member of the black gum family (*Nyssaceae*) is found in forests throughout the Eastern United States from southern Ontario and Maine south to Florida and west to Texas. Black gum is certainly one of the most handsome and desirable trees for any landscape! It's rich dark green shiny leaves of summer,

excellent form, moderate height, spectacular fall color, attractive fruits, textured bark, and relatively carefree nature combine to make it the perfect year around tree for even the smallest of yards. The generic name refers to the beautiful Greek water nymph Nyssa, while the specific epithet, *sylvatica*, means of the woods. The common name of tupelo is said to derive from the Creek language, meaning tree of the swamp. However, black gum is very adaptable and can be found growing in most any soil and light condition. Black gum is a relatively slow growing tree typically reaching heights of 30 to 50 feet and has a rounded pyramidal crown making it an excellent shade tree. The flowers of the Black gum are relatively small but are very attractive to bees and other insects for their rich nectar. In the early fall as the fruits ripen, they are quickly taken by birds and small mammals for their fat rich pulp. It is in the early fall that the black gum is perhaps most spectacular. It is among the first of trees to develop its fall color as the deep shiny green leaves of summer give way to a brilliant shiny crimson color. Interestingly, most gardeners do not recognize black gum. The larger oaks, pines, maples, poplars and other trees of the forest, often dwarf it. But given a chance, it will win a spot of prominence in any landscape!

#### **WHERE TO GROW**

Although often a native of lowland places, black gum is very adaptable and will grow well in most any soil and light conditions. One of the reasons the black gum looks good in many seasons is its resistance to serious insect and disease problems. The foliage often looks as good in early fall as it did soon after emerging in the spring. The site requirements for black gum are quite simple; it prefers sun to partial shade, moist, well-drained soil but tolerates wet soil and clay very well. Its long taproot makes it particularly resistant to drought. Other than supplying it

## **Resources & Reviews**

### ***The Plant-Book : A Portable Dictionary of the Vascular Plants***

Authored by D. J. Mabberley. Internationally accepted as an essential reference text for anyone studying, growing, or writing about plants. Includes over 20,000 entries and provides information on every family and genus of seed-bearing plant. A new edition of one of the most practical and authoritative botanical dictionaries available.

## Resources & Reviews

### *The Book of Swamp and Bog: Trees, Shrubs, and Wildflowers of the Eastern Freshwater Wetlands*

Authored by John Eastman. The author's love of nature and years of experience clearly show in this unique field guide. Most books have an encyclopedic and repetitive approach. In contrast, this book looks at the individual plants and how they fit into the entire ecosystem ranging from companion plants, and dependent bird, mammal, and insect species.

with slightly acidic or neutral and moist soils, it is a very undemanding woody plant. Black gum is primarily dioecious (separate male and female trees), but each tree often has some perfect flowers. This means that some trees will bear numerous fruits while others will have only a few or none. To ensure best fruiting we recommend planting at least one male and one female tree in relative close proximity. For larger landscapes a single male and several female trees planted in a grove will provide excellent fruiting and a great display of fall color.

#### **PROPAGATION AND CARE**

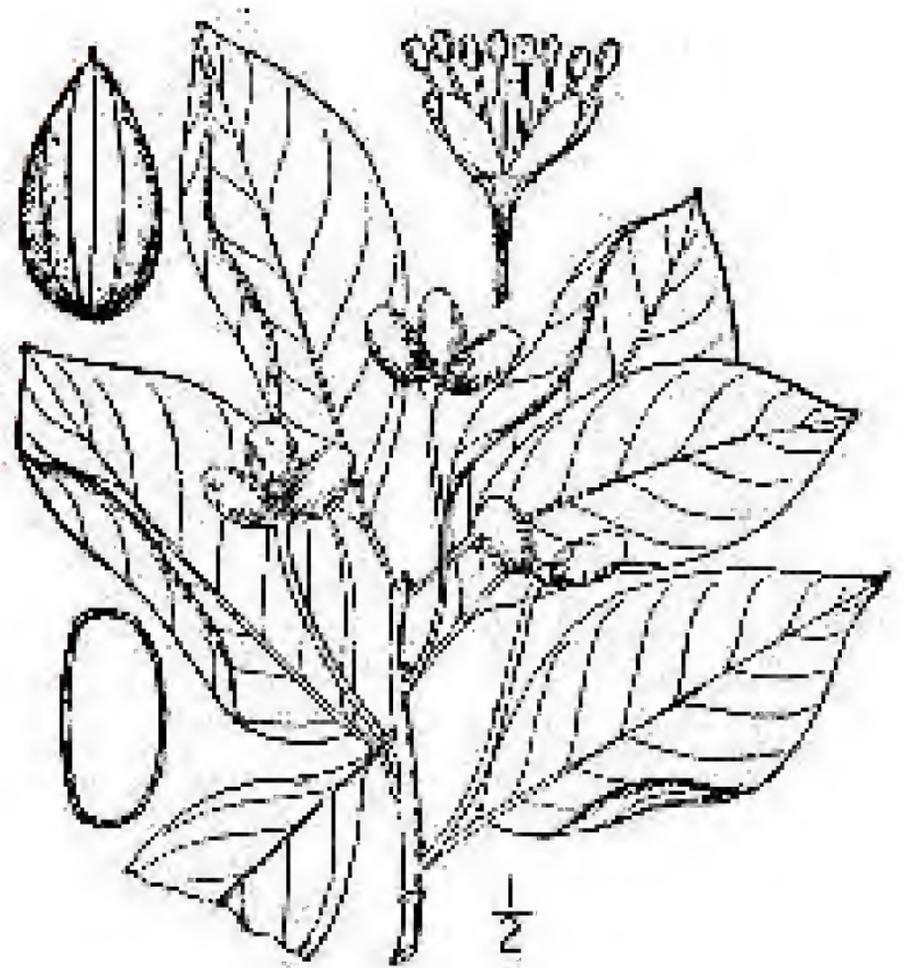
Black gum is difficult to propagate from stem cuttings; therefore most plants are produced from seed. Seeds should be collected soon after ripening otherwise wildlife will surely beat you to them. As soon as collected, separate the seed from the pulp by maceration and rinse several times in fresh water. Most seeds will float to the surface where they can be skimmed off. Place the seeds in a plastic bag with moist sand and refrigerate for a minimum of 30 days cold stratification. In the spring plant the seeds in community pots in a mixture of sand and peat and place in a warm moist environment to germinate and grow. Once the seedlings have developed 2 pairs of leaves, they may be repotted into individual pots. Keep the seedlings protected, warm and moist until fall, and then bury the pots in the ground in a protected spot and cover with a layer of leaves for over wintering. In the spring, plant the seedlings in their desired space, provide protection from grazing by deer and rabbits, and continue to provide water until well established. Large well established saplings should not be disturbed. Their deep taproot makes transplanting nearly impossible. If purchasing plants, avoid container-grown specimens with large circling roots that develop if plants are left in the containers for too long. Young trees require irrigation until well established but will tolerate average

dry conditions thereafter. Black gum is quite hardy and may be transplanted in fall or spring with good success.

#### **LORE**

The black gum is also known as sour gum, which relates to its edible but displeasing tasting fruit, therefore the primary historic value of the tree lies in its wood. The wood of the black gum is very difficult to split, resulting in its use as durable handles for hand tools and was historically used in veneers, plywood, barrel staves, railroad ties and furniture. 

 Bob Edelen, DNPS Member



*Nyssa sylvatica*, USDA Plants Database

# 5th Annual Native Plant Sale

When: Saturday, 5 November 2005, 10:00 AM – 3:00 PM

Where: DE Native Plant Society's native plant nursery.

Directions: The nursery is located at 818 Kitts Hummock Road, at the St. Jones Research Reserve in Dover. Take Route 113 to the Dover Air Force Base. Kitts Hummock Road is directly at the southern border of the air base at the three way intersection of 113, Route 9, and Kitts Hummock Road. Kitts Hummocks Rd. only goes east, and if you go almost one mile you'll see a large sign for the St. Jones Reserve. Turn right onto the gravel road and the nursery is all the way in the back to the left of the parking lot.

What's for sale: Hundreds of trees, shrubs, herbaceous species, ferns, vines and grasses will be available at very reasonable prices.

Here's a sample of what's available (not a complete list):

fringe tree	sweet pepperbush
pawpaw	ink-berry and teaberry
hickories	winterberry holly
American holly	spicebush
tulip tree	butterfly milkweed
many species of oaks	cardinal flower
azaleas	coneflowers
red chokeberry	ferns

Come early, some quantities are limited!

For more information: Call 302.735.8918, email [wmcavoy@delawarenativeplants.org](mailto:wmcavoy@delawarenativeplants.org), or on the web at [www.delawarenativeplants.org](http://www.delawarenativeplants.org).

We had a great sale last year and hope to have an equally great sale this year.

So come out and join the fun!

# Upcoming Events

**SATURDAY, 15 OCTOBER 2005**—AUTUMN AT ABBOTT'S MILL FESTIVAL. EVENTS INCLUDE ENCOUNTER NATURE, DEMONSTRATIONS & EXHIBITS, CHILDREN'S ACTIVITIES, SALES, GUIDED TOURS, GUIDED WALKS, CANOE RIDES, REFRESHMENTS AND FOOD. FOR MORE INFORMATION CALL 302.239.2334, OR ON THE WEB AT [HTTP://WWW.DELAWARENATURESOCIETY.ORG/INDEX.HTML](http://WWW.DELAWARENATURESOCIETY.ORG/INDEX.HTML)

**24-27 OCTOBER 2005**—EIGHTH ANNUAL WETLAND & WATERSHEDS WORKSHOP AT THE HOLIDAY INN, ATLANTIC CITY, NJ. THIS WORKSHOP, HOSTED BY THE WETLANDS WORK GROUP, FOCUSES ON WETLANDS SCIENCE AND POLICY. THERE WILL BE NUMEROUS PRESENTERS IN SESSIONS, POSTER PRESENTATIONS, AND A FIELD TRIP ALONG WITH ALL THE MEALS AND SOCIAL HOURS. REGISTRATION IS REQUIRED AND INFORMATION CAN BE OBTAINED BY CALLING FRANK REILLY AT 540.286.0072. ALSO ON THE WEB AT [HTTP://WWW.WETLANDSWORKGROUP.ORG/WETLANDS\\_WORKSHOPS.HTM](http://WWW.WETLANDSWORKGROUP.ORG/WETLANDS_WORKSHOPS.HTM)

**SATURDAY, 5 NOVEMBER 2005**—BEACH TO BAY TOUR AT ASSATEAGUE ISLAND NATIONAL SEASHORE AT 1:45 PM. A NATURALIST FROM THE NATIONAL PARK SERVICE WILL LEAD A SPECIAL 2-HOUR INTERPRETIVE PROGRAM CALLED "BEACH TO BAY". A HIKE THROUGH DIVERSE BARRIER ISLAND HABITATS WILL HIGHLIGHT VARIOUS LIVING ORGANISMS AND THEIR INTERACTIONS, WITH AN EMPHASIS ON PLANTS. FOR MORE INFORMATION CONTACT: [HUNTERL@DMB.COM](mailto:HUNTERL@DMB.COM) (PREFERRED) OR CALL 410.463.2890, OR ON THE WEB AT [HTTP://WWW.MDFLORA.ORG/](http://WWW.MDFLORA.ORG/)

**SATURDAY, 12 NOVEMBER 2005**—KNOWING NATIVE PLANTS: WINTER BOTANY WORKSHOP. ALTHOUGH PLANTS LOOK DORMANT NOW, THERE IS STILL A LOT HAPPENING UNDER THE SURFACE. SEE WHAT'S GOING ON WITH SEED STRUCTURE AND DISPERSAL. DISCOVER THE FASCINATING WAYS PLANTS PREPARE FOR, AND SURVIVE, WINTER. ALSO LEARN HOW TO RECOGNIZE WOODY PLANTS AFTER THEY SHED THEIR LEAVES. SLIDES/DISCUSSION FOLLOWED BY AN OUTDOOR TOUR. PRE-REGISTRATION SUGGESTED; CALL 215.862.2924 FOR MORE INFORMATION, OR ON THE WEB AT [HTTP://WWW.BHWP.ORG/CALENDAR.HTM](http://WWW.BHWP.ORG/CALENDAR.HTM).

**SATURDAY, 12 NOVEMBER 2004** – FALL FAMILY FESTIVAL AT ADKINS ARBORETUM. ACTIVITIES INCLUDE HAYRIDES, WALKS THROUGH THE ARBORETUM WOODS, MUSIC, AND AN ARRAY OF LUNCHTIME TREATS. PARTICIPANTS CAN ALSO PLACE ORDERS FOR HOLIDAY WREATHS MADE FROM FRESHLY CUT LOCAL GREENS THAT WILL BE DELIVERED AT THE ARBORETUM'S HOLIDAY GREENS SALE. CALL 410.634.2847 FOR MORE INFORMATION, OR TO REGISTER BY PHONE, OR ON THE WEB AT [HTTP://WWW.ADKINSARBORETUM.ORG](http://WWW.ADKINSARBORETUM.ORG).

**SATURDAY, 19 NOVEMBER 2005**—WILDFLOWER FARM TOURS, ANNE ARUNDEL COUNTY AT 3 PM. SPEND AN HOUR TOURING THE WILDFLOWER FARM AND ASKING QUESTIONS ABOUT INCORPORATING NATIVES INTO YOUR OWN YARD. OVER 100 SPECIES OF FLOWERS, GRASSES, GROUNDCOVERS, AND SHRUBS IN CULTIVATION. COME SEE THE PLANTS THAT ARE FLOWERING THIS MONTH, AND LEARN ABOUT THE BIRDS, BUTTERFLIES AND CATERPILLARS THAT DEPEND ON THEM! DIRECTIONS: WE ARE LOCATED ON AISQUITH FARM ROAD IN DAVIDSONVILLE, MD. ONCE YOU ARE ON AISQUITH FARM ROAD, FOLLOW THE SIGNS FOR CHESAPEAKE NATIVES AND THE LARGE RED ARROWS ABOUT A HALF MILE TO THE FAR SIDE OF THE TOBACCO BARN. A MAP AND DETAILED DIRECTIONS MAY BE OBTAINED AT [WWW.CHESAPEAKENATIVES.ORG](http://WWW.CHESAPEAKENATIVES.ORG). FOR MORE INFORMATION CALL 301.580.6237.

**DNPS BI-MONTHLY MEETINGS FOR 2005**—ARE CURRENTLY SCHEDULED THE 3RD TUESDAY OF EVERY OTHER MONTH. OUR NEXT MEETINGS WILL BE: 15 NOVEMBER. MEETINGS WILL TAKE PLACE (UNLESS OTHERWISE NOTIFIED) AT 7 PM AT THE ST. JONES RESERVE, 818 KITTS HUMMOCK RD. ABOUT 1 MILE EAST OF THE RT. 9/113/ KITTS HUMMOCK ROAD INTERCHANGE JUST AT THE SOUTHERN EDGE OF DOVER AIR FORCE BASE. WE PLAN TO HAVE GUEST SPEAKERS AT EACH MEETING (SPEAKERS AND THEIR TOPICS WILL BE ANNOUNCED AT LATER DATES). CHECK OUR WEBSITE FOR ADDITIONAL DETAILS, OR EMAIL US AT [DNPS@DELAWARENATIVEPLANTS.ORG](mailto:DNPS@DELAWARENATIVEPLANTS.ORG).

# Membership Application

## DELAWARE NATIVE PLANT SOCIETY

### Member Information

Name:

Business Name or Organization:

Address:

City and Zip Code:

Telephone (home/work):

E-mail address:

" Full-time Student \$10.00

" Individual \$15.00

" Family or Household \$18.00

" Contributing \$50.00

" Business \$100.00

" Lifetime \$500.00

" Donations are also welcome \$\_\_\_\_\_

Membership benefits include:

- \* The DNPS quarterly newsletter, The Turk's Cap
- \* Native plant gardening and landscaping information
- \* Speakers, field trips, native plant nursery and sales

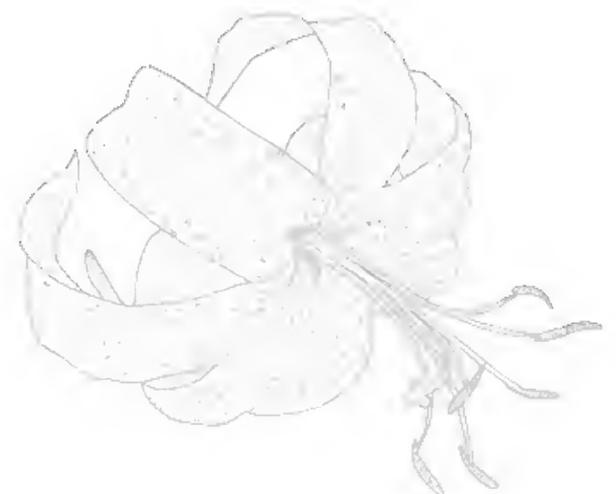
**Total Amount Enclosed: \$**

**Make check payable to:  
DE Native Plant Society  
P.O. Box 369, Dover, DE 19903**

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**DELAWARE NATIVE PLANT SOCIETY  
P.O. BOX 369  
DOVER, DELAWARE 19903**

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