



Claytonia

Newsletter of the John Clayton Chapter of the Virginia Native Plant Society

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Dr. Randy Chambers, watershed biologist at the College of William and Mary, is featured speaker at November meeting

Dr. Randy Chambers, Director of the Keck Environmental Field Laboratory at William and Mary, will discuss recent research in watershed biology at the November membership meeting of the John Clayton Chapter. The meeting will be held at 7:00 p.m. on Thursday night, November 20th, in the **Williamsburg Library Theatre, 515 Scotland St.**

Dr. Chamber's research is focused on the environmental effects of pollution and invasive species on wetlands. Water quality studies will be the primary subject of his talk, including the work of his graduate students on monitoring stormwater retention ponds and the work of the College Creek Alliance—a volunteer citizen-student group that monitors water quality in ponds, streams, and tidal creeks in Williamsburg and James City County. Please join us for this informative talk!

... And note the change of location for this meeting!

Donna Ware

President's message

At our last board meeting, we discussed possible projects for the John Clayton Chapter and more or less decided to keep doing what we do well—outreach, and funding young botanists. Our chapter is unique among the 13 VNPS chapters across the state who give field trips and host excellent speakers. Many of the chapters are active in invasive plant removal; we have made no real effort to address this need, rather our focus has been on the academic side of botany.

This year we funded four students at Nature Camp, and sent a graduate student in botany to a taxonomic symposium. Seeing a need at the William and Mary herbarium, we are donating \$1600 for supplies and student assistants. Our support of the Flora of Virginia is the largest of any other chapter, and with our donation this year of \$1500, we have moved to the next level of over \$10,000 in contributions. While the Flora is on track for publication in 2010, revisions and corrections will be ongoing, anticipating the publication of a second edition, and funding is needed to add photographs to the Digital Atlas of the Virginia Flora.

The board also recognized the work of former member Ann Messick, who was instrumental in the establishment of our sister chapter in the Northern Neck, and who has presented programs to our chapter, using her wonderful wildflower slides. In her memory, we donated \$100 to the Digital Atlas of the Virginia Flora.

We are changing our address! Since our treasurer and several other board members reside in the Williamsburg area, we will be moving our Post Office Box to Williamsburg. Pat Gibbs has discovered the post office box rates are much higher in Yorktown, which was part of the incentive to move. You'll find the new address on the last page.

Plan to attend our next chapter meeting on Nov. 20 with Randy Chambers as guest speaker; see the article above for more information.

Helen Hamilton

Sept. 19 annual membership meeting featured *Remarkable Trees of Virginia*

Our annual meeting at VIMS got under way with a presentation by Aiyana Persinger, winner of a John Clayton Chapter Nature Camp scholarship, who spoke about her experiences at Nature Camp.

In appreciation of Mary Hyde Berg and all she does for her chapter, Mary was presented at the meeting with the John Clayton Botany Award and a check to be used for her choice of conservation purpose.

The speaker for the evening was Nancy Ross Hugo, outdoor writer and lecturer who coordinated the Remarkable Trees of Virginia Project. This project was an initiative to locate and celebrate Virginia's oldest, most historic, largest, and most interesting trees. With co-author Dr. Jeffrey Kirwan and fine art photographer Robert Llewellyn, she visited over 100 of Virginia's most remarkable trees in order to describe them in *Remarkable Trees of Virginia*, a large-format book of text and photographs. Signed copies of the book were available at the meeting.

Using Robert Llewellyn's magnificent photographs, she described the four-year search to find Virginia's most remarkable trees, as well as important community trees, unique trees, fine specimens, and culturally significant trees.

Nancy recommended three other books to us:

Donald Culross Peattie's *A Natural History of American Trees* (2007), originally published in the 1950s;

Out of the Woods—the Armchair Guide to Trees, by Will Cohu (London, 2007);

Tree—A Life Story, the story of a single Douglas Fir by David Suzuki and Wayne Grady, illustrated by Robert Bateman (Greystone Books, 2004).

We are urged to nominate trees ourselves which we consider historic, old or having community importance. The Remarkable Trees of Virginia website at www.cnr.vt.edu/4H/remarkabletree/ describes what to do to nominate a tree.

Here are some of the remarkable trees introduced to us that evening:

An 800-year-old baldcypress on the Blackwater River in Southampton County;

the state champion swamp white oak in Highland County;

the Brompton Oak, a white oak in Fredericksburg which can be seen sheltering soldiers in a photograph taken during the Fredericksburg campaign in 1864;

a cucumber magnolia in Colonial Heights believed to have been planted in 1833;

the state champion cherrybark oak at 215 Ball Street in Colonial Beach;

the state champion sassafras in Lee County;

a huge Higon cherry (*Prunus subhirtella*) in Yorktown;

... and one of Nancy's favorite trees, a white oak in Cumberland County with a trunk over 7 feet in diameter and a limbspread of more than 120 feet!



These and many other remarkable trees and their histories are described in this book, and Nancy's love of trees shines from every page. I'm so glad I purchased a copy.

Louise Menges



Nature scholarship winner Aiyana and Helen pose for a photo after her presentation.



Our speaker, Nancy Ross Hugo



Patti Gray and Mary Hyde Berg enjoy refreshments after the meeting.



The engraved cup presented to Mary

Photos Phillip Merritt

August 30 College Creek walk

Phillip Merritt led a group of native plant enthusiasts on a walk at College Landing Park and Colonial Historic Parkway at College Creek on August 30. On the walk were: Linda Cole, Shirley Devan, Dave Youker, Adrienne Frank, Liz Lescault, Carolyn Weekley, Angier Brock, Stewart Goddin, Flora Adams, Terry Johnston, Margaret Ware, Gary Hammer, Helen Hamilton, Gary Driscoll, Cynthia Long, Lucille Kossodo and Louise Menges. Nearly half of the participants were members of The Virginia Master Naturalist Program, Historic Rivers Chapter. A description of some of the plants seen that day follows, borrowed with permission from an article in their last newsletter by Linda Cole.

The **bald cypress** (*Taxodium distichum*), one of the few deciduous conifers, is pyramidal in shape when young with horizontal branches. The straight trunk is dark reddish brown to silvery brown with bark that shreds lengthwise. The 0.5 to 0.75 inch leaves or needles are arranged feather-like (pinnate) along two sides of small branchlets. The flowers or cones are globe-shaped and roughly one inch in diameter that turn brown when the seeds are ready to be released. The seeds must have continuous moisture to germinate.

There are two common mulberry trees locally: **red mulberry** (*Morus rubra*), a native species, and **white mulberry** (*Morus alba*), a non-native from China that is a favorite food of silkworm caterpillars. Both have alternate leaves that



Ripening fruit on a red mulberry (*Morus rubra*) in a photo taken in May

are oval and toothed (serrate). The leaves may or may not be lobed. The larger (4-10 inches) leaf of the red mulberry is dull with a rough scabrous feel and is fuzzy on the underside while the white mulberry's smaller (3-4 inches) leaves are usually shiny and smooth underneath. The fruit (drupe) of the red mulberry resembles blackberries and ripens in June/July. Its bark is grayish with flattened, scaly ridges, while the bark on the white mulberry has thick, braiding ridges with a yellowish inner bark exposed between the ridges. The buds of the red mulberry are larger, more flattened and sit off-center on the twig. There is a black band on the margin of each scale. White mulberry buds are smaller, more domed, and sit along the center of the twig. The tip is short and needle sharp. There is a brown band but not necessarily on the margin. Red mulberry twigs are a pale tan while white mulberry twigs appear pinkish-brown.

Groundsel tree or high tide bush (*Baccharis halimifolia*) is a member of the aster family that flowers August through November. The flower heads are subtended by toothless leaves, while the rest of the alternate leaves are coarsely toothed in this salt-tolerant shrub that was the John Clayton Chapter's November 2007 Wildflower of



Photo Linda Cole

Phillip identifies a specimen of Groundsel tree (*Baccharis halimifolia*) growing along the edge of College Creek.

the Month. *B. halimifolia* is dioecious meaning that male and female flowers are on different plants. The showy, white female pappus helps the seeds disperse by wind. Some people refer to the shrub as cottonseed tree. It is little wonder that this shrub was named for the Roman god of debauchery, Bacchus. The **marsh elder** (*Iva frutescens*) also is known as high tide bush. This shrub is similar to *B. halimifolia* but with opposite leaves.

Two mallows were identified on the walk: **swamp rose** or **rose mallow** (*Hibiscus moscheutos*) with its pink or white summertime blossom now present as seed heads and **seashore mallow** (*Kosteletzkya virginica*) with its pink flowers that bloom late summer through fall. Both are in the family, Malvaceae, that includes okra, cotton, hollyhock and Rose-of-Sharon. There are over 50 species of *Hibiscus* but only two of *Kosteletzkya*. The genus *Kosteletzkya* was named after Vincenz Franz Kosteletsky who lived from 1801 until 1887. The *H. moscheutos* has large (6-inch) white or pink flowers with a reddish purple center. *K. virginica* flowers are small (2-inch), numerous, and hot pink with bright yellow centers. It has been reported that the seeds of *K. virginica* may be a good source of biodiesel.



Photo Louise Menges

Seashore mallow (*Kosteletzkya virginica*) was in bloom near the banks of the James.

Although a native, **purple lovegrass** (*Eragrostis spectabilis*) is considered by Virginia Tech to be a weed. Named for the Greek god of love, Eros, the bright purple seed-head is open panicle that may be two-thirds as tall as the entire plant. The plant, however, spreads by rhizomes.

Other plants identified during the walk were:

- **Swamp milkweed** (*Asclepias incarnata*) with its purple-pink summertime blooms

- **Partridge pea** (*Chamaecrista fasciculata*) with its yellow summertime blossoms



Swamp milkweed (*Asclepias incarnata*)
Photo Phillip Merritt



Photo Louise Menges

- **Common boneset** (*Eupatorium perfoliatum*) with its white summertime blossom

- **Virginia creeper** (*Parthenocissus quinquefolia*) with its fruit blue on red stems

- **Winged (shining) sumac** (*Rhus copallinum*) and **smooth sumac** (*Rhus glabra*)



Photo Phillip Merritt

These delectable looking immature persimmons are not even close to being edible yet!

A caterpillar on partridge pea (*Chamaecrista fasciculata*) near the river

- **Persimmon** (*Diospyros virginiana*) with fruit edible only after the first frost

Go Green—Save Green on Sept. 20

The Newport News Master Gardeners invited John Clayton Chapter to host a table to help educate the public about conservation landscaping. This event was a “first” for them, and it was highly successful and likely to be repeated next year. We were in the lobby of the Virginia Living Museum along with 15 other organizations promoting their message. A lot of participants stopped by to talk about native plant gardening on their way to and from lectures and outside programs. Many thanks to Lucile Kossodo and Louise Menges who answered questions and talked about our drought tolerant plant display.

Helen Hamilton

Sept. 21 walk on Pat Richardson’s property

On a sunny Sunday afternoon, Sept 21, John Clayton Chapter members Mary Hyde Berg, Edie Bradbury, Lee Bristow, Helen Hamilton, and Lorna Wass enjoyed walking through only a few of the 62 acres owned by chapter member Patrick Richardson near Saluda. Up and down and through the woods and out on the dock and to a meadow, we viewed plants typical to such a diverse habitat. And additionally, we visited the oldest gravesite in



Photo Helen Hamilton

A fragment of John Lewis’ gravestone

King and Queen County, that of John Lewis, who died in 1657. The gravestones are broken and scattered in an open wooded area; Lorna brushed aside the vegetation to get a clearer look at the inscription.

Patrick’s property is on Poro-potank Creek. A Google search using key words provides lots of information about the ancestry of John Lewis, apparently born in Wales in the 16th century.



Photo Helen Hamilton

The group on the walk at Pat Richardson’s property: Patrick Richardson, Mary Hyde Berg, Lee Bristow, Lorna Wass, Edie Bradbury

Helen Hamilton

Backyard Habitat Day Oct. 4

Historic Rivers Chapter of the Virginia Master Naturalists held Backyard Habitat Day at the Williamsburg Farmer’s Market on October 4. They had a successful day, and gave away many copies of Philip Merritt’s list of natives that should be “findable” in these parts, as well as the VNPS list of nurseries. They also used the Chapter’s blue tent in addition to one borrowed from the Farmer’s Market, and were “all exhausted by 11:00 am when it was time to pack up” (we know the feeling!).

Other field trips earlier this fall

Attention John Clayton Members! We’ll soon begin planning our spring field trips; if you know of an interesting spot we could visit, email Phillip at claytonsnatives@yahoo.com.

For our September 20th fieldtrip at Waller Mill Park we had a small group of four people. Not too much was

blooming but we did come across the yellow flowers of a hairy hawkweed (*Hieracium gronovii*) and some devil's walkingstick (*Aralia spinosa*) and beautyberry (*Callicarpa americana*) in fruit. Later in the trip Lee Bristow noticed dark patches on the fallen leaves under a beech tree. We looked up and saw several branches covered with fluffy white beech blight aphids. The dark patches were from aphid droppings, known as honeydew. This sugary substance falls to the ground where it is gathered by other insects and supports a fungus called sooty mold —gross!

We had a nice walk at Freedom Park on September 27th. About 12 people showed up and we retraced a path that Donna Ware led us on two years ago. We saw several Eupatoriums—hyssopleaf thoroughwort (*E. rotundifolia hyssopifolium*), roundleaf thoroughwort (*E. rotundifolia*) and mistflower (*E. coelestinum*). Along the woodland edges there was a red chokeberry in full fruit (*Aronia arbutifolia*) and some downy lobelia (*Lobelia puberula*). Walking through the woods we came across some *Liatis* that we were worried might have escaped from the Ellipse garden, but Carolyn Will told me later that it was the locally native variety (*Liatis pilosa*) and had always been in the woods (whew!). We also came across a small plant that we thought might be a peppergrass, though the seeds didn't quite match our guidebook. Carolyn helped me out again by identifying it as a skullcap (*Scutellaria integrifolia*) on a later plant walk. The recent rains brought out lots of interesting and colorful mushrooms—unfortunately no one in the group was familiar with fungi. I'll have to put learning mushrooms on my endlessly expanding to-do list. Down by the water we saw one of the last hibiscus blooms of the season, and Helen Hamilton pointed out some sugarcane plumegrass (*Saccharum giganteum*).

On the October 5th fieldtrip, we had a bit of a problem. Two days before the walk, no one had yet registered! I was concerned that our guest fieldtrip leader Doug DeBerry would come out for a very lonely plant walk, so I decided to cancel it. I had a feeling, though, that a few people might show up, and I headed over to Greensprings trailway just in case. About 6 people were there, and we decided to make a go of it. Luckily, Ralph and Carolyn Will were there and were familiar with the area, having done some plant rescue along the trail when it was built. Just off the trailhead was a small detention basin that had lots of things blooming, including tall goldenrod (*Solidago altissima*), flat-top goldenrod (*Euthamia graminifolia*), bushy aster (*Symphotrichum dumosum*) and lots of purple false foxglove (*Agalinis purpurea*). There were several small willow trees (*Salix sp.*), and Indian hemp (*Apocynum cannabinum*), wool grass (*Scirpus cyperinus*)

and sugarcane plumegrass, all in seed. Walking towards the woods, we came across some hearts-a-bursting (*Eunonymus americana*) and Carolyn pointed out some wild coffee (*Triosteum perfoliatum*) that they had planted—I'll have to go back for seeds. We also came across a turtle heading for the water—I'm not sure what species it was. He made a loud hissing sound when we flipped him over trying to identify him. The poor guy was long gone when we made our way back to the parking lot. Greensprings trailway is a great spot and I'm looking forward to going back next spring!

You can see photos of all the fieldtrips at

<http://www.flickr.com/photos/claytonsnatives>.

Phillip Merritt

A tree walk in Williamsburg Nov. 1

Phillip Merritt will lead a walk on November 1st to take a look at some of downtown Williamsburg's native trees. We'll meet at the new native plant garden in front of the Williamsburg Public Library on Scotland Street at 1:30. You can register for the walk by calling Phillip at 259-0386 or emailing claytonsnatives@yahoo.com.

Jamestown Island walk Dec. 14

Join Helen Hamilton for a walk around Jamestown Island, viewing trees in their winter condition. Learn to recognize tree shapes, bark characteristics, and buds. Meet at the entrance to the Jamestown Island Visitor's Center at 2 p.m. on Sunday, December 14. For registration, contact Helen at 757 564 4494 or at helen44@earthlink.net.

Phillip's current projects...

Lafayette Street Planting



This past spring the city of Williamsburg put in a nice planting of native trees and shrubs along Lafayette Street behind Colo-

onial Williamsburg. The project was proposed by David Kranbuehl, chairman of the Williamsburg Beautification Advisory Committee. David felt some plantings along the road would help soften the view of the railroad tracks, and as a fellow BAC member I suggested using all native plants. I thought native plants would be more in keeping with the historic landscape (and I just like them better). I drafted a proposal for the BAC, and after it was approved drew up a planting plan. The City donated money for the

plants and Jason Robins (head of the landscape department and BAC member) and his crew installed the project this past spring, just in time for the summer drought. You may notice that a few of the plants have died, but most of it is looking pretty good.

Plants installed include evergreen plants like inkberry holly (*Ilex glabra*), wax myrtle (*Myrica cerifera*), dwarf yaupon holly (*Ilex vomitoria* 'Nana'), yellow anise (*Illicium parviflorum*) and Little Gem magnolia, a cultivar of *Magnolia grandiflora*. Other plants include winterberry holly (*Ilex verticillata*) and sweetspire (*Itea virginica*). Next time you're driving by, take a look!

Williamsburg Public Library



Another city project I've been working on is a native plant garden in front of the Williamsburg Public Library. It's been many years

since the garden was originally planted and most of the plants were long gone. Thanks to the generosity of Jason Robins, I was able to buy some perennials from Sandy's Plants in Mechanicsville. Sandy's is a great nursery with a nice selection of native plants. I also used some of the plants left over from our plant sale last spring.

The garden features plants from up and down the east coast. Some of the species are: dwarf sabal palm (*Sabal minor*), powdery thalia (*Thalia dealbata*), turtlehead (*Chelone lyonii*), horsemint (*Monarda punctata*), pitcher plant (*Sarracenia purpurea*), sneezeweed (*Helenium autumnale*), and nodding ladies-tresses (*Spiranthes cernua*). This fall I've collected seeds from about fifty local species and am looking forward to trying them out in the garden and seeing what does well. Eventually I'm planning to get labels on the plants and to put together some kind of brochure to hand out. If you're interested in helping out with the library garden, email me at claytonsnatives@yahoo.com.

Phillip Merritt

Preparing for next April's plant sale

Lucile Kossodo and Joan Etchberger are arranging a meeting with the Master Gardener committee to work on details for the plant sale in April.

Please collect seeds from your plants grown from local sources. It's very important that we attempt to maintain genetic integrity so we can guarantee to buyers that our plants will thrive in the coastal plain, specifically the Virginia peninsula. Seed packets make nice donations at our outreach events.

If you have the space and resources, consider growing your seeds to young plants for sale; Cynthia Long has done this for many years. Cynthia has noted customers are more likely to purchase larger plants than small seedlings, so it is important to get them growing as soon as possible.

If your garden produces too many new seedlings in the spring, call Lucile or Joan to set up a potting party. We need all members to make our sale a success!

Helen Hamilton

Bobwhite habitat update

At New Quarter Park, a planning meeting was held Oct 15 with Brian Noyes and Jim Wallace of the Colonial Soil and Water Conservation District (SWCD). JCC member Cynthia Long opened the discussion with a brief history of the involvement of 3 entities in the restoration of bobwhite quail habitat.



Bob Long, Shirley Devan and Cynthia Long at the planning meeting at NQP

Representatives from the Master Naturalists (Susan Powell) and the Williamsburg Bird Club (Shirley Devan) were delighted to learn that the SWCD can help with putting down pre-emergent and adding seeds of wildflowers and warm season grasses. In 30 minutes with a machine, the area that was recent disced can be completely seeded with 8–10 pounds of seed.

A work day will be held at NQP Saturday, October 25, to plant wildflower seedlings nurtured by Cynthia, and to assign plots for volunteers to monitor. Since we co-sponsor this project, several members of the John Clayton Chapter will be helping with this event. Call Cynthia Long for more information: 259-9559.

Helen Hamilton



News from the Williamsburg Botanical Garden

The new deer fence is up, thanks to Charlie Martino of Cookes Gardens and Ralph Will and many volunteer workers who removed the old fence on the Day of Caring, September 10. Charlie and Ralph and helpers put in several long days thereafter, installing the deer-proof fence, and Ralph is making additions to discourage the bunnies.

The Horticulture Committee met recently and found a location for a demonstration compost heap. Ralph Will has designed a 3-bin facility, to be constructed behind the water tank (thanks, Ralph, for your energy and expertise!)

The committee will continue to monitor plantings in the garden, to reflect those native to the coastal plain and specifically the Virginia peninsula. The John Clayton Chapter donates signage to all plants; it helps visitors with their own gardens to see the mature plants in a natural setting.

In December we will be planting daffodil bulbs outside the fence, continuing the display around the perimeter of the Ellipse Garden of early to late blooming varieties, including heirloom bulbs. Early next year we will be installing native grass plugs outside the fence and in the meadow. Both daffodils and grasses are not palatable to our native deer.

Of course anyone is welcome to join the “on-the-ground” crew of Carolyn and Ralph Will and Donna Ware Friday mornings as they do whatever is needed throughout the entire garden. Many thanks to our dedicated native plant gardeners, Carolyn, Donna and Ralph who have donated countless hours to the Williamsburg Botanical Garden at Freedom Park. This two-acre plot has survived very well since its beginning 3 years ago with no water on site, and severe deer pressure. With the deer browse now controlled, the native shrubs and perennials should really blossom!

Helen Hamilton

Membership Form for VNPS (Place checks in the boxes below next to your selections.)

Yes, I want to **join** **renew** my membership in the John Clayton Chapter.

Name		
Address		
City	State	Zip
email	Phone	

Membership dues

Individual (\$30) Family (\$40) Patron (\$50) Sustaining (\$100) Life (\$500)

Student (\$15) Associate (\$40) —for groups who designate one person as delegate

I wish to make an additional contribution in the amount of \$ to VNPS to John Clayton Chapter

This is a gift membership; please include a card with my name as donor.

I have time a little time no time to help with activities.

I do not wish to be listed in a chapter directory.

Please Note: John Clayton Chapter does not distribute any of our membership information to other organizations. It is used only by the officers and chairpersons of our chapter.

Make your check payable to VNPS and mail to: VNPS Membership Chair
400 Blandy Farm Lane, Unit 2
Boyce, VA 22610

Visit our website

Webmaster Jan Newton has updated and added some new pages to our web site, www.claytonvnps.org. Be sure to check out Chapter News, Habitats and Education, and Native Plant Locations and Why Plant Native. And, of course, keep checking out our Photo Gallery page to see what photos claytonsnatives has added! Please pass any additional native plant resource information along to Jan at jnewton110@cox.net or call her at (757)566-3646, as she would like to add more book lists, web site links and other helpful native plant information to our site.

Calendar

Saturday, Oct. 25	9:30 am: Work day at the Bobwhite Habitat Meadow at York River State Park. A York Co. crew has plowed and disced the grassy area, and Cynthia Long and Shirley Devan have scheduled a work day there to begin after the Bird Club's bird walk. Call Shirley Devan at 757/813-1322 for more information.
Saturday, Nov. 1	1:30 pm: Join Phillip Merritt to take a look at some of downtown Williamsburg's native trees. Meet at the new native plant garden in front of the Williamsburg Public Library on Scotland Street. To register call Phillip at 259-0386 or email him at claytonsnatives@yahoo.com .
Thursday, Nov. 20	7-9 pm: John Clayton Chapter Meeting in Williamsburg Library Theatre, 515 Scotland St. Randy Chambers, Associate Professor of Biology and Director of the W.M. Keck Environmental Field Laboratory at the College of William and Mary, will speak about watershed biology. Note change of meeting location!
Sunday, Dec. 14	2 pm: Helen Hamilton leads a walk around Jamestown Island to look at trees in their winter condition. Meet at the entrance to the Jamestown Island Visitor's Center. For registration, contact Helen at 757/564-4494, helen44@earthlink.net .

Mary Hyde Berg has the last word... Now is the time to locate trees, shrubs and seedlings to be transplanted and mark them so they can be found when they are dormant. Invasive exotics can be removed during the coming months, as many of them are evergreen and easily spotted.

John Clayton Chapter
Virginia Native Plant Society
P.O. Box 1128
Williamsburg, VA 23187 (our new address)
www.claytonvnps.org



Note the membership renewal date after your name in the email in which you received this newsletter, and please renew if it has passed or is coming up soon. A renewal form is on page 7.

...and let Patti Gray know if we have the wrong info! (757/645-4164 or patriciagray67@juno.com)