

## Natural and semi-natural grasslands are rare in Virginia



Amy Johnson

With more than 80% of North America's grasslands currently residing on private lands, it is imperative that we optimize the potential of these areas to preserve declining early successional plant species.

Virginia Working Landscapes is currently monitoring grassland plant populations on both public and private properties across 15 Virginia counties in an effort to understand the long-term trends of relative abundance and species composition in relation to habitat structure and land management practices.

Places to see restored grasslands in Northern Virginia include:

Big Meadow in Shenandoah National Park  
[www.nps.gov/shen](http://www.nps.gov/shen)

Blandy Experimental Farm  
[blandy.virginia.edu](http://blandy.virginia.edu)

Manassas National Battlefield Park  
[www.nps.gov/mana](http://www.nps.gov/mana)



Charlotte Lorick

## WHAT CAN YOU DO?

### Plant native grasses and forbs

Native plants are recommended because they are beneficial to other insects and wildlife. For tips on gardening with native plants, visit the Virginia Native Plant Society's website at:

[www.vnps.org](http://www.vnps.org)

### Remove invasive plants from your yard

Invasive plants are non-native species which have been introduced and cause environmental harm. Invasive plants can crowd out native plant species, and they often do not provide resources for native wildlife: no nectar for pollinators, no seeds or cover for native birds, no food for native caterpillars and other herbivores. Visit the Virginia Department of Conservation and Recreation's website for lists of species that are invasive in Virginia:

[www.dcr.virginia.gov/natural-heritage](http://www.dcr.virginia.gov/natural-heritage)

### Convert part of your property to a native meadow

Go beyond adding a few native plants by creating your own meadow with a mixture of native grasses and forbs. In addition to creating an attractive patch of natural habitat, you'll attract native pollinators and provide foraging habitat for birds. Visit the Virginia Department of Game and Inland Fisheries website for information on creating native habitats:

[www.dgif.virginia.gov/wildlife/habitat/](http://www.dgif.virginia.gov/wildlife/habitat/)

### Become a volunteer

Participating in citizen science-based projects is a great way to assist in the monitoring of long-term trends of native grassland plant species. Virginia Working Landscapes is currently monitoring grassland plants on working farms across 15 Virginia counties in an effort to understand long-term trends and to determine the effects of pasture and hayfield management on relative abundance and species composition. To become a VWL Citizen Scientist, visit us on the web at:

[www.VAWorkinglandscapes.org](http://www.VAWorkinglandscapes.org)



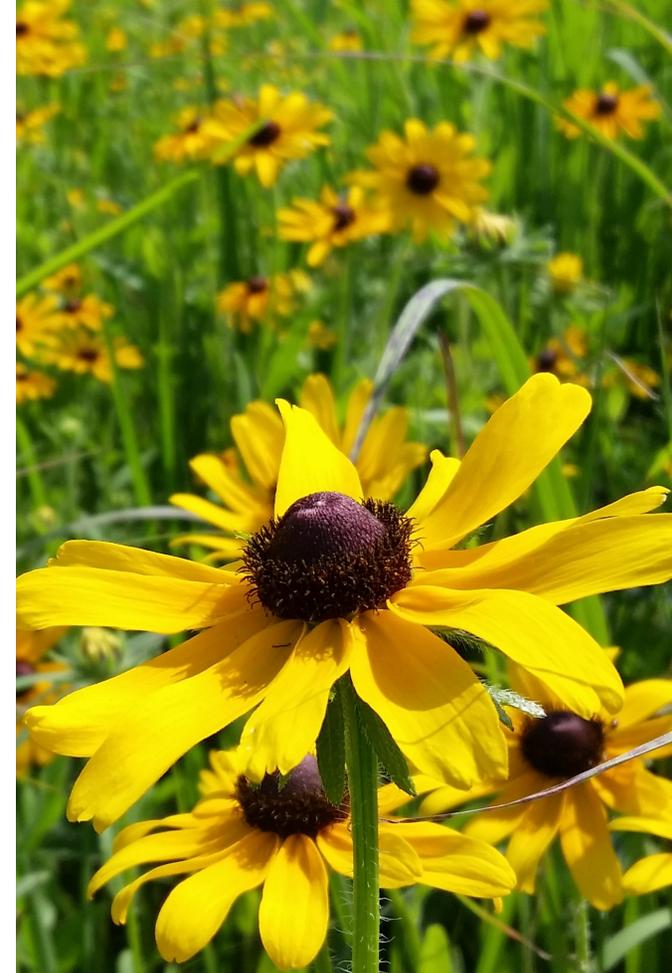
Smithsonian Conservation Biology Institute

[www.VAWorkingLandscapes.org](http://www.VAWorkingLandscapes.org)

[www.facebook.com/VirginiaWorkingLandscapes](https://www.facebook.com/VirginiaWorkingLandscapes)

VIRGINIA WORKING LANDSCAPES

# Grassland Plants of Northern Virginia



Jennifer Davis



Smithsonian Conservation Biology Institute

# Grassland Plants of Northern Virginia



**Little bluestem**

*Schizachyrium scoparium*

Common in mountains and piedmont  
A widespread, warm-season  
bunchgrass found in tallgrass prairies



**Hoary mountain-mint**

*Pycnanthemum incanum*

Common in mountains and piedmont  
The name "hoary" comes from the  
white hairs that coat the upper leaves.



**Purple false foxglove**

*Agalinis purpurea*

Common throughout the state  
A hemi-parasite that can extract  
nutrients from the roots of other plants



**Rose-pink\***

*Sabatia angularis*

Frequent throughout the state  
A fragrant flowering plant that  
attracts native bees

**Scaly blazing star**

*Liatris squarrosa*

Frequent in piedmont  
A low flowering plant  
which is attractive to  
pollinators



**Balsam ragwort\***

*Packera paupercula*

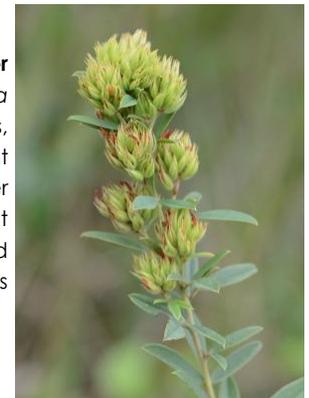
Rare in mountains  
and piedmont  
This rare species can be  
difficult to distinguish  
from the much more  
common Small's ragwort.



**Round-headed bush clover**

*Lespedeza capitata*

Rare in mountains,  
infrequent in piedmont  
A nitrogen-fixing member  
of the bean family that  
Provides food for birds and  
for pollinators



**Purple milkwort\***

*Polygala sanguinea*

Frequent in mountains  
and piedmont  
Prefers dry sandy soil  
and offers a food source  
for pollinators



**Smooth small-leaf tick-trefoil\***

*Desmodium marilandicum*

Common in piedmont,  
infrequent in mountains  
The Velcro-like seeds are  
spread by large mammals,  
including humans!



**Indian grass\***

*Sorghastrum nutans*

Common in mountains and  
piedmont  
A dominant grass in tallgrass  
prairies, found across much  
of the Continental U.S.