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## Wildflower Spot – August 2016

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

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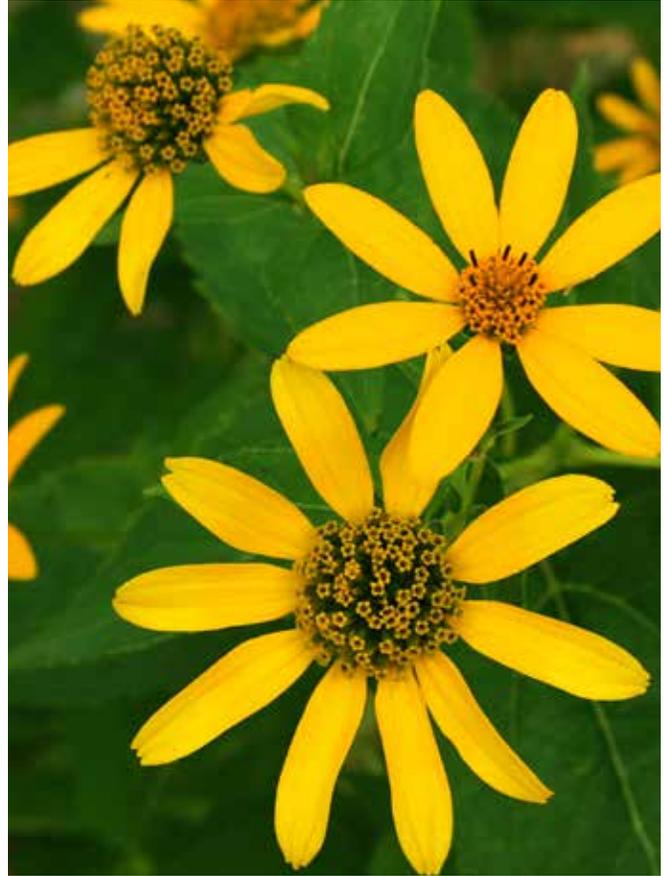
## OXEYE

*Heliopsis helianthoides*

By Helen Hamilton, *Past-president of the John Clayton Chapter, VNPS*

Related to sunflowers, Oxeye bursts into bloom in July and continues well into autumn. Large, bright yellow ray flowers surround deeper yellow disk flowers. Unlike sunflowers with fertile disk flowers only, both the ray flowers and the disk flowers of Oxeye will set seed. It's interesting to watch the disk flowers develop in this member of the Aster Family. Each flower is very small, with petals joined in a single tube. The male anthers are the brown columns that first appear, pushed upward and out the top of the flower by the female pistil that acts as a piston. After the stamens wither, the stigma opens where pollinators deposit pollen as they search for nectar.

Growing 2-6 feet tall on stout stems, these are robust plants with large, dark green leaves that are ovate in shape and have teeth along the margins. Very undemanding, Oxeyes do best in full sun with good, well-drained loam, but will tolerate clayey soils. These plants occur in woodlands, meadows and roadsides and do very well in the home garden. They self-sow easily, and as perennials, will return each year. They are frequent in the mountains of Virginia, less frequent in the Piedmont, and grow



naturally in only a few counties of the Coastal Plain.

Oxeye is pollinated by many insects: the ground-nesting bee *Holcopasites heliopsis* is a specialist pollinator of Oxeye, visiting only this plant and a few others. Usually, the flowers are covered with other bees, hoverflies and especially soldier beetles, often mating while eating. Deer and voles do not bother this plant. ❖

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**Photo:** Oxeye (*Heliopsis helianthoides*) taken by Helen Hamilton  
For more information about native plants visit [www.vnps.org](http://www.vnps.org).