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**Wildflower Spot – August 2012**  
John Clayton Chapter of the Virginia Native Plant Society

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## BONESET

*Eupatorium perfoliatum*

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

Boneset derives its name from long, lance-shaped leaves which are paired and fused on the stem, without petioles. This perennial grows over 5 feet tall on erect, solid stems covered with long spreading hairs. Small fuzzy white florets cluster at the top of branching stems, blooming August through October. Other species of Eupatoriums found on the Coastal Plain have spreading clusters of white flowers, but the leaves are rounded, sessile or on short petioles. The genus is confusing because of varietal forms and hybrids.

Widespread across Virginia, Boneset grows in marshes, swamps, bogs, wet pastures, and other moist or wet low grounds. The range extends from Nova Scotia and Quebec to northern Florida, west to North Dakota, Nebraska, Oklahoma and Texas.

Because the stem appears to be growing through the leaf, early herb doctors wrapped its leaves with bandages around splints, thinking



the plant would be useful in setting bones (“doctrine of signatures”). The dried leaves have been used to make a tonic, “boneset tea,” thought effective in treating colds, coughs and constipation. Many insects visit the plant. ❖

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**Photo:** Boneset (*Eupatorium perfoliatum*) taken by Phillip Merritt  
For more information about native plants visit [www.vnps.org](http://www.vnps.org).