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**Wildflower Spot – November 2011**  
John Clayton Chapter of the Virginia Native Plant Society

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## PURPLE LOVEGRASS

*Eragrostis spectabilis*

By Helen Hamilton, *President of the John Clayton Chapter, VNPS*

In late summer and early fall, the flowers and seeds of Purple Lovegrass form clouds of purple, close to the ground, along roadsides and in fields. This is a tufted perennial grass growing to two feet tall, with narrow, flat, firm leaves, tapering at the tip. The flower cluster is still and delicate and extends 2/3 the length of the whole stem. After flowering, the flower stalk becomes tan, breaks away, and floats around like a tumbleweed.



Purple Lovegrass prefers sandy soil and grows in fencerows, fields and dry pinelands in nearly every county in the state of Virginia. Blooming from July through October, the plant ranges from Maine to North Dakota and south to Florida and Texas.

The genus name *Eragrostis* comes from the Greek *Eros*, “god of love,” and *agrostis*, “a grass,” since some of the Old World species were long known as Lovegrass. ❖

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**Photo:** Purple Lovegrass (*Eragrostis spectabilis*) taken by Helen Hamilton  
For more information about native plants visit [www.vnps.org](http://www.vnps.org).