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**Wildflower Spot – June 2009**  
John Clayton Chapter of the Virginia Native Plant Society

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## CORAL HONEYSUCKLE

*Lonicera sempervirens*

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

This pretty, native Coral Honeysuckle is neither invasive nor aggressive, unlike the exotic highly invasive Japanese honeysuckle *Lonicera japonica* (see [www.invasive.org](http://www.invasive.org)). Blooming April through October, hummingbirds love the nectar from the flowers, two-inch clusters of narrow, scarlet trumpets with orange tips.

The leaves are blue-green and smooth (not fuzzy like Japanese honeysuckle), and the terminal leaflet is fused.

Coral honeysuckle will climb up trellises, trees, and crawl along fences; it looks great on a mailbox! A premier choice for an arbor, the vine is almost always blooming and never makes a mess with drippy, juicy fruits. A native yellow-flowered form, Clayton Honeysuckle, can be found in most local nurseries.

Not fussy about growing conditions, Coral Honeysuckle will grow in sun to part-sun, average to moist drainage, and any soil. The root system is deep, and can colonize. Over the winter some leaves remain, and the tangled stems furnish shelter for birds. In late summer, fall, and into winter, small red fruits are enjoyed by many birds. Coral Honeysuckle is a larval plant for the spring azure butterfly.

Growing in woods and thickets all over eastern U.S. and Canada, Coral Honeysuckle is found in eastern and central counties in Virginia. ❖



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**Photo:** Coral and Clayton Honeysuckle (*Lonicera sempervirens*) by Jan Newton.  
For more information about native plants visit [www.vnps.org](http://www.vnps.org).