



VMGA Report

Late Fall Edition

VMGA Report
November/December 2014



A Message from the President

Did you know that Governor Terry McAuliffe proclaimed October as “Fall is for Planting Month” in the Commonwealth of Virginia?

“In a press release by the Virginia Department of Agriculture, Virginia Governor Terry McAuliffe proclaims October as “Fall is for Planting Month”. The Virginia Department of Agriculture and Consumer Services (VDACS) joins the Virginia Department of Conservation and Recreation, the Alliance for the Chesapeake Bay, the Central Virginia Nursery and Landscape Association, the Green Industry Council and the James River Association to support the initiative and encourages Virginians to add plants, especially those “Virginia Grown”, to their home and community landscapes. Hopefully this can help Master Gardeners encourage the public that fall really is for planting.

Exciting VMGA Events!

Congratulations to Robyn Puffenbarger and the members of the VMGA Education Committee who planned and executed a wonderful educational event at Virginia State University. Reviews of the Permaculture Symposium were very positive. The event featured a wide range of well known speakers and even included group exercises so everyone could get hands-on practice.

The Education Committee is looking forward to planning more educational opportunities and would love to get ideas from Master Gardeners on topics and locations for future events. The committee is looking into planning a joint event with the Master Naturalist possibly this spring. If you would like to help, please contact Robyn Puffenbarger.

VMGA supported the Master Gardener Booth at the 2014 State Fair of Virginia focusing on “Saving our Pollinators”. The Hanover Master Gardeners hosted this event and eleven Master Gardener groups participated in staffing the booth for the ten day event. This event could not be the success it is without the team of Hanover Volunteers who love the Fair, THANK YOU. A Special THANK YOU goes to volunteers from Hanover, Henrico, City of Richmond, Chesterfield, Norfolk, Northern Neck, Central Virginia (Louisa), Prince George, Green Spring, Fairfax, and MGCRA (Spotsylvania, Fredericksburg). The official attendance has been reported as 238,000 people attended this year’s Fair, this is a 4 percent increase over last year’s attendance!

The Master Gardener Booth was part of the State Fair VCE Day which celebrated the 100th Anniversary of VCE. Fair attendees visited the MG Booth to get a VCE back pack and had an opportunity to learn about pollinators, make their own wildflower seed tape and homes for Mason Bees. Master Gardeners had a great time participating in this event. A BIG THANK YOU goes to Dave Close, John Freeborn and Riley Sixta who helped to make this event a huge success.

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President's message cont.

VMGA has delegated a special committee to redesign the recruiting brochure and to design a kit which can be used at Master Gardener meetings and events hi-lighting the benefits of belonging to VMGA.

The officers, committee chairs and members, and unit representatives are committed to the success of VMGA. In order to strengthen the communication between the Master Gardener units and VCE, VMGA has started building a catalog of topics and presentations that can be used as a resource for Master Gardeners throughout Virginia. It is our hope to include a list of writers, presenters and topics which can be used for referrals by VMGA and VCE. Tom Bolt has graciously volunteered to pull this catalog together and would like to encourage each group of Master Gardeners to participate by sending your list to: tom bolt @cox.net.

We hope to see you at our next VMGA meeting Dec 13th in Rockbridge, visit www.VMGA.net about 30 days before the meeting for specifics.

Please consider volunteering with VMGA contact: ctb47@comcast.net for opportunities.

Christy Brennan

Horticipia: Discover the Right Plant For the Right Place

Margaret Mundy Hill City Master Gardener Association



Do you want to identify a new plant for a shady location? Are you answering help-line questions requesting a list of shrubs for sunny locations? Has your neighbor cornered you, the "Master Gardener," for help selecting annuals to brighten their front walkway, which happens to be shaded most of the day?

We have a tool available to help in all of these scenarios: Horticipia®: Professional Education Edition. From their web page, Horticopia.com. The description is: "The Education Edition has more than 4100 woody and herbaceous ornamental plants, all complete with data, pictures and botanical name pronunciation. It is a great resource for learning everything from plant identification to plant selection. It is a powerful tool that allows you to show pictures and plant information via e-mail and in a variety of print and presentation formats.

- Search, view and print plant culture/ identification information and pictures.
- Slide shows and thumbnails let you view and study groups of plants.
- Quiz modes help you study plant identification and test your plant knowledge.
- Sound bites for the pronunciation of botanical names
- Variety of print options for study and class work.
- Create plant study lists." We have installed Horticipia on all three of the HCMGA computers. Click on the icon for Horticipia to open it on the desktop. Simply explore the application to discover a treasure-trove of plant information.

The first screen choices are as follows: · Plant Type: Woody or Herbaceous · Exposure: Sun, Partial Sun or Shade · Soil type: from sandy to clay · Soil pH · USDA Zone

The list of plants on the right dynamically updates as you make each choice, showing only the plants that fit the criteria. After you select a plant on the right, the center of the screen has a vertical set of icons that relate to an individual plant:

- Plant information page
- A speaker icon which, when clicked with the speakers on, provides the pronunciation of the botanical name for the plant (nice for those of us who did not study Latin)
- Graphic depiction of plant shape and characteristics
- Thumbnail photos of the plant list developed during the session
- Switching between Common and Botanical plant names
- My List: Develop a list of plants by clicking on this box to add a plant to a list of possible plants
- Finally, clear the plant list to start a new one.

This brief introduction just scratches the surface of the power of this software. Get to the office and try it out. Have some fun with it, as well.

This robust software application augments the fine MG training program by identifying appropriate plants for all types of environments

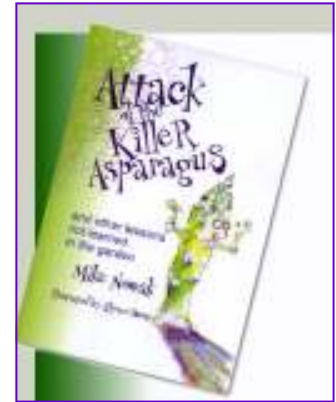
<http://www.horticopia.com/>



THE GRAINETHUMB GARDENING FROM A VERY, VERY DIFFERENT PERSPECTIVE By George Graine, Fairfax County Master Gardeners

The ultimate definition of an optimist may very well be a person who looks out at a mass of brown, unrecognizable foliage; twisted, broke, defoliated branches, and lumpy, gray-green lawn and says, 'Yup. Looks like it's going to be a good gardening season.'

Mike Nowak, 2014



For the past 13 years, The Grainethumb has enlightened you with some of the best thoughts and ideas of horticultural writers including Dirr, Armitage, DiSabato-Aust, Darke, Talamy, and others concerning what they have to say about many aspects of the gardening world. By way of contrast, a completely off-the-wall new book just hit the bookstores without a lot of fanfare. Mike Nowak, a radio talk show host (WCBT-Chicago) and award winning garden columnist has a truly unique slap-stick style of writing that could be the envy of any stand-up comedian. In his book, *Attack of the Killer Asparagus and other lessons not learned in the garden* (Around the Block Press, 2014) you will be in for a side-splitting belly-busting discussion (?) about the paranoid fantasies of gardeners. Grainethumb hereby anoints Nowak as the Prince – no, not good enough, as the King – no, still not quite right. ...ah-ha, absolutely the Lord High Grand Poobah of horticultural mirth and off-beat humor. He is so outrageously funny you will need to occasionally put down the book in order to catch your breath.

Nowak gets you to think about the way you yardabout because underneath all of the humor the author makes eminent good gardening sense. He does not provide you with a step-by-step instructional manual because the strange brain of Nowak does not obsess in a cookie-cutter scheme for gardening the “right” way. Actually he will make you pause and think about some absurdities of our gardening lifestyle. Perhaps a sampling of a half-dozen “chapter” titles (out of 40) will provide an idea of why this book is a keeper. Friends Don't Let Friends Plant Mint, Dismayed in the Shade, Dawn of the Rhodo-Dead-Drons, Harvest Schmarvest, Pathogens on Parade, and of course Attack of the Killer Asparagus. The last chapter is the Mike Nowak Holiday Hort Sing-Along Songbook. It is a parody of 18 popular tunes. A few examples: White Fungus (White Christmas), I Saw Mommy Kill a Plant Because (I Saw Mommy Kissing Santa Claus), and Let It Grow (Let it Snow).

Treat yourself to a copy of this inexpensive (\$15) book and definitely consider it as a gift for other gardeners. You will never look at gardening the same way and have so much fun doing it.

October Unit Report to VMGA Central Shenandoah Valley Master Gardener Association Via Robyn Puffenbarger, Unit Rep



CSVGMGA continues to have a monthly meeting on the evening of the second Tuesday of the month. In September our new horticulture agent Jason Cooper presented his favorite trees and shrubs for gardens. On Saturday October 4th the CSVGMGA group with help from local high school students installed the landscaping for the current Habitat for Humanity home in Harrisonburg. CSVGMGA will give the new home-owners a manual for plant care and tools for gardening soon. Our unit intends to be a long term collaborator with Habitat. We are planning our CSVGMGA Board elections, our social event in December with dinner, a May garden tour, and a 2015 training class.



Permaculture Report

The first VMGA Educational Symposia was held in partnership with Virginia State University on Saturday September 27, 2014. The goal of the symposia was to introduce master gardeners to the principles of permaculture. How to define permaculture was an interesting theme of the day, with one speaker calling permaculture "a revolution disguised as gardening."

Our morning kicked off with Will Hooker, emeritus professor from North Carolina State University with 34 years of experience in horticulture and landscape design. His work at a very small garden in NC was spectacular and you can see more at his website, <http://610kirby-permaculture.org/610kirby-permaculture.org/Welcome.html>. He considers the three ethics of permaculture to be 1) care for the earth, 2) care for the people, and 3) sharing the surplus. His garden was featured throughout his talk as it transformed from lawn to gardens with fruit trees, structures, and ponds. Another theme from Will was "there is no such thing as waste in nature so make your garden a circular system with no waste stream." To see the PowerPoint used by Will, go to <http://vmga.net/nexteduvent.php>.

Next, we had Project Grows from Augusta County on "permacaplop" and how to see your progress in a garden as "feedback not failure." Ryan Blosser, Sam Berenstein, and Jenna Clark presented the learning process of installing permaculture in various iterations and how they used "the problem is the solution" to meet various challenges. They also led us in a patterning exercise in small groups to think about how vital planning is to success in the garden. For more information about Project Grows, go to <http://www.projectgrows.org/>.

After lunch, we had two more speakers, Cindy Conner (<http://www.homeplaceearth.com/>) on cover crops as part of permaculture and Joel Koci of VSU on proper installation of trees as the most "permanent" part of our gardens. Cindy emphasized sustainability and the role of cover crops as a way to bring nitrogen into the garden without purchasing fertilizers. Joel was a wealth of information and very disappointing was his statistic on the average life span of a tree in yards or municipal landscapes, just 6 years! His presentation had numerous props to show the problems with trees in pots and he had lots of advice on how to properly install a tree for maximum longevity.

It was a fascinating and whirlwind introduction to permaculture. For more information, here are several books and authors referenced by our speakers, **Gaia's Garden: A Guide to Home-scale Permaculture** (2nd Ed) by Toby Hemenway from Chelsea Green in 2009; **The Permaculture Handbook: Garden Farming for Town and Country** by Peter Bane from New Society Publishers in 2012; and **Introduction to Permaculture** by Bill Mollison with Mia Shay from Tagari Press in 1991. Virginia also has a number of permaculture groups that put on additional educational activities and some have certifications, including: <http://www.blueridgepermaculture.net/>, <http://www.meetup.com/Northern-Virginia-Permaculture-Guild/>, <http://weareallfarmers.org/tag/virginia-permaculture/>.



October 2014 Plant Disease Update from the VT Plant Disease Clinic



Rhizosphaera needle cast, caused by the fungus *Rhizosphaera kalkhoffii*, is a common problem in landscape and Christmas tree plantings of blue spruce, but it is also a problem on other spruce, such as Norway spruce. Although symptoms appear in the fall, the fungus that causes the disease infects needles in the spring.

Symptoms of *Rhizosphaera* needle cast typically begin at the bottom of the tree and gradually move upward.

Rhizosphaera needle cast is best managed with spring applications of protectant fungicides; applications in the fall will not be effective. Sprays should begin when new growth is 1/2" to 2" long and be repeated at 2 to 4-week intervals or at shorter intervals during heavy rainfall. New infections can occur throughout the summer, but sprays are most effective during the early part of the summer when conditions are typically wetter.

Rhizosphaera Needle Cast on Spruce



The fungus infects needles in the spring, but symptoms of browning and needle drop do not appear until fall.

When trees have suffered significant defoliation it can take several years of fungicide treatment before the tree regains full foliage. Stigmina needle cast is another fungal needle cast disease of spruce with similar symptoms and control recommendations to *Rhizosphaera*. Spruce mite infestation can also cause spruce needles to brown and drop, and, like *Rhizosphaera* needle cast, the problem starts at the bottom of the tree and appears to move upward.

For all current plant disease updates, visit the plant disease clinic site at:

<https://www.ppws.vt.edu/extension/plant-disease-clinic/index.html>



A Book from Joan's Coffee Table



Currently, I am still turning pages in Remarkable Trees of Virginia because this large book (purchased at our May Symposium) provides a hundred days of reading. Written by Nancy Ross Hugo and Jeff Kirwan with photographs by Robert Llewellyn, this book is homage to the biggest, tallest, and the oldest trees in the state of Virginia. The photography is “remarkable”. Some of the trees selected are close by – in Stafford County, Fredericksburg, Westmoreland County, Colonial Beach – others are deep in the mountainous regions of our state. The Afterward section argues the need for “tree places”. We plant ornamental species in our yards but seldom plant trees that are slow growing and require space. Our public places should reserve “tree places” for large native trees. Visit the Remarkable Trees website for background information on the trees nominated and the status of the trees in the book (a few trees have died). Enter “Remarkable Trees of Virginia” into your search engine or go to www.web2.cnre.vt.edu/4h/remarkabletree/

Remarkable Trees of Virginia states that the state champion Sassafras (*Sassafras albidum*) is in Lee County. It is 18 feet in circumference. My back yard Sassafras tree is only 2 feet, 4 inches in circumference. In autumn, leaf buds were curled up tightly on the ends of the branches but the extreme winter split the trunk of the tree. The leaves never opened.

Now there is a small grove of young Sassafras trees in my back yard - the sunny side of the tree (Sassafras is intolerant of shade) sprouts new saplings almost daily. Sassafras has thin lateral roots that spread about 29 inches per year - along these roots the new trees appear into the grass and the garden. I've let them all grow (except those in the lawn) because the Sassafras is dioecious (a tree will have either male or female flowers). The male tree died. This spring both male and female trees were growing under the father tree. Next spring the trees will be thinned after examining the flowers.

Female trees bear larger flowers and in about ten years produce dark-blue drupes relished by birds. The spicy and aromatic Sassafras has been cultivated since colonial days for its leaves, bark and wood. It was used by Native Americans for many medicinal purposes. Today the ground leaves or roots are dried and pounded into a thickening agent, “Filé”, used in Cajun foods such as gumbo.

More information about the history, uses, habitat and allelopathic properties of the Sassafras - the tree with mitten shaped leaves, three lobed leaves and plain entire leaves - are provided in the references below.

Remarkable Trees of Virginia by Nancy Ross Hugo and Jeff Kirwan with photographs by Robert Llewellyn – see the chapter on Sassafras, Lee County

USDA NRCS Plant Guide –United States Department of Agriculture and Natural Resources Conservation Service www.plant-materials.nrcs.usda.gov

A special thanks to Joan Lindsey Master Gardener from the Central Rappahannock area for this article originally published in the August 2014 MGACRA newsletter.



Permaculture: Each Element Performs Multiple Functions

By: Laura Kerson

Each item you place in your design should serve more than one purpose. To illustrate this design principle, I will take you through the process of building an Herb Spiral.

An Herb Spiral involves building a raised garden bed that spirals up from the ground. It can be as large or small as you have space for and can even be built on top of pavement, a stump, or poor soil. By building vertically you increase your growing space, make it easier to water, and reduce the need to bend over when planting or harvesting. It also adds architectural interest and can be an eye catching focal point for your garden. The stacked stones also create a habitat for beneficial critters such as lizards and spiders who will find a year round safe haven in your spiral and be able to help keep your garden in balance. The spiral works so well because it creates multiple micro climates in a small space. The stones, shape, and vertical structure offer many planting niches for a diversity of plants.

Any kind of stone or brick that can be dry stacked is suitable for building the framework of your spiral. Make sure you're starting with a level surface and then I recommend putting down some cardboard to help suppress the weeds. After determining how large you want your spiral, you can begin to lay out the first level of bricks. Ideally, the lowest point faces north and the bed spirals clockwise from the center out. The width of the planting space should be at least eight inches. Every two and a half bricks a new layer is added to build up to your eventual height. I started filling the bottom of mine with mulch before the finished height was reached to make it easier to fill. Once you reach your desired height, you can fill the top with soil for planting.

The top of the spiral is exposed to sun and wind, making it a great place to plant Mediterranean herbs such as rosemary, thyme, oregano, and tarragon. As you move down the spiral, facing east, more delicate herbs such as parsley and chives will find a nice home. The sunny south and western sides will be best for basil, lavender, and sages. And on the low, northern side, cilantro, cress, mint, or dill will do best. However, your spiral doesn't have to be just herbs. You can plant just about anything! Depending on the stone or block you used, you may even have little niches along the wall that can be plugged with soil and planted too.





Permaculture cont.





FIVE STEPS TO FOOD SAFE SCHOOL GARDENING



Food Safety and Your School's Garden Produce

Establishing and maintaining a garden in a school setting is a great learning project for students, staff and the surrounding community. All involved will certainly feel a sense of pride as the garden yields fruits and vegetables that were planted by their own hands. Teaching basic food safety practices is a great way to incorporate healthy habits that will last a lifetime.

Increasingly, foodborne illness outbreaks are being traced to lettuce, tomatoes, cantaloupe and other raw fruits and vegetables. These outbreaks are caused by pathogenic (disease causing) bacteria, viruses, molds and parasites found on raw produce. ***These microorganisms are a natural part of the environment and can be a problem whether you choose to use organic or conventional gardening methods.***

You can reduce the levels of these microorganisms with good gardening and harvesting practices. Thorough washing and careful preparation will further *reduce* the level of the pathogens found on the outer surface of fresh fruits and vegetables.

It is also possible to get sick from contamination of produce with chemicals such as cleaning solutions, fertilizers, pesticides, and heavy metals (lead) and other chemicals that may be found in garden soil or well water.

FIVE STEPS TO FOOD SAFE GARDENING

Here are five simple steps school gardeners follow to reduce the risk of foodborne illness from eating the produce from your school garden.

STEP 1-PREPARE THE GARDEN FOR PLANTING

Be aware of your school's rules and regulations and how they pertain to your garden project. Test soil for contaminants, particularly lead, prior to planting.

Locate vegetable gardens away from manure piles, well caps, garbage cans, septic systems, run-off from any potential sources of contamination, and areas where wildlife, farm animals, or pets roam.

Use compost safely. Compost is the natural breakdown product of leaves, stems, manures and other organic materials--and also a source of pathogens. To be safe for gardening, your compost must reach a temperature of at least 130°F. Check the temperature with a compost thermometer.

Do not use any animal waste, including pet waste, meat scraps or dairy product waste in your compost bin.

Work with the maintenance staff at the school to ensure safe practices on the school grounds near the garden.

STEP 2- MAINTAIN THE GARDEN

Schools must water their gardens with water from an approved public water system. You can be sure that water from a municipal or public water system is safe and potable (drinkable).

Surface water (lakes, ponds, rivers and streams) can be polluted by human sewage or animal waste,

Fertilizers and pesticides from lawns and farm fields, or chemicals from industry and should not be used.

Instead of using chemical herbicides, control weeds by using mulch or pulling them out.

During the gardening season, keep cats, dogs and other pets out of the garden, as animal waste can be a source of bacteria, parasites and viruses.

Curtail nesting and hiding places for rats and mice by minimizing vegetation at the edges of your fruit and vegetable garden.

Do not feed wild animals, even birds, near your garden. Fencing or noise deterrents may help discourage other wild animals.



STEP 3-HARVEST GARDEN PRODUCE

Do not work in the garden when suffering from vomiting and/or diarrhea.

Always wash your hands before and after harvesting fresh produce.

Use clean gloves (that have not been used to stir compost or pull weeds) or clean hands when picking produce.

Use clean, food-grade containers. Food-grade containers are made from materials designed specifically to safely hold food. Garbage bags, trash cans, and any containers that originally held chemicals such as household cleaners or pesticides are not food-grade.

All tools used in the garden must be used solely in the garden and cleaned regularly.

Do not eat fresh produce while harvesting.



STEP 4-STORE GARDEN PRODUCE

If you choose to wash fruits and vegetables before storing, be sure to dry them thoroughly with a clean paper towel. (NEVER wash berries until you are ready to eat them).

If you choose to store without washing, shake, rub or brush off any garden dirt with a paper towel or soft brush while still outside. Store unwashed produce in plastic bags or containers. Be sure to label the container in a way that makes it clear to others that it must be washed prior to use.

Keep fruit and vegetable bins clean.

When washing produce fresh from the warm outdoors, the rinse water should not be more than 10 degrees colder than the produce. If you are washing refrigerated produce, use cold water.

Fresh fruits and vegetables needing refrigeration (melons, cut leafy greens, and cut tomatoes) can be stored at 45° F or less.

Fresh fruits and vegetables stored at room temperature (onions, potatoes, and whole tomatoes) should be in a cool, dry, pest-free, well-ventilated area separate from household chemicals.

STEP 5-PREPARING AND SERVING FRESH GARDEN PRODUCE

More often than not, we eat fresh fruit and vegetables raw, so we cannot rely on the heat of cooking to destroy pathogens that might be on our lettuce or tomatoes. It is important to prepare raw produce with food safety in mind.

Always wash your hands before and after handling fresh produce.

Rinse fresh fruits and vegetables under cool, running, potable, clean water even if you do not plan to eat the skin or rind.

Never use soap, detergent, or bleach solution to wash fresh fruits or vegetables. These solutions can affect flavor and may not be safe to ingest.

Avoid cross-contamination when preparing fruits and vegetables. Cross-contamination occurs when a clean work surface, such as a cutting board or utensil (paring knife) or uncontaminated food, is contaminated by dirty work surfaces, utensils, hands or food. Be sure to wash your hands (as well as the knife and cutting surface) before preparing any ready-to-eat foods such as salad, fresh fruit or a sandwich.



Master Gardener's Association of Appomattox County

The Little Unit That Can!

by

Jody Purches, Secretary, MGAAC and VMGA Representative

We are the Master Gardener's Association of Appomattox County. We currently have eleven active members, six members from the original group that started our Association in April, 2010, four from the second set of classes held in 2013, and one who recently transferred to our unit from Northern Neck. Even though our group is small, we have accomplished much. We are the Little Unit That Can! We maintain two gardens. Our signature garden is at the CVCC satellite campus in Appomattox; our members designed the garden and continue to maintain it. By request, we created and tend four raised "period beds" at the Museum of the Confederacy. Each bed in this garden contains herbs which have different uses in the home including medicinal herbs, culinary herbs, and herbal teas.

In addition to the two gardens we maintain, we have helped update the planting beds at the Jamerson Memorial Library, landscaped two Habitat for Humanity houses, and assisted the Junior Master Gardeners with their gardens at the Appomattox Elementary School.

Of course, education is a very important component of the Master Gardener program, and we have not been remiss in this responsibility. We have assisted the Appomattox 4-H agent with Junior Master Gardener workshops, taught a gardening class at 4-H camp for two years and assisted the Hill City group another year, ran an informational booth, an edible soils demonstration, and helped participants with lavender crafts at the Evergreen Lavender Festival for three years, made presentations to the Hill City and Danville Master Gardeners as well as the Appomattox Garden Club, ran an informational booth at the Annual Appomattox Railroad Festival for several years and at James River State Park Summer Festival about preserving what you grow and nutrient information, and held a workshop on rain water collection then assisted participants in constructing their own rain barrels. Finally, we recently started a monthly column in our local newspaper, the Times-Virginian, in which our first article should be published in October.

Our unit has one major fund raiser each year. We sell a variety of vegetables, annuals, perennials and herbs at our Plant Frenzy. We have also sold strawberry plants two years in a row to raise funds. There are talks in our unit about establishing an annual workshop of some kind. A lot of our funds are used to promote our unit, but 2014 was the first year we paid for one of our members to attend Master Gardener College, and we are looking forward to sending another member in 2015.

We enjoy being able to give back to the community and hope that our group will continue to grow so that we will be able to take on more and larger projects. We are the proof that good things do come in small packages!

Let other Master Gardeners know what your unit is doing. If you are a "We Think We Can" unit like Appomattox County, send an article to the editor at jancorra52@gmail.com and get your efforts recognized.

- the editor



State Coordinator Endowment Update: Now or Later?

The Endowment continues to grow, and here is the update: Cash and pledge payments total \$236,114 and deferred gifts and pledges total \$239,711. VMGA would like to see the cash increase to \$250,000 this year. Cash donations are wonderful, but deferred gifts will provide support in the future. We looked into deferred gifts, and want to share that information with you.

Cash donations make a HUGE difference because of the income it earns. In the last nine months, the interest account has increased from \$14,159 to \$22,980. That is an astounding increase of 62.3% over the nine months! So, yes, cash donations have a significant impact as the amount earning income grows.

But there is another way to have an impact on the Endowment. We categorize various options in our account balance updates as “deferred gifts.” These gifts are also important to VMGA’s Endowment, and may even benefit you NOW.

Since we are not experts in this area, we will quote from Virginia Tech’s Development Future Giving web page.

“Need income, either now or later? Perhaps for retirement? You receive lifetime income from charitable remainder trusts, gift annuities, and pooled income fund gifts. In addition to income, such gifts generate current tax benefits, and provide future support for Virginia Tech.

“Planning your estate? Bequests and retirement account designations are among the options that will reduce estate taxes and establish your legacy at Virginia Tech without affecting your current assets.

“The variety, flexibility, and donor benefits of deferred gifts may provide a way for you to make a contribution with more impact than you may have thought possible.

You can make deferred gifts in the following ways:

- Bequests
- Gifts that pay you income
- Retirement account gifts
- Charitable lead trusts
- Retained life estate”

Like we said, we’re not the experts, but you can contact Ben Grove, VMGA’s contact in the CALS Development Office (begrove@vt.edu or 540-231-7640). Please visit University Development’s Future Giving webpage at <http://www.givingto.vt.edu/MakingAGift/future-gifts.html>. There is even a Gift Calculator that you can use to explore how one of these kinds of gifts can work for you! Email them at giftplanning@vt.edu or call 800-533-1144 or 540-231-2813.

Thanks for all of your support – current or future – for VMGA’s State Coordinator Endowment!



MG Gear

Cooler Weather...Sweatshirt Time!

While some of us are already missing the warm breezes of summer, VMGA's Fund Raising Committee greets the cooler weather with glee! It's sweatshirt season!



New sweatshirts have been added to the VMGA inventory in response to requests for a new style and color. Light Blue has been added to the color options. Also new is a zip-up, hooded sweatshirt – perfect for layering (and bad hair days!). The crewneck sweatshirts are \$18 and come in Indigo Blue, Maroon, and the new color, Light Blue. The zip-up hoodies come in Maroon and Light Blue and are sold for \$35. Great for the new trainees.

Don't forget about the license plate frames, decals and window clings that VMGA sells. The clings and plate frames help spread the word about VCE-Master Gardeners, and it really is effective. Some MGs have even been stopped getting out of their car to answer plant questions!



The window clings come with a white backer, but are clear to show off the green lettering. They are easily applied and can be removed just as easily, with no mess. The plate frames are white with green letters. Both sell for \$3; decals are \$2. At prices like that, they are an awesome gift for your new class of MG Trainees!

Supporting the State Coordinator Endowment

One of VMGA's purposes is charitable, and VMGA sells Master Gardener gear to benefit one of our charitable activities, the State Coordinator Endowment. After covering the cost of the goods sold, all proceeds go into VMGA's State Coordinator Endowed Fund with The Virginia Tech Foundation. Your purchases are greatly appreciated.

Thanks for supporting the State Coordinator Endowment!





Witches Broom

by Claire Mclvain



Halloween? Black Cats? Magic? No! There is a horticultural “Witches’ Broom.” When I lived in New York City and walked Central Park, one might look up into the trees and see what looks like an unsightly nest of black twigs coming out of the end of a branch of some of the deciduous trees. Upon investigation I learned that they were called “Witches Brooms.” If one goes to various internet articles one learns that “Witches Brooms” are caused by cytokinin which is a phytohormone. It interferes with the “slow and steady” growth regulator at the tip (apex) of a branch causing it to reproduce rapidly creating what is called a “witches broom.” This development of the phytohormone can be caused by mistletoe, fungi, insects, mites, viruses, nematodes, oomycetes, and phytoplasmas.

Witches brooms can be benign or problematic. They have a diagnostic association with rose rosette disease as they spread by the eriophyid-mite, *Phyl-locoptes fructiphilus*, and causes the rapid and excessive growth typical of witches’ brooms. Some witches brooms are not benign, such as rust fungus *Pucciniastrum goeppertianum* which will attack both fir trees and blueberries. The blueberry bushes will not recover and must be destroyed. In Florida plants such as Olianders and crepe myrtles contract the fungus *Sphaeropsis tumefaciens*. Again, there is no known cure but cutting out the infection helps.

There are relatively benign examples of witches’ brooms. A “witches broom-like” appearance in the top of pine trees or other conifers caused by a heavy infestation of an insect similar to aphids, Adelgids. Anthracnose in a variety of deciduous trees will also cause the unsightly growths which will attack both fir trees and blueberries. The blueberry bushes will not recover and must be destroyed.

Some witches brooms have been a benefit to the horticulture industry. These are growths in conifers which have led to the development of very dwarf plants. A notable example is the Montgomery Dwarf Blue Spruce. Conifer nurserymen will make a point of searching their trees for signs of “witches’ brooms,” which could be developed into varieties to be introduced into the trade. Dwarf forms can also be developed from seedlings of these “witches broom” trees. I encourage you to read the article associated with this paragraph as it is very interesting at <http://www.uaex.edu/yard-garden/resource-library/plant-week/witches-broom-2-12-10.aspx> I was prompted to write this because I have a beautiful *Chamaecyparis obtusa* “Gracilis” and it has a sport coming out of one of its branches. It has a beautiful, lacy form as opposed to the compact, swirling form of the “Gracilis.” I had thought it was a “witches’ broom” because it grows more rapidly than the mother plant and given time might look more typical. However, it is not compact. On visiting Charles Greiner’s garden for Through the Garden Gate, I found that he had two *Chamaecyparis obtusa* “Gracilis” and they were doing the same thing. So I have now learned (thanks to Mary Stickley-Godinez) that it is probably reverting to the plant from which it most likely was developed. So watch out for “witches’ brooms” in the tops of trees or maybe even in a shrub, and know that they don’t limit their flight to Halloween and, while there may be some evil lurking in their work, they also might reap their magic in creating a new kind of tree. Other sites of interest on the topic are listed below.

- 1) <http://www.ipm.iastate.edu/ipm/hortnews/2005/2-23-2005/witchesbroom.html>
- 2) http://pubs.ext.vt.edu/450/450-620/450-620_pdf.pdf
- 3) <http://www.extension.umn.edu/garden/yardgarden/fruit/pest-management-for-homeblueberry-plants/witches-broom/index.html>
- 4) <http://okeechobee.ifas.ufl.edu/news%20columns/witches.broom.htm>
- 5) http://pubs.ext.vt.edu/450/450-604/450-604_pdf.pdf
- 6) http://pubs.ext.vt.edu/2907/2907-1402/2907-1402_pdf.pdf



More from the State Fair

Virginia Cooperative Extension Day at the State Fair of Virginia featured educational Exhibits and hands-on activities for the whole family.



10-17-14
 Good morning, Christi,
 Thanks you for all that you did to be sure that the Master Gardeners were involved in the State Fair. (Coordinating) so many to do so much has to be time consuming and no easy task.
 Please convey my thanks and appreciation to the Master Gardeners. They are an important part of what we are trying to accomplish here at the fair.
 Again, thanks to all of you.
 Kathryn

STATE FAIR
 OF VIRGINIA AT THE MEADOW



Wanted: Articles that are current and pertinent to the sustainability of our gardens and community projects. Let's share our successes, learning experiences, or opportunities for learning with the membership. Please remember to send your unit report or newsletter to Angela Cingale, VMGA VP at arcingale@cox.net or Jan Worthy at jancvva52@gmail.com. We'd like to make the VMGA newsletter as interesting, informative and current as possible. Get your computer fired up and send us an article and knock our trowels off!!!! Thank you.



Submit a nomination for our *Volunteer of the Month* award. **We want to recognize the best volunteers in the state** each month on the VCE public website (maybe more depending on number of nominations received). Nominations can be submitted using this survey. Copy and paste this link to access the Volunteer of the month nomination form.

https://vce.az1.qualtrics.com/SE/?SID=SV_0NuDUwkelMdPIrf

It is easy. Just requires a short write-up and a picture.

Also, make sure you recognize your Unit volunteers as well on your own Unit Website.

You can continually submit throughout the year, but the first selection will be made with the nominations received before February 1.



Calendar of Events

If you wish to have your event published in future newsletters, please send to jancvva52@gmail.com

THE VIRGINIA MASTER GARDENER PROGRAM
Sharing knowledge. Empowering communities.

61 MG units throughout the Commonwealth

made up of

5,500+ Master Gardener volunteers

who made

430,000 contacts in 2013

by volunteering

365,000 hours in 2013

for an economic value of more than

\$8.36 million

Virginia Cooperative Extension
A Division of Virginia State University



VMGA
A Voice for Virginia Master Gardeners

**Deadline for January/February 2015 newsletter:
December 15, 2014**

**Please submit any announcements or articles to be
included in the next issue to:**

Jan Worthy, editor
Central Shenandoah Valley MGA
jancwva52@gmail.com

ABOUT THE VIRGINIA MASTER GARDENERS AND VIRGINIA COOPERATIVE EXTENSION

Virginia Master Gardeners are volunteer educators who work within their communities to encourage and promote environmentally sound horticulture practices through sustainable landscape management education and training. As an educational program of Virginia Cooperative Extension, Virginia Master Gardeners bring the resources of Virginia's land-grant universities, Virginia Tech and Virginia State University, to the people of the commonwealth.

Extension is a joint program of Virginia Tech, Virginia State University, the U.S. Department of Agriculture, and state and local governments. Virginia Cooperative Extension programs and employment are open to all, regardless of race, color, national origin, sex, religion, age, disability, political beliefs, sexual orientation, or marital or family status. An equal opportunity/affirmative Action employer.

The Virginia Master Gardener Association, Inc.

Purpose

To foster communication,
education, and fellowship
among those involved in the
Virginia Cooperative
Extension Master Gardener
Program and to support and
promote the Program

Visit our Website
www.vmga.net

VMGA Bi-Monthly Board Meeting

When: Saturday, December 13th

Where: Lexington, VA: Rockbridge Area Master
Gardeners Association

For more details see vmga.net/calendar.php

Newsletter Submission Deadline



The deadline for submission of articles and
announcements for the Jan/Feb 2015
newsletter is December 15.