



# VMGA REPORT

Spring Edition

Volume 19, Issue 3

May/June 2014

## A Message from the President

Thank you for the honor and privilege of serving as your President of the Virginia Master Gardeners Association for the past two years. It has been both very rewarding and fulfilling for me. I have appreciated the opportunity to get to know many more of you than previously. All of your contributions to our organization are very much appreciated.

I wish to give a great big THANK YOU to our outgoing Executive Board team. To Bill Scott, our Past President, your steady hand and sage advice are much appreciated. To David Mims, our Vice President, thank you for challenging us to think outside the box and for providing a guiding hand in our educational programs. To Mary Ann Kincaid, our Secretary, I especially want to thank you for keeping me in line with your expertise and organizational skills. To Pat Reilly, our Treasurer, thank you for stepping up to take on this tremendous task. We were floundering without the right person to do this job. Your abilities and dedication are unsurpassed.

VMGA wishes to extend a big welcome to our new Executive Board which will be taking over leadership after our annual meeting on June 28, 2014. They include: Christy Brennan, President; Angela Cingale, Vice President; Joan Richards, Secretary; and Pat Reilly, Treasurer. Most of you know these fine people from their other activities on many of our projects. Of course yours truly will continue on the board as Past President.

We are all looking forward to our Master Gardener College coming up June 25th through June 29th. Also coming up is our Master Gardener Day at VSU in Petersburg on September 27. Hope you all can be there.

Thank you again.

Tom Bolt

### VMGA OFFICERS

#### President

Tom Bolt, Norfolk

#### Vice President

David Mims, Rockbridge

#### Treasurer

Pat Reilly, Prince William

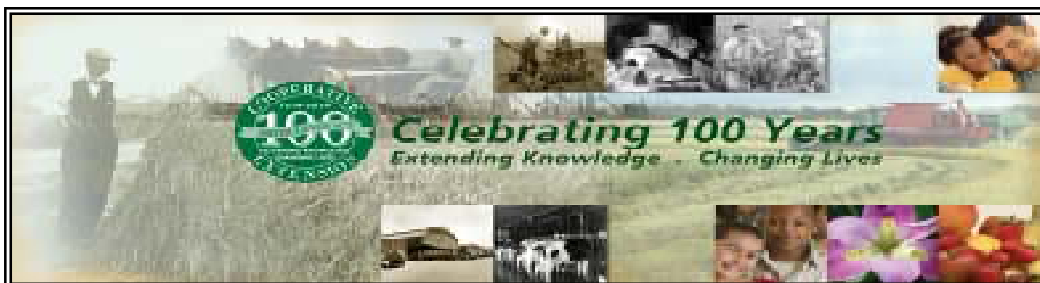
#### Secretary

Mary Ann Kincaid, VA Beach



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On May 14, 1914, President Woodrow Wilson signed into law the Smith-Lever Act establishing the Cooperative Extension system, and by doing so significantly broadened the mission of the nation's developing land-grant institutions. It marked the beginning of a partnership among federal government, state government, and higher education in working cooperatively towards the solution of social and economic problems. It elevated the posture of higher educational institutions as social actors accountable to the social systems they helped to produce. It changed the view of university as a training ground for the elite by expanding its mission to the public domain. *Excerpted from*

<http://www.ext.vt.edu/about/history.html>

Help your local and state units celebrate this anniversary through events and activities that honor our volunteers and highlight our commitment to families and communities. This anniversary gives us an opportunity to celebrate and communicate Extension's achievements and partnerships in the community and statewide over the last 100 years.



# Plant Disease Update

Disease Advisory from the Plant Disease Clinic at Virginia Tech

April, 2014

## Winter Desiccation Injury on Evergreens

During late winter and early spring leaf scorch symptoms are noticeable on many evergreen plants. Leaf scorch is particularly apparent on broadleaf evergreens, such as Southern magnolia, holly, and cherrylaurel, but it can also occur on conifers, such as arborvitae. These symptoms are not caused by a disease, but by winter desiccation.

Evergreens continue to lose water through their leaves during the winter, and at higher rates when exposed to sun and wind. Roots cannot replenish water when the ground is frozen and leaves desiccate as a result of this water deficit. This year symptoms of winter desiccation are severe due to very cold and sustained winter temperatures, along with high winds from many winter storms. Plants in exposed, windy sites experience more desiccation and recently planted evergreens may be more sensitive because of inadequate root establishment.



*Symptoms of winter desiccation on cherrylaurel in the springtime.*



*Southern magnolia is particularly prone to winter desiccation if not located in a protected site.*

Growers should not be overly concerned about winter desiccation. Severely injured leaves should drop when growth resumes in the spring and plants should eventually green up. When new growth appears, dead branch tips can be identified and pruned back to healthy tissue. To minimize winter desiccation, plant broadleaf evergreens in locations where they will not be exposed to prevailing winds. Ensure plants receive adequate water during the growing season and irrigate plants deeply before the ground freezes if conditions have been dry. Mulch also helps plants conserve soil moisture. Anti-desiccant products are available, but not practical in most situations.

### Plant Disease Clinic

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www.ppws.vt.edu



Department of Plant Pathology, Physiology, and Weed Science



## ALL ABOUT A BUNCH OF BUSY TRAINEES AND OTHER NEWS

By Jim Davis, Rockbridge Area Unit

At this writing, in late March, here in Rockbridge County members of Master Gardener Class 2014 are completing work on their second test. Like most units, I guess, we require two tests. The first one is objective. Our second one, however, is a research assignment. After a few weeks of basics, we say, it's time to use the early lessons, along with some research, to cover broader areas. We hand out a list of sixteen topics. Lots are drawn to determine order of choice, with no more than two trainees allowed on a single topic.

Many areas are covered, from fighting insects and diseases to planning a grove of trees, landscaping and Permaculture. One topic allows several trainees to become experts, each one focusing on a group of perennials available at our annual plant sale in May. These newly-created specialists then serve as clerks at the tables, ready to educate customers.

The same day written reports are due, trainees give short oral reports. These are always quite lively and imaginative presentations, some aided with PowerPoint, some with physical specimens, whiteboard drawings and handouts. Authors of the most appropriate ones are asked to give repeat performances at our monthly meetings. (These are not business meetings. Continuing education credit is granted, and the public is invited.)

Across the state, Master Gardening seems to attract folks who have interesting backgrounds and who make us proud to have them help our purpose. We have certainly found that true of our Rockbridge unit. This year, we are especially fortunate to have attracted several professionals in a full class. We attribute much of our success to the recruiting efforts of our energetic and inventive Joan Dubis, Class coordinator. One of her innovations was to hold sessions in the late afternoon (from four to seven), when folks with other obligations could be free. It's true that their activities could render them less free during weekdays to work their volunteer hours, but all have made commitments to Master Gardener projects and are obviously raring to go.

Other News: Michael Dirr, Nancy Ross Hugo and Coach/Gardener/MG Vince Dooley were featured March 8 at a symposium in Lexington. It was not a Master Gardener event, but several MGs served on the planning committee. The chair was Faith Vosburgh, who is also president of our association. The whole thing was her idea, and I'm pleased to say it was a great success, having attracted over 300 attendees from as far away as New



### Southern Region Master Gardener Conference 2014

Baton Rouge, Louisiana October 21<sup>st</sup>-24<sup>th</sup>

The East Baton Rouge Master Gardener Association of the LSU Ag Center's MG Program is proud to host the 2014 Southern Region Master Gardener Conference. When gardening enthusiasts from Texas to Virginia converge on Louisiana's capital city, they will be greeted with riveting speakers, entertaining tours and a trade show that promises to offer those 'one-of-a-kind' items.

This event will bring together master gardeners, vendors, horticulture professionals and others with a common interest in all aspects of gardening, the environment and plant sciences. The 2014 Conference Committee is grateful to all who have made this conference possible through sponsorships, in-kind gifts and hundreds of volunteer hours from our members.

Check it out at <http://SouthernRegionMGConf2014.com>.



**VMGA Board Meeting  
State Coordinator's Liaison Report  
April 12, 2014  
Louisa, VA**

- 1. Support is available from the State Coordinator's office for the license plate effort; just let our office know what we can do to help.**
  
- 2. MG College**
  - a. MG College edition of In Season will be out next week.**
  - b. Registration will begin the week of April 28 and remain open until June 6; late registration will run from June 7-15**
  - c. Master Food Volunteers will be joining us this years as special guests; we have scheduled 4 concurrent sessions specifically for them, but they are open to EMGs too; Melissa Chase, the state coordinator for the MFV program arranged for the speakers for their sessions. This could be the beginning of an ongoing relationship with their program.**
  - d. New tours will be available at MG College this year.**
    - i. Kayak trip**
    - ii. Bike tour**
  - e. Land Care Stewards will also be at the MG College.**
    - i. Managing by Fire/Quail Introduction**
    - ii. Measuring the Forest**
  
- 3. A new website is in the works.**
  - a. It should be operational by mid-May**
  - b. There will be three sections of the website.**
    - i. I want to be an EMG**
    - ii. I am an EMG**
    - iii. I am a VCE Agent/Coordinator (password protected)**

**Available in this section will be:**

    - 1. Toolkits**
    - 2. Forms – 2 pending approval**
      - a. Project Approval Form (a fillable pdf)**
      - b. VMS Contacts Collection Form (Western Tidewater)**
    - 3. Speakers lists**
    - 4. Presentations**
  
- 4. There is support available from the state coordinators office to help Robyn Puffenbarger with the VMGA Education Committee work. We have mentioned to Virginia Cooperative Extension**



## SPOTLIGHT ON

Central Virginia Master Gardeners – Louisa, held their first training class in 1997 and have continued yearly since then. We currently have 61 active members. Most of us are transplants, i.e., from the Northeast, Northern VA, Ohio, Michigan, and so on. We staff the Help Desk year round, the plant clinics at the Louisa County Library from April to the end of October and the Mineral Farmers Market from May until the end of October every Saturday.

In 2013, Monticello recognized us as an integral part of their annual Heritage Harvest Festival held each September. We have participated as workshop mentors, greeters and staff at an information table each year since its beginning six years ago. Several of our members present monthly workshops about plants at our local Senior Center. We have other members who work with school children planting vegetables that the children harvest and eat in the school cafeteria. Other members work with children in the Jr. Master Garden program.

Central Virginia master Gardeners work with the local Resource Council (Food Bank) by planting a teaching garden to encourage people to eat more fresh vegetables.

Each year we are participants in the Louisa Agriculture Fair as judge helpers, registration assistants building sitters, and we also staff our information table. Many members submit items to be judged and we receive a fair number of blue ribbons too! We have been selling Rain Barrels for several years and usually provide a demonstration exhibit at the Louisa AG Fair, VA State Fair and Monticello Heritage Harvest Festival each year. We just finished presenting three Backyard Gardening Workshops that were offered on consecutive Saturdays. Presentations were on Vegetable Gardening, Perennials and Annuals and Native and Invasive plants. The workshops were well attended and received very good reviews. We have had requests for additional workshops.

We are developing a reputation for “Eva’s Frame Workshop”! We provide frames, glue and seeds, and other materials to make decorative frames. The children look for us at the Louisa AG Fair, Monticello Heritage Harvest Festival and at our local plant sales!

Central Virginia Master Gardeners also have a published author, Ira Wallace, who wrote “Vegetable Gardening in the Southeast”!





## Bumblebee Jamboree at Richmond's Maymont on June 14<sup>th</sup>, 2014 11AM to 3PM

Chesterfield County Master Gardeners will present pollinator education at its best for the third year in a row with participation by the Richmond Master Gardeners, Richmond Audubon Society, Rockwood Park Backyard Beekeepers, VCU's Entomology Dept., and this year, the Greater Richmond Fit4Kids. The event is timed to take place on the Saturday before Father's Day to inaugurate both National and State Pollinators Week, to raise awareness of the importance of pollinators to us all and to promote family enjoyment of a great early summer's day visit to the Maymont in Richmond.

The efforts of more than 75 master gardeners will be needed to prepare and implement the activities planned for the 2014 Bumblebee Jamboree. Now in its third year, the Bumblebee Jamboree is becoming a well-planned event. Preparation begins as early as February to ensure that all the equipment, donated food, flowers, and the MG's are ready to arrive at 9AM on June 14<sup>th</sup> when set up begins. At 11AM it is anticipated that the first of up to 1,500 visitors will begin passing through the activities in the open space near Maymont's Children's Barn.

Some of the key activities include:

Butterfly Safari This consists of two screened tents filled with 50 native Virginia butterflies. Eight to ten children and parents stand in the tent while the butterflies land on plants and on the people for a few minutes. You will be able to learn about caterpillars while waiting, usually no more than 10 minutes

Flower Power is a place for each child to pot up a flower to take home with them.

Bee Thankful Snacks are prepackaged food or fruits that represent the 1/3 of all our food that requires pollinators.

Pollinator Puppet Play and Puppet Craft A play put on by one of our very own MG's.

Pollinator Parade A creative movement activity through an area of wooden flowers for 2-4 year olds. A movement activity for 5-10 year olds has been added this year.

And much, much more . . . take a tour through Marie's Butterfly Trail, see the honeybee Observation Hive, and play the pollinator game **Find My Flower**. Each child will receive a pollinator tattoo, temporary of course, and a visor made up like a humming bird, a bee or a butterfly.

Plan to come and enjoy a great outing. You just might learn something new about our pollinator friends!





# THE GRAINETHUMB

## HOW TO VEGETABLES + AND SOME HISTORY

By George Graine

Fairfax County Master Gardeners

*The most noteworthy thing about gardeners is that they are always optimizing, always enterprising, and never satisfied. They always look forward to doing something better than they have ever done before.*

---Vita Sackville-West

Last year my neighbor did not worry about the impatiens “flu” because many volunteers erupted from her 2012 annual plants. Would she always be so lucky or would it be a better choice for her to breed her own plants and not trust to luck in the future? Joseph Tychonievich, JT for short, in his book *Plant Breeding for the Home Gardener: How to Create Unique Vegetables & Flowers* (Timber Press, 2013) helps to answer this question by showing you how you can create your own plants. You could actually experience a modicum of horticultural freedom from both the garden center and the grocery store. Anyone has the ability to create their own plants including the now popular heirloom vegetables and flowers.

Fear not, there is no need to wear a white lab coat or have intimate knowledge of DNA and genetics in order to succeed at plant breeding. If you can garden you can breed plants....period! The fact is that plant breeding at home will reap many rewards. Just think of the cardboard taste of grocery store tomatoes – yeech. Breeding plants is simple, easy, effective, and fun to do. The holy grail of plant breeding is to produce a plant that “perfectly” matches your tastes and the conditions in your garden. As in many things in life if you want to get into plant breeding it is a good idea to have a goal. For example, a plant breeding goal could be combinations of color, fragrance, foliage, taste, hardiness, resistance to disease, and even the topic du jour-reblooming. JT gives you how-to-do-it examples in a simple and humorous style that will help you set achievable goals for your own breeding program. His chapter on genetics (about 20 pages) is understandable and sufficient. Of course as you become more sophisticated and develop the desire for better understanding of what is meant by F1 and F2 on a garden center plant tag, JT does provide that helpful information as well as many other facts and insights.

What is the connection between flavor and yield when growing vegetables? As a home grower you can control both unlike the grocery store where you shop. The grocery store is more concerned with the weight of produce and not with flavor. Surely store bought tomatoes make this point. Flower production has succumbed to a different fate. In this instance, fragrance has often been bred out though it should be noted that while some heirloom flowers fade, some improved varieties actually look good for a considerably longer period. That is a choice you can make. Let's be clear, the type of plant breeding discussed in JT's book is not a sophisticated treatise when compared to a text on micro-propagation a.k.a. tissue cultured plants where you probably need to work in a sterile environment in order to raise plants in test tubes.

If genetics and plant breeding are not in your future, then here is a book about the past. *How Carrots Won the Trojan War: Curious (but True) Stories of Common Vegetables* by Rebecca Rupp (Storey Publishing, 2011) is a hoot. After such a disastrous winter (skiers excepted) as you are waiting around for another month or two to see what survived in your garden, maybe it is a good idea to take a break from yarding about. This book about vegetables is far from an encyclopedic explanation. It is in fact a side-splitting random romp through more than 20 vegetable stories and the bits of information and wild ideas people have attributed to vegetables that would be unimaginable today. The book is replete with lore and legends about familiar vegetables that we all eat. Rupp has a wonderful way with words and reveals well researched stories about the origins, uses, and myths of vegetables all of which will make you guffaw. At the same time, serious and informative aspects about vegetables are included such as nutritional value, preparation, and propagation. Have you wondered why “carrots” are used in the book title? Aside from being a catchy title, based on research, it seems that “...Agamemnon's soldiers legendarily munched (presumably quietly) inside the Trojan Horse 'to bind their bowels'.” In that way they didn't have a “problem” before the big ruckus that took place later. This is just a single example of the stories that are interwoven about each vegetable discussed in the book. You will really know your onions after finding out the “secret” stories about many other vegetables that are covered in this book.



## SILENT AUCTION

The Virginia Master Gardener Association (VMGA) will once again conduct the very popular Silent Auction on Saturday, June 28, 2014 at Master Gardener College. The auction is a fundraising event for VMGA's State MG Coordinator Endowment. Won't you and your unit support this fundraising event with contributions of items?

Recognizing that our State MG Coordinator is essential to the success of the Master Gardener program, VMGA initiated the endowed fund to ensure stable funding. While we are enjoying support from VCE and VT now, funds are not guaranteed. In the past, we've had to fight to maintain funds for our program. Let's put energy into building this Endowment now so we never have to worry about it again!

You can help by donating items to the Silent Auction. Plants bring in the best bids, but also appreciated are tools, planters, gardening gear, garden art, home décor, culinary items and books. See if your local garden center would donate something! Complete a Donation Form and bring or arrange for items to be transported to College.

More information can be found on the Silent Auction page of the VMGA website [www.vmganet.net](http://www.vmganet.net) under Charitable Activities). A donation form is attached and there is a [fillable PDF](#) on the site. You can also complete an [online form](#) and submit from the website.

Questions? Email [Auction@VMGA.net](mailto:Auction@VMGA.net).

Thank you for your support of the State Coordinator Endowment!

## GMO AND GE – THE DIFFERENCE

By George Graine

Fairfax County Master Gardeners

We are living in the age of political correctness and sometimes these concerns are not only confusing but are decidedly wrong. This is an accurate statement when discussing the difference between Genetically Modified Organisms (GMO) and Genetically Engineered (GE) organisms. These terms, while they sound similar, have very different definitions and meaning even though the terms have unfortunately been used interchangeably.

To set the record straight, GMO refers to any living thing that has different DNA than the parent. This can happen in nature or manipulated in a laboratory setting. Perhaps an easier way to understand this concept is to recognize that all of us, in a manner of speaking, are GMO's. That is because we are a combination of our parents and inherited the DNA from both. This model happens in the plant world all the time because insects and/or weather, e.g., wind causes pollen to move from plant to plant of the same or similar species. Often this results in a hybrid plant because of a cross between two genetically unlike plants. Ideally, plant breeders desire to have new plants that incorporate the best qualities of the parent plants.

The media has spent a lot of ink and air time expressing concern about crops, seeds, and hormones that have been genetically engineered. Not to be left out, even fish have been studied because of an artificial "interference." GE plants are those that have been "mated" with a completely unrelated organism that does not occur in nature. For example, a bacterial pesticide or herbaceous resistant protein can become a new GE crop (plant) that has little resemblance, that is, a different DNA than the parent plant. For the most part, and this is where the confusion comes in, all crops have been genetically modified from the original wild state. (Let's not get into the purity or lack thereof of native plant society deliberations.) This happens because of domestication, selection, and controlled breeding over a considerable period of time. Note too that most GMO's are not genetically engineered. I hope this clears up some of the confusion about GMO and GE. I am not advocating either approach regarding home horticulture. These are just the facts.





## BOLT ANNOUNCES \$10,000 MATCHING GIFT

At the April VMGA Board Meeting, President Tom Bolt announced that VMGA would match cash gifts to the State Coordinator Endowment up to \$10,000. The match will be dollar-for-dollar for any cash donations made to the Endowment between now and June 30, 2014.

The Coordinator Endowment was established by VMGA to ensure the continuation of our VCE Master Gardener Program in perpetuity. It is managed by the Virginia Tech Foundation. As of April 1, 2014, a total of \$212,319 in cash has been donated to the Endowment. The Foundation has invested the cash and reinvested the income resulting in the current market value of \$271,439 an increase of more than \$59,000. While donations of bequest and deferred gifts almost equal the cash gifts, interest is only earned on the cash gifts. The greater the cash balance the faster interest is earned.

While all gifts are important, President Bolt realizes the multiplier factor of this challenge to the Endowment. When VMGA's \$10,000 is matched, the total of cash gifts in the Endowment account will be close to \$235,000. As the interest income account grows, money will be moved into the corpus where it will earn even more.

The time is now to double the impact of a donation to the Endowment. Won't you join other Master Gardeners, associations and units and send your gift today? A [donation form](#) is available at the VMGA website, [www.vmganet.net](http://www.vmganet.net). If you prefer, call the Coordinator Endowment Committee Chair, Pat Reilly at 540-286-0072. To speak directly to our contact in the Development Office, Ben Grove, Associate Director call 540-231-7640. His email is [begrove@vt.edu](mailto:begrove@vt.edu). He is available to answer your questions.

Thank you for supporting VMGA's State Coordinators Endowment.



### Calendar of Events

If you wish to have your event published in future newsletters, please send to [jancva52@gmail.com](mailto:jancva52@gmail.com)

**THE VIRGINIA MASTER GARDENER PROGRAM**  
Sharing knowledge. Empowering communities.

**61** MG units  
throughout the Commonwealth

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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**  
• VIRGINIA TECH • VIRGINIA STATE UNIVERSITY



**VMGA**  
**A Voice for Virginia Master Gardeners**

Deadline for January/February newsletter: December 13, 2013

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.

## Mission, Vision, and Core Values

**Mission:**

Sharing Knowledge. Empowering Communities

**Vision:**

To be the Virginia Cooperative Extension volunteer organization extending horticultural and environmental outreach across the Commonwealth.

**Core Values (Internal & External):**

- Respect
  - The environment, each other, and those we serve
- Accountability
  - Wise stewardship of resources
  - To our organization, our community, and each other
- Collaboration
  - Willing to work with a diverse group to reach a common goal
  - Actively seeking out partners

Like us on Facebook  
VCE Master Gardener Program

**VMGA Bi-Monthly Board Meeting**

Master Gardener College at VA Tech

**When:** Saturday, June 28

**Where:** VA Tech in Blacksburg

For more details see [vmga.net/meetings.htm](http://vmga.net/meetings.htm)

**Newsletter Submission Deadline**



The deadline for submission of articles and announcements for the July/August 2014 newsletter is June 15.