

# Virginia Master Gardener Association

# REPORT



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<http://www.vmga.net>

July/August 2008

## VMGA Executive Board

### PRESIDENT

Cheri Haggerty 804-779-3159

### VICE-PRESIDENT

Betty Villers 757-481-6398

### PAST PRESIDENT

Bill McCaleb 434-575-6827

### TREASURER

Ted Jenks 540-463-4722

### SECRETARY

Angela Cingale 757-565-4712

## VMGA Committee Chairs

### EDUCATION

Fran Shelton 757-721-2948

Pinky Derieux 757-523-2850

### COMMUNICATIONS/UNIT SUPPORT

Frank Reilly 540-286-0072

### MEMBERSHIP

Mary Ann Kincaid 757-467-6782

### STATE FAIR

Christy Brennan 804-741-0801

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## NEXT BOARD MEETING

10 AM - 2 PM, August 9, 2008  
Sudley North Government Center  
7987 Ashton Avenue  
Manassas, VA

## ADBB

Cheri Haggerty, VMGA President

This is my last Presidential contribution. Betty Villers will be here for the next edition. Just wanted to finish up with a review of the past year.

This year, VMGA members have participated across the state in several venues.

June 2007 - June 2008 MGCAT (MG College Advisory Team)

September 2007 - State Fair

October 2007 - VGIC Garden Festival

February 2008 - Maymont Flower Show

Ongoing - Beautiful Gardens Program: MGs

statewide have volunteered over 5500

volunteer hours valued at \$19.72 an hour to this program.

In April, the by-laws were updated to allow for better means of communicating with the membership and possible electronic balloting. The suggested wording changes do not require electronic balloting but open the door going forward. The update replaced the words "mail" or "mailed" with words such as "distribute" or "distributed". This has the two-fold advantage of allowing future balloting and elections to use whatever the latest method of communication may be, while still allowing mail to be used for those who do not have ready access to electronic means of communication.

The Board approved that the VMGA join the VA Green Industry Council (VGIC). We were asked to participate due to our strong volunteer base. I am our representative on the Council.

Sites for the VMGA Bi-Monthly Meetings – It was my vision to have each meeting in a different district and this has been very successful. There are several opportunities for Units to participate for next year.

- The remaining 2007 meeting calendar is:  
August – Prince William  
October – Northern Neck  
December - Clarksville

(Continued on page 2)

UPCOMING EVENTS

29 July, “Sustainable Basics Organic Gardening”, Lewis Ginter Botanical Garden, 4:30 PM

<http://www.lewisginter.org/index.php>

2 August, “Blandy’s Amazing History”, State Arboretum of Virginia, 10 AM

<http://www.virginia.edu/blandy>

5 August, “Surviving the Summer - Drought Tolerant Plants, Norfolk Botanical Garden, 7-9 PM

<http://www.norfolkbotanicalgarden.org/>

9 August, “Bugs in the Garden”, State Arboretum of Virginia, 9 AM

<http://www.virginia.edu/blandy>

16 August, “2008 Super Turf Saturday”, State Arboretum of Virginia, 8 AM - 4 PM

<http://jccwmg.org/PDF/2008SuperTurfSaturday.pdf>

13 September, “Honeysuckle and Reed Basketmaking”, Smithfield Plantation, 1 - 4 PM

<http://vmga.net/2008%20Smithfield%20Plantation.htm>

19 September, VMGA Educational Event, Mount Vernon, 9 AM

<http://vmga.net/19Sept%20Program%20Information.htm>

21 September - 6 October, Virginia State Fair, Richmond Race Way

<http://www.statefairva.org/>

Send VMGA calendar inputs to Kathryn Debnar, [k2garden@cox.net](mailto:k2garden@cox.net).

AADB (continued)

(Continued from page 1)

- For 2008 the schedule is:  
February - Open  
April - Open  
June - VA Tech MG College  
August - Open  
October - Open  
December - Open

Get with Betty soon to reserve your meeting date.

A big **Thanks** to Gwen Ewing and the New River MGs for assembling the Goody Bags for MG College.

I have enjoyed being President but I will also enjoy sitting on the sideline cheering Betty on.

Thanks to all of you for your support and new friendships. I have met many MGs over the past 2 years...And not a rotten one in the bunch!

I suppose some of you want to know what AADB means in my report title. Remember that the last one was “I am not done yet”? Well, with a teenage granddaughter, I have been initiated into the world of texting! AADB means “All Done, Bye Bye”.

VMGA New Executive Board

President:	Betty Villers	757-481-6398
Vice President:	Cheryl Sebera	804-861-8581
Secretary:	Christy Brennan	804-741-0801
Treasurer:	Bill Scott	703-791-2646
Past President:	Cheri Haggerty	804-779-3159

P. Diane Relf Scholarships

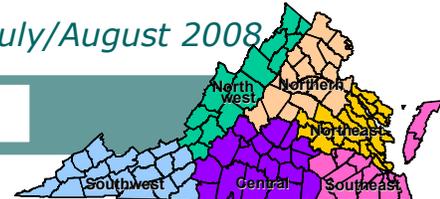
The P. Diane Relf Education Endowment Fund awards \$100 VMGA Scholarship to MG College. The 2008 scholarships went to these six Master Gardeners:

Tina Stephens	Fairfax
Karen Renda	Virginia Beach
Joyce Brannon	Henrico
Norman Garner	Chesapeake
Marilyn Spencer	Prince Williams
Jeannine Hall	Halifax

**Congratulations to all of you!!**

June News From Across the State

The full report of the units can be found at <http://www.vmga.net>.



## Central



### Amherst, Campbell and Lynchburg (Hill City) <http://www.hcmga.com>

Our School Programs in five of Lynchburg's City's Schools are done for this spring. Programs included Houseplants and Geography; Insects, the Good and the Bad; Composting; All About Seeds; Birds of Virginia; and planting the school beds with wave petunias. Our Master Gardeners are now helping children plant their gardens at several Community Centers in the city.

### Bedford

Our Victory Garden, on March 3, 2008, was awarded the "National Gardening Award". There were over 700 entries around the country and Bedford MGs are proud to have been a part, however small, in helping the youth win this award.

### Halifax (Southside)

Southside Master Gardeners created a recycling education program for the community to sell reusable shopping bags. The Halifax County Improvement Council gave us a grant of \$1,000 to help educate our citizens about the waste and litter of plastic bags. At this time we have sold over 2,000 bags and have ordered another 500. GREEN is the word and so are our bags.

## Northeast



### Chesterfield

<http://www.chesterfield.gov/extension>

Posters were sent to all Chesterfield Parks on "One Way to Help the James River". If anyone would like copies we would be glad to share. These posters focus on easy ways citizens can help the river and bay (no spring fertilization of lawns, only water down the storm drain, and planting natives). We also have postcard-sized handouts about using rain barrels to conserve water and reduce runoff.

## Northeast



### Hanover

Hanover has been participating in several plant clinics throughout the Richmond area and has reported over 500 contacts. The Master Gardeners are busy volunteering around several gardens in the area as well as helping staff Lewis Ginter and Maymont garden and educational events.

## Northern



### Fairfax

<http://www.fairfaxmastergardeners.com>

We are hard at work doing plant clinics, about 20/week, from May to the end of September. This adds up to more than 400 plant clinics at farmers markets and county libraries (17 locations) during the prime growing season.

### Fairfax – Green Spring

<http://www.fairfax.county.gov/parks/gsgp>

All 120 plus Green Spring MGs met in April with Sandra Reichert, our MG coordinator and Adria Bordas, VCE agent for Fairfax County, to establish an annual recertification process. Annual dues were required for the first time. All hands had the opportunity to sign up for volunteer projects they deem interesting to them. Also discussed was the opportunity to donate to the Endowment for the State Master Gardener Coordinator position. A total sum of \$800 was received and presented at MG College.

### Fluvanna

[www.fluvannamg.org](http://www.fluvannamg.org)

The new Community Garden at Pleasant Grove is open and "helping hands" similar to the ones used at Lewis Ginter Botanical Gardens, have been created. These "hands" acknowledge individuals, corporations, etc. who have contributed to the creation of the Community Garden. The "hands" will be inserted into the ground throughout the garden. This is a way to make visual the many supporters of the new Community Garden.

## June News From Across the State (continued)

## Northwest



## Roanoke, Botetourt and Craig

We welcome Sheri Dorn to the Extension Agent, Agriculture position! Sheri began her employment the end of April. She is the former VCE State MG Coordinator and editor of the state MG Coordinator Manual and the volunteer chapter of the MG Handbook. She and her husband have owned a landscape business for many years in Blacksburg.

## Southeast



## Norfolk

<http://www.nmgv.org>

Replacing old, inappropriate trees under utility lines in the median on Granby St. were Redbud, Fringe Tree, Styrax, Kousa Dogwood, Flowering Cherry and Stewartia. This was a joint effort by many partners including Norfolk master gardeners and tree stewards.

## State MG Liaison Report for June

By David Close, Virginia MG State Coordinator

- The **handbook revisions** have been received and are in the process of being reviewed and updated – scheduled release in October. There will be no extreme changes and a wild life chapter will be added.
- **National State Coordinators Conference** – Virginia will be the host Oct 8<sup>th</sup>- 10<sup>th</sup> in the DC area. There will be lots of opportunities for MGs to help out.
- **State Record-Keeping System** has been approved but has a slow implementation process.
- **Unit E-mail addresses** - The VMGA Executive Board met with Dean Quisenberry and Dean McCann to discuss unique e-mail addresses for units. Dave will meet with units to discuss specific design and content needs.
- **Landcare Training** - Two programs are starting in the James City and DC / Northern VA area. One unit, Hanover, has an existing strong Landcare Stewards program.
- **Firewise Landscaping** – This has become a prominent issue in several counties. MGs are asked to target training needs for homeowners and the general public. Extension has several publications available.
- The **Plant Science Department** will remain a separate degree program in Horticulture, although there is still an effort to combine efforts to develop a stronger department during the budget constraints. Recruitment materials are available through Va. Tech.
- There is a **national review** of Extension and the Master Gardener program and Dave will be working with the committee.
- Dave **thanked the Zemke's** (Linda and Larry from Louisa) of Z Squared for advising the endowment team on marketing techniques.



*When weeding, the best way to make sure you are removing a weed and not a valuable plant is to pull on it. If it comes out of the ground easily, it is a valuable plant. -- Author Unknown*

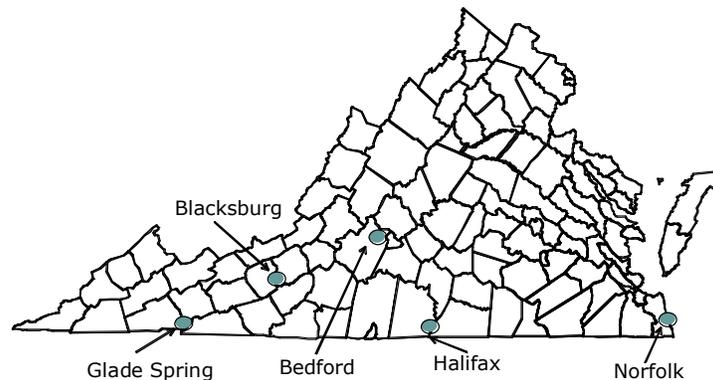
## Beautiful Gardens™ Program

Have a unique or old-fashioned plant that thrives in your garden and is the envy of the neighborhood? Consider nominating your beautiful baby to the Virginia Beautiful Gardens Program!

The Virginia Beautiful Gardens Program was established to strengthen the Virginia green industry through coordinated research, evaluation, production and marketing in order to increase the quality and diversity of ornamental plants available to the mid-Atlantic.

The initiative began in 2004, when the Virginia Nursery and Landscape Association received an initial grant to establish test sites and fund a director position. Since then, a number of organizations have joined, to include industry, academia, and gardening enthusiasts (specifically, Virginia Master Gardeners!).

Five test sites, representing the breadth of Virginia's cold hardiness zones, have been established and on-going evaluations have resulted in the first sets of recommendations, slated to reach consumer markets in 2009.



There are a number of unique and very special aspects of this collaboration:

- Anyone can nominate a plant and the organization counts heavily on grassroots contributions to the program.
- A long-term evaluation (minimum of three years) is done in several hardiness zones before recommending any plant to the market. Plants are evaluated based on their ornamental qualities, adaptation potential, resistance to pests and diseases and consistency of performance. This means that nursery owners and consumers can have high confidence in these plants as solid long-term performers in our area.
- The plant DNA that results from these activities is available through Virginia Tech. With the recent interest and concerns regarding the registration of plant characteristics as proprietary to certain developers, this allows public access to a rich (and growing) base of healthy plant DNA with long-term benefits to all growers and consumers.

Plants of Merit have been identified for 2009 and for 2010. The 2009 listings include: Chinese redbud 'Don Egolf', Lenten Rose Pine Knot Strains, Oakleaf Hydrangea 'Snowflake', Holly 'Virginia', Arborvitae 'Steeplechase', Boxwood 'Green Velvet', Stoke's Aster 'Peachie's Pick', and Hardy Banana. The 2010 listings include: Eastern Redbud 'Hearts of Gold', American Boxwood 'Dee Runk', Goldleaf Buttercup Winterhazel, Autumn Fern 'Brilliance', Purple Pineapple Lily 'Sparkling Burgundy', Sweet Coneflower 'Henry Eilers', and Blue Bluestem 'The Blues'.

For more information on the program, to nominate a plant, or to view these Plants of Merit, bookmark the organization's website: <http://www.beautifulgardens.org/>.

## The Graine Thumb

## Compost: New Life from Dead Plants

By George Graine, Fairfax County Master Gardeners

*Gardening is a craft, a science, and an art. To practice it well requires the enthusiasm of the true amateur and the understanding of the true student.* --- Louise and James Bush-Brown

The last Grainthumb article concerning the subject of compost appeared in the Mar/Apr 2007 VMGA Report. It was entitled "Compost Happens" and it featured a delightful book written by Ken Thompson called *Compost* (DK, 2007). That almost pocket-sized "field manual" contained just 192 pages. Compare this to a new book by Barbara Pleasant and Deborah L. Martin's *The Complete Compost Gardening Guide* (Storey Publishing, 2008). This book covers just about all aspects of the subject, as it is a heavyweight: 8-1/2x11 format in 319 pages! If you want to learn more about composting then you will not be disappointed with this expansive book on the right way to deal with yard and kitchen waste and the techniques for dealing with what is often called gardeners gold. The compost gardening guide should be carefully read, as you are probably the ultimate decision maker. No doubt a book of this magnitude will probably suit every situation but do not be discouraged because of the book size. (By the way, the font is fairly large.) It is a fact that too much waste is trucked to the landfill or goes down the kitchen garbage disposal. Intuitively we know that plant material past its prime and kitchen waste could be put to much better use in our gardens. Planet earth is our sacred trust and must be treated accordingly. The goal of composting is really very simple and how to compost is not difficult. Only a few "rigid" rules apply, such as no meat and bone products should be included in a compost pile.

Let's take some of the mystery out of composting because this topic should not fall into the category of something that is horticulturally esoteric. The fact is that composting will create a soil amendment that helps clayey soil to drain quicker and for those with sandy soil hold more water. Additionally, compost will provide your soil with a source of nutrients for plants that will be released slowly and improve soil structure. Another little known fact is that compost can also be used as mulch by controlling weeds and retaining moisture. In fact, the key benefit is to prevent disease. This happens because the microscopic organisms in compost champion over the "bad" bacteria and fungi.

At Master Gardener College – 2006, Jeff Lowenfels discussed the soil food web noted in his book *Teaming With Microbes* (Timber Press, 2006). He indicated that real soil is active, alive, moving, and critters were everywhere doing interesting things. In other words, by adding compost to your soil you will encourage beneficial soil microorganisms. Furthermore, you will save time, money and labor because additional nutrients achieved with these soil amendments will reduce the need for fertilizers that include lots of salts. Surely this has got to be a worthwhile goal.

Now let's get serious about why the Pleasant-Martin book is truly a complete compost gardening guide. From the get-go the authors lay out six basic rules of compost gardening. They write in an easy to follow manner and the book contains uncomplicated charts and helpful sidebar comments that show how any gardener can employ composting techniques regardless of soil type. Many color photos help to get specific points across. When you read the so-called rules you might say to yourself, "What's the big deal? Composting isn't rocket science." While that is true, the rules will flesh out the whys and wherefores of composting. After all, aside from the science associated with the subject, which is not difficult to understand, you will really achieve better plants, better fruits and vegetables, and lest we forget, a better environment. Do not try to master every written word in the book, however, it might be a good idea to have a hi-liter handy or a box of paperclips as you are likely to become addicted to the book and will refer to it often.

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## The Graine Thumb (continued)

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Below are the six basic rules of compost gardening according to the authors.

1. *Choose labor-saving sites.* (Grainethumb says perhaps the back 40 is not the right place for your compost pile.)
2. *Work with what you have.* (Grainethumb says shred your leaves and ideally use a mulching mower, and use kitchen scraps, too, if that is your thing.)
3. *Help decomposers do their job.* (Grainethumb say absolutely encourage the earthworm population as well as pill bugs.)
4. *Reuse and recycle.* (Grainethumb totally agrees.)
5. *The magic of the mix.* (Grainethumb says having a diverse mix adds to the microorganisms that provide "deluxe" compost.)
6. *Compost to suit your garden's needs.* (Grainethumb says to customize your compost to suit whatever you are growing, e.g., rough texture or partially decomposed compost.)

In summary, by composting you are feeding your garden naturally. Try not to get hung up on the ratio business of brown to green. How do you accurately measure this anyway? The internet and various publications include many recipes for compost. Why not simplify things and just use equal parts (by weight) of autumn leaves and grass clippings? Heresy? I think not! If you want to add some soil to the mix this is fine. Some manure to increase beneficial microorganisms is okay, too, and of course you can include fruit and vegetable peelings and leftovers. Even coffee grounds can be added to the pile. Nevertheless, the fact remains that just leaves and grass will make a fluffy black gold. Why? Because any loose pile of these materials will eventually decay even if you do nothing. The proverbial bottom line is that adding compost is probably the best thing you can do to improve your soil.

## With Heavy Hearts...

We are truly sorry to report the loss of Hill City MG, Judy Kinney.

**Judy Kinney**, Master Gardener Emeritus (Class of 1994), lost her war with cancer on June 22, 2008. Judy fought many battles with this terrible disease for more than three and a half years. She faced this immense challenge with courage, faith, and dignity. It was with this same attitude and "can do" spirit that she served the Virginia Master Gardener Program in Lynchburg. We are thankful for her leadership as HCMGA President for two terms and as Treasurer for two terms. She shared her skills with us in MG Training and Compost Education. Judy brought our publicity to new levels of success and professionalism. She was involved in the foundation of many organizational details necessary for the daily operation of our organization. Judy's last concerns were for people to volunteer and give of themselves to make a better world for all of us.

I send this information to you with sadness and a heavy heart. We are better because of her presence and will miss her greatly. -- Karen Sacasky



"Where flowers bloom, so does hope." -- Lady Bird Johnson

**VMGA Report**

The VMGA Report is the bimonthly newsletter of the Virginia Master Gardener Association. Submissions should be received by the 1st of January, March, May, July, September, and November. Send inquiries and submissions to:

Dawn Meyerriecks,  
[dmyrix@hotmail.com](mailto:dmyrix@hotmail.com)

**2008 Brag Board Results**

Thank you to all who participated in the 2008 Master Gardener College. It was a great event! Special congratulations to the 2008 Brag Board winning entrants.

SLM 1: James City County

SLM 2: Bedford

SLM 3: Loudoun

SLM 4: Chesapeake

SLM 5: Louisa

**Best Overall: Chesapeake**

*About the Virginia Master Gardener Association....*

The Virginia Master Gardener Association, Inc. is a statewide association of Master Gardeners and Virginia Cooperative Extension (VCE) employees whose mission is to foster communication, education and fellowship among Master Gardeners, and to give support and input to the state leaders of our VCE effort. We are a non-profit educational organization as described by section 501(3)(c) of the US tax code.

VMGA Report  
1549 Beechwood Cove  
Virginia Beach, VA  
23464

