



VMGA Executive Board

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April VMGA Bi-Monthly Membership Meeting

10 AM - 2 PM, April 18, 2009
 Obrigado Restaurant
 109 West Main Street
 Louisa, VA 23093

www.obrigadorerestaurant.com/location/html

President's Message

Betty Villers, VMGA President

This time of the year I'm enjoying the bones of my garden with the anticipation of Spring. I have already attended several gardening symposiums and seen the pictures of all those plants I must have for my garden but must wait a little longer to go shopping.

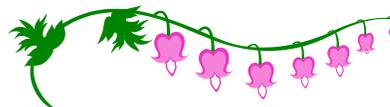
In January, your executive board met with VCE in Charlottesville to discuss some of the questions you had for VCE concerning the VA Master Gardener program. Highlights of that meeting can be found beginning on page 2 of the newsletter. For the full report contact your unit rep or me. Does your MG unit have a unit representative to the bi-monthly VMGA Board meetings? If not, and you would like to volunteer, please contact me. The unit rep responsibilities can be found on our website at <http://www.vmga.net>.

Good news from Richmond and the budget: VCE received only a 5% cut where some agencies received 20%. Thanks to all those who contacted their legislators to put in a good word.

Dean Quisenberry will be leaving VT to return to Iowa State University, her alma mater. Dr. Loke Kok has been appointed Interim Dean, College of Agriculture and Life Sciences. We will all get to meet him at MG College this June.

Check out the outstanding power point "2009 MG College Preview" at the VMGA website and give consideration to attending this year. Speakers so far include, Alan Armitage, Joe Murray, Mike Raupp, Bonnie Appleton, Holly Scoggins and Alex Niemiera. Registration for Master Gardener College, June 18-21, will be available by mid-April on our website.

-- Betty



In the spring, at the end of the day, you should smell like dirt.

-- Margaret Atwood

UPCOMING EVENTS

21 March, "Grow Local, Buy Local, Eat Local - Food for Thought", Northern Neck MGs, 8:30 AM, www.nnmg.org

27-28 March, "Back to Basics", 2nd Annual Old City Cemetery Garden Symposium, Lynchburg, www.gravegarden.org/symposium.htm

28 March, Native Plant Sale, National Arboretum, 9:30 AM, www.usna.usda.gov

7 April, "A-Z Organic Gardening for the Homeowner", Peggy Lee Hahn Garden Pavilion, 6 PM, www.hort.vt.edu/hhg

18 April, Hanover MGs Annual Plant Sale, 9 AM, www.nhcgov.com/AgnAndDpt/COOP/Pages/MasterGardenerPlantSale.aspx

18-25 April, Historic Garden Week, www.vagardenweek.org

21 April, 3rd Biennial Horticultural Horizons Symposium Conserving the Commonwealth: Keeping Virginia Green, Lewis Ginter Botanical Gardens, www.vmga.net

25 April, 5th Annual Spring Garden Fest, Goochland-Powhatan MGs, 9 AM, www.gpmga.org

30 April - 2 May, Spring Plant Sale, Peggy Lee Hahn Garden Pavilion, www.hort.vt.edu/hhg

18-21 June, MG College, VT www.hort.vt.edu/mastergardener/mgcollege

Send VMGA calendar inputs to Kathryn Debnar, k2garden@cox.net.

State MG Liaison Report for February

By David Close, Virginia MG State Coordinator

- Dave is working with John Ignosh, Area Specialist, Agri-based Bi-Product Utilization, and Joyce Latimer, Prof., VT Dept of Horticulture, on a survey to the industry on recycling plastics from nursery containers and flats. This is a joint project with Maryland. The survey has been sent out here in VA. John Ignosh is the lead on this project.
- A national review of the MG program was launched in late November. There has been an unprecedented response rate of 43 states, including VA and Washington, DC.
- A new interim dean has been named: Loke Kok. He has been the Dept. Head of Entomology since 2004 and has been at VT since 1972. His research focus is on biological controls for weeds and arthropods.
- Work on combating the Emerald Ash Borer is proceeding in the Northern District. Initial data collection occurred in conjunction with grounds maintenance training. Dave, with Gary Man of the USFS National office, presented at the 17th Annual VA Forest Health Professionals Conference.
- VCE came out with only a 3.5% budget cut on top of the previous 1.5% for a total of a 5% cut for FY 09-10. This is good considering some state agencies saw as much as 24%. Things will still be tight and we will likely have more cuts during the next cycle, but we are in relatively good shape.
- As a result of the meeting between VMGA Executive Officers and CALS Administration (including 2 reps from the Hort Dept.), the Dean has asked for external bids to complete the volunteer service record keeping system. No commitment of funds has been made at this point, rather VT is considering potential options to get this completed.
- The videos used for missed MG training classes have been converted to DVD. Copies will be available to borrow just as the videos were. Dave is hoping to transfer 35mm slide sets to digital images, too, but that will take a lot of time and money for student wages.
- Dave and Dawn Lerch met with a different Corporate Relations Director for the VT Foundation this week and will meet with them again next week. We have renewed hope and potential assistance for the foundation and corporately.

VMGA/VCE VT Meeting Notes

- **In the future what can we expect from VCE concerning the "green" movement?** "Sustainability" will receive more emphasis in both graduate and undergraduate studies. Emphasis areas will include sustaining green space, land preservation, runoff, and LEED (Leadership in Energy and Environment Design) building. Additional public information will address landscaping, eco systems, horticulture and agriculture, and storm water management.
- **Record Keeping system status.** Costs are anticipated to be \$10,000 - \$50,000 so money is an issue. (continued on page 8)

March News From Across the State

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



Northeast



Chesterfield, Lynne Foote

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

The Chesterfield Master Gardeners continue to focus on registration for the 3rd Biennial Horticultural Horizons at Lewis Ginter on April 21. The Chesterfield MGs will be taking a tour and receive training at Brent and Becky's.

Some projects in which the Chesterfield MGs are involved: making rain barrels, Urban Tree Specialist Program and working with Habitat for Humanity.

The MGs will be working with the Dept of Environmental Engineering and Utilities to do the Chesapeake Club social marketing campaign. A grant is in review to continue the program in 2010 in all Virginia and Maryland markets. If DCR gets the grant we will branch out our message in 2010 to rain barrels, rain gardens and conservation landscaping.

Hanover, Christy Brennan

<http://www.hanovermastergardeners.org>

Strategic planning meetings have been scheduled for new projects including: A backyard sustainable gardening program and Garden Demo plots at the VCE Office.

Six Education Grants from the Hanover Master Gardeners will be distributed to a variety of County local school projects.

Newport News, Peggy Fox

<http://www.nnmastergardeners.org>

Plans are being developed to host our 2nd annual Go Green-Save Green day long workshop in September. Speaking engagements have been conducted on pruning, houseplants, composting with worms, and an entomology presentation titled, A Zoo in My Luggage. Our unit has a new MG Coordinator, Mary Wright. The 5th horticulture enrichment session at the Newport News Juvenile Detention Center began Mar 5.

Northeast



Northern Neck, Ted Munns

<http://www.nnmg.org>

The Annual Seminar is on March 21, 2009. This year's topic focuses on all aspects of vegetable gardening, recognizing today's economic environment. Dr. Andy Hankins, Extension Specialist of VCU will open with: Grow Local, Buy Local, Eat Local. Go to www.nnmg.org for details and registration forms.



Northern



Arlington/Alexandria, Joe Kelly

<http://www.mgnv.org>

We will be starting activities in our demonstration gardens the first week of March. In response to community interest, we are exploring the staffing of plant clinics at three new locations (in addition to the four that we regularly provide during the gardening season).

We will have a schedule of public education events including: computer class on searching for VCE and other science-based hort sites; pruning workshops; gardening fitness classes (including one specifically for seniors). In conjunction with *All Alexandria Reads* program, we will provide classes at libraries on "Growing Your Own Pizza" and "Gardening With Children".

The unit is working with Arlington Food Assistance Program to promote classes on growing vegetables as part of their *Plant a Row* program.

MGs are working on a *Dine Local Arlington* initiative encouraging restaurants to obtain ingredients from local growers and encouraging residents to buy locally produced food and to support restaurants and businesses that offer local products.

March News From Across the State (continued)

Northern

**Fairfax, George Graine**

<http://www.fairfaxmastergardeners.org>

In addition to the MG training "core curriculum," Fairfax added a new twist. Specifically, five "plant profiles" will be discussed in depth including: boxwoods, dogwoods, azaleas, rhododendrons, and the most popular vegetable, the tomato. The rationale for altering our training program: citizen problems associated with these plants constitute 50 per cent of the questions raised at 400+ plant clinics and the help line each year.

Fairfax-Green Spring, Cindi Bishop, Joan Richards

<http://www.fairfaxcounty.gov/parks/gsgp/mastergardener.htm>

Preparation for the Eco-Savvy Symposium to be held on Saturday, February 28, has kept Green Spring MGs busy as well as filling positions to meet the Speaker's Bureau requests. Two recently created power point presentations will be used for speaking requests on Creating a Wildlife Habitat and The Basics of Vegetable Gardening.

MGs will teach the Ready, Set, Grow 4-H program in 91 fourth grade classrooms in Fairfax County beginning March 3.

The Basic Gardening Series taught by MGs begins March 6. Classes focus on: Backyard Wildlife Habitats, Vegetable Gardens, Bulbs for Summer Interest, Colorful Containers, Invasives, and Shade Gardens.

The Library Committee has implemented a program of demo boards with handouts focusing on seasonal information for gardeners at six branches of the Fairfax County Library System.

MGs are in training to lead garden strolls at the Historic Manor House.

Central Rappahannock, Linda Dunn

We continue to raise funds for Cossey Botanical Park in Fredericksburg and we are just beginning to work on the gardens of the historical sites around Fredericksburg. Plant clinic training will be held in February and plant clinics will be up and running in March.

Southeast

**Norfolk, Don Snipes**

<http://www.vbmg.org>

The 2009 NMGV training class is underway and most unusual, the majority of the students are young.

Norfolk MGs will participate in the Virginia Zoo Earth Day event. They will show and explain the Wazoo rain garden.

Prince George, Mary Vinsh

<http://www.pgmqa.org>

Work still continues at the Water Garden at Richard Bland College and also with the Weston Plantation. We will be hosting the 7th annual Good Gardening Symposium March 14 at Prince George High School.

Garden Basics public classes start on Saturday, March 7. These include vegetables for small plots, ornamentals, lawns, and basic horticulture.

Southwest

**Master Gardeners of the Blue Ridge (Carroll, Grayson, Galax), Charlie Whittle**

Extension agents & members conducted pruning sessions for MG's and the general public. This is part of a larger effort to restore the heirloom apple orchard at Matthews Historic Farm & Forest and to utilize heirloom produce from the orchard and farm for the purpose of teaching food prep, nutrition and entrepreneurial skills while working with the 4H Youth Development. Agents, with MG assistance, will conduct apple grafting sessions for the general public in March/April in Carroll and Grayson Counties.



*I love spring anywhere,
but if I could choose
I would always greet it in a garden.
-- Ruth Stout*

This and That

By Cheri Haggerty, Past President, VMGA

- **Why is turning in Volunteer Hours so important?**

So much of VCE funding is dependant on volunteer numbers. As volunteer educators, it is important to track our efforts. These hours are reported to Virginia Cooperative Extension (VCE) for much the same reason Contacts are counted. Also, it is state policy and this is expected of anyone who agrees to become an Extension MG volunteer.

Volunteer hours also count towards Milestone Service awards. The awards start at 50 when you get your official name badge and then progress with recognition from 250, 500, 1,000, 2,000, and so on, until 10,000. (Yes, there is a Master Gardener in Prince William County who has achieved that recognition.) These Service Awards also make you eligible for discounts to Master Gardener College.

- **Why is counting Contacts so important?**

Virginia Cooperative Extension (VCE) recognizes the importance of diversity and inclusion in the development and implementation of Extension programs. However, beyond our own interests in program inclusion, as a federally funded agency, VCE is required to comply with USDA Civil Rights nondiscrimination policies, rules, and regulations. Specifically, VCE must establish and maintain a system for collecting and reporting data on clientele participation in Extension programs. This data system must obtain racial, ethnic and gender data on all significant aspects of program participation. The contacts data are also supplied to the state government to illustrate the extent to which we reach Virginians with our educational programs. This all goes to show 'reasonable effort' to ensure all VCE programs are accessible to all citizens of the Commonwealth.

- **What about Master Gardener College? What is it?**

Master Gardener College is an annual event held at Virginia Tech the 3rd week of June. The dates this year are June 18-22. MG College includes gardening seminars, workshops and popular speakers from the horticulture and arboriculture fields. Each year rotates a different Advanced MG Training. 2008 was Land Care Steward, 2009 is Tree Steward and 2010 will be Water Steward. A sneak peak is available at www.vmga.net/College or by visiting www.hort.vt.edu/mastergardener/mgcollege. MG College is an advanced training opportunity and is open to all active, certified VCE MG volunteers. You must have completed your internship in order to be eligible to attend. The education hours you receive from attending MG College can be used to satisfy your annual Continuing Education commitment.

Opportunities

MG College Silent Auction for the State MG Coordinator Endowment Fund

In December of 2004, VMGA entered into an agreement with the Virginia Tech Foundation to provide partial funding for the State MG Coordinator with a \$1 million endowment. VMGA will again hold its Silent Auction to raise money for the State MG Coordinator Endowment Fund. So far, efforts have raised \$300,000.

Donations garnered through our membership did really well in years past. Our goal this year is to top last year! Invite and encourage donations from local retailers and nurseries as well. You can help by generously donating any of the following suggested items:

garden & landscape tools	planters	culinary items
new & gently used books	baskets	table ware
plants	bird feeders	gardening gloves
fountains	hats	hand crafted items
garden art	bird baths	bird houses
home décor		

And so on.....

If you have questions or would like to assist, please contact **Leslie Paulson** at ljp6651@comcast.net or 703-330-9441 or **Sharon Corbin** at sharonandtrish@comcast.net. A list of your donations is needed by 11 April 2009. Please include your **name, value of the item(s)** and your recommendation of a **minimum bid** for each item. Don't delay! Let us know of your contributions as soon and as early as possible. MG College 2009 is just 3½ months away!

Opportunities (continued)

2009 MG College Scholarships

VMGA will offer \$100 MG College Scholarships through the Dianne Relf Educational Endowment Fund to selected Master Gardeners who have been nominated by their Extension Agent/Unit MG Coordinator. Each Extension Agent/Unit MG Coordinator has the opportunity to nominate two Master Gardeners from their Unit. Based on your accumulated volunteer hours, you may be eligible for a service award and a discount off the registration cost. Finally, many of your units have individual opportunities for monetary awards or grants for educational opportunities. Take advantage of any or all of these opportunities to join us at Master Gardener College this year! The scholarship nomination forms for 2009 will be forwarded via ListServ and are available on the VMGA website. For more information, contact Paul Campbell, VA Beach MG, Panda91@cox.net or (757) 412-0696.

Nominations by Agents/MG Coordinators must be received by Friday, May 18, 2009.

2009 MG College Goody Bags

MG College has 225 to 250 attendees, along with guest speakers, so we need 300 goody bags to be prepared before the program begins. If you know of a unique horticulture item (e.g., pencils, bookmarks, magazines, soil samples, or creams) that would be interesting to MGs or our speakers, or you know someone who can make arrangements to acquire 300 donated pieces of that item, then please contact Patty Gamache at (540) 587-0524 rgama37@aol.com. All items for the goody bags should be sent to Patty at 1714 Kingston Circle, Bedford, VA, 24523.

Virginia State Fair

Interested members met with the State Fair Feb 6th to discuss our first fair at The Meadow in Doswell, VA. The Master Gardener Booth will be situated in the middle of a long tent like structure.

Because this is the first year at the Meadow and it will be a learning experience, we will be doing what we know works: Pruning demo, mulching demo, the insect cage, composting and vermicomposting, and firewise landscaping house (Land Care Stewards).

Last year's teacher surveys were very positive about the Strawberry DNA experiment. Several MGs felt this did not relate to agriculture and education. Gwynn Hubbard and Jennifer Ross (SFVA) explained that biotechnology applied to agriculture is a huge (and misunderstood) news item, so teaching the basics was important. We will be performing the DNA experiment again this year.

The tent has room for two more demos. Perhaps for a JR Master Gardener area and Master Naturalist display? Please let Christy know if your group is interested.

Search for Excellence...

(formerly Brag Board Competition)

The Search for Excellence (SFE) is the recognition program for Master Gardener Volunteer work throughout the United States and Canada. There are seven categories in which Master Gardeners can demonstrate outstanding contributions to their communities. The seven categories are:

- Youth Programs
- Demonstration Gardens
- Workshop or Presentation (hands on workshops)
- Community Service
- Innovative Projects
- Special Audiences, Senior/Disabled Audiences or Hort Therapy
- Other General MG Accomplishments

The Virginia Master Gardener Association has elected to change the requirements of the former Brag Board competition by modeling this program after the International Search for Excellence (SFE) program. The hope of the VMGA Search for Excellence Committee is that every VA Master Gardener unit will participate at MG College and the winners of our state competition will then be entered into the International SFE competition to represent Virginia Master Gardeners.

For rules, competition details and a copy of the submission form, contact Christy Brennan, ctb47@comcast.net.

The Graine Thumb

Have No Fear Bamboo

By George Graine, Fairfax County Master Gardeners

"Between the bamboos tall the moonlight softly trickles, and I hear the cuckoos call."

-- Matsuo Basho, Japanese poet (1664-1694)



Let's get something straight right away. Bamboo is not a plant to be feared. Bamboo is a misunderstood plant. Bamboo gets a bad rap from many people and some who ought to know better. The fact is, some people have selected the "wrong" type of bamboo or they did not understand how to contain this king of grasses, the fastest growing woody plant on earth. Some might say this is a plant gone wild and out of control, a reputation well deserved because many types of bamboo are aggressive and spread quickly. For others this may be just the ticket for a fast growing privacy and textured screen. On the other hand, you can plant bamboo that does not run and that is what this article is all about.

In the past few years, bamboo propagators have introduced non-invasive, graceful ornamental clumping bamboos, which do not spread when planted. Look for plant tags that indicate sympodial, a clumping variety whereas monopodial is a running type. Many clumping bamboo varieties are hardy in Zone 7a and 8, they offer a variety of form and texture, and are available in variegated leaf and different cane colors. Depending on the type of "clumper", they grow in either a tight or open clump.

Clumping bamboos have a limited root structure. The reason this type of bamboo rhizome does not have the ability to spread indiscriminately is because the growing tip turns upward and becomes a culm (cane), ergo, this is why it clumps and is considered to be non-invasive. As for the open-type clumping bamboo, this growth pattern happens because the rhizome necks on these species become elongated; therefore, the canes are spaced further apart. What you will actually see in clumpers is a dense mass of new canes that only increase a few inches in diameter each year unlike the running species. In either case, because of the way the rhizome grows, both of these clumping varieties need not be contained with some type of barrier.

This type of bamboo typically grows 1-2 feet of height per year. The ultimate height is variable depending on the species and climate. A healthy bamboo will often have a mixture of green leaves, yellow leaves and new leaves that are unfurling. If the clump gets too large, it can be pruned back. (A whiskey barrel makes an ideal planter if you would rather not plant bamboo in your landscape.) Contrast this with running bamboos that spread by underground rhizomes and can cover great distances. These rhizomes are all connected to a single plant and it becomes extremely difficult to eliminate and thus becomes a vicious spreading pest.

Oh....one last point. Lucky Bamboo is actually a houseplant, *Dracaena sandieriana*.

Recognition & Thanks

Professional of the Year Award, Joel Koci

Joel Koci, Arborcare Professional Tree Service, Rockville, VA, who speaks at many Master Gardener events and classes statewide, was unanimously selected as the 2008 VNLA Professional of the Year, formerly the: "VNLA Nurseryman of the Year". The award was presented at the 2009 VNLA Annual Breakfast Meeting in Baltimore on January 8, 2009.

Thank You from SFVA, Jennifer Ross

Thank you so much for your continued support of the State Fair with the Master Gardener program. The gardens and horticulture area at the Fair would not be possible without the countless hours spent by Master Gardeners.

This year's strawberry DNA project was a huge hit. We received many enthusiastic and positive comments from teachers who brought their classes to the Fair and appreciated a modern, hands-on, and educational activity in which their students could participate. We hope that you can continue the strawberry DNA experiment for another year for students who may have missed it last year.

We look forward to a continued partnership at our new home, The Meadow Event Park, in Caroline County for the 2009 Fair. See you in September!

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:

Peggy Fox, peggyfox@hotmail.com

Dawn Meyerriecks, dmyrix@hotmail.com

VMGA/VCE VT Meeting Notes (continued)

- **When an Extension Agent leaves, the unit leadership should be notified.** If you have a question concerning your agent, contact Dave Close.
- **More public information will be made available for a Hort and foods program that can be integrated into Standards of Learning.** There will be more emphasis on local and organic food as food banks, hospitals, and schools work together to go in this direction.
- **Budget cutback update.** Publications are being updated and will continue to be available by electronic distribution and print on demand. The VT/VCE website is being updated and will be up soon. The website will include a link to the state Master Gardener program. MG College is self-sustaining and not affected by VT budget cuts. The state MG Coordinator salary is frozen at this time, as are all salaries. Empty positions are on hold.
- **The official statement to be used as the concluding paragraph for news columns and articles has been supplied by VT Communications and Marketing as follows:** "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."

VMGA Report
 1549 Beechwood Cove
 Virginia Beach, VA
 23464

