

Virginia Master Gardener Association

REPORT



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<http://www.vmgga.net>

March/April 2010

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IN THIS ISSUE

PRESIDENT'S UPDATE	1
UPCOMING EVENTS	2
STATE MG LIAISON REPORT	2
NEWS FROM ACROSS THE STATE	3
THE GRAINE THUMB	5
RESOURCES FOR MGVS	6

April VMGA Bi-Monthly Board Meeting

10 AM - 2 PM, April 10, 2010
The Historic Ware Episcopal Church
7825 John Clayton Memorial Hwy
Gloucester, VA 23061

-- Hosted by Gloucester MGs --

President's Message

Betty Villers, VMGA President

As I write this message they are calling for three inches of snow tonight here in Virginia Beach. I am more than ready for Spring. I have noticed the crocus and daffodils have already started to bloom so Spring can't be too far away. Our February Bi-monthly Board meeting scheduled for Suffolk was canceled because of a winter storm advisory so we are looking forward to our next meeting in Gloucester, April 10th where daffodils can be found blooming on every street corner.

The last couple of days have been trying days for the Master Gardener Program as we received the message of a proposed House of Delegates budget amendment (House Bill 30). If passed, this proposal includes restructuring of VCE, which includes closing of 8 offices and consolidation of 13 offices, thus eliminating Extension in urban areas. In addition, this proposal would eliminate key program areas that over the years have brought about positive impact in the lives of Virginians. We didn't have much time to prepare before the vote but we tried to notify all Master Gardeners to contact their legislators to reinforce the importance of the VCE and the benefits to all the citizens of Virginia. By the time you read this message the vote will be in for the future of the Master Gardener Program as we know it now.

We need to work together as we chart new courses for our Master Gardener Program. The VMGA is the Voice of the Master Gardeners and communication between all will be most important as we work together to develop educational programs based on citizen needs.

Sign up for our Mini-MG College program on March 27th, "Leading Edges in Consumer Horticulture" at Virginia State University. Your Education Committee has another event planned for April 17th at VA Western Community College in Roanoke on "Community Gardens". This program will be a "How to" teaching event, using Roanoke's Community Gardens information and including speakers from Fluvanna and other areas that have worked in this field of interest. Check the website for more details on both events.

Our thanks to Cheri Haggerty, who is updating the VMGA history. You will see and hear it all and meet those who were the leaders of the organization over the years at MG College (June 24-26) when we celebrate our 20-year anniversary. Make your plans to attend.

-- Betty

UPCOMING EVENTS

13 March, "A Fresh Look at Your Landscape, Germanna Community College, Culpeper, VA, 9 AM
www.vmga.net/Calendar

13 March, Annual Good Gardening Symposium, Prince George High School, Prince George, VA, 8:45 AM,
www.vmga.net/Calendar

20-21 March, First Annual Gardening Symposium, Ida Lee Park, Leesburg, VA, 9 AM, www.vmga.net/Calendar

25 March, Training Workshop for VCE MGVs and Teachers, Southern Piedmont AREC, Blackstone, VA, 6 PM,
www.vmga.net/Calendar

27 March, 1st Mini-MG College, Virginia State University, Ettrick, VA, 8 AM
www.vmga.net/educationalevents1.htm

17 April, Community Garden Workshop, Virginia Western Community College Univ, Roanoke, VA, 8 AM,
www.vmga.net/educationalevents1.htm

24 April, Sixth Annual Spring Garden Fest, Goodchland campus of J. Sargeant Reynolds Community College, 9:30 AM,
www.vmga.net/Calendar

1 May, Tenth Annual Festival of Gardening, The Aviary in Miller Park, Lynchburg, VA, 8:30 AM,
www.vmga.net/Calendar

8 May, Patrick County MG Annual and Perennial Plant Sale, Rotary Field, Stuart, VA, 9 AM,
www.vmga.net/Calendar

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

State MG Liaison Report for February

By David Close, Virginia MG State Coordinator

- The VCE Strategic planning process is still progressing. The team collected more than 12,000 comments that have been compiled into 800 pages of data. A draft of the results will be available in mid-February. Suggestions and directions from the process will be implemented on July 1, 2010.
- Dr. Grant has announced that 34 Extension agents have applied for ASO (alternative severance option, i.e. early retirement). There will be many holes depending on how many, if not all, of the ASOs are approved. Once internal transfers have occurred to fill some gaps, VCE will strategically hire 10 positions to fill critical needs. In addition to field faculty ASOs, 25 tenure track positions have applied for the ASO. These retirements will go into effect in June. Through salary savings as a result of retirements, Dr. Grant has proposed to hire back 17 of the 25 tenure track positions over three years (these positions are both on-campus and at our ARECs).
- A group of VCE agents, specialists, and MGs met in Charlottesville on January 25 for a planning session involving the *Home Grounds & Animals PMG*. We scheduled a meeting with PMG authors for February 23. We are approaching this as a long-term project but will implement some changes in the 2011 edition.
- The State Record Keeping System is in a holding pattern awaiting the final contract with Univ. of California - Davis.
- MGCAT met on January 18. We essentially filled out the remaining concurrent session topics and the leadership development training. The registration fee for 2010 will be \$150, up \$25 from the past 5 years. A Sunday morning session has been added back, when Kirk Brown will appear as John Bartram. We will also have a picnic on Sunday.
- The Emerald Ash Borer online web course has been fully drafted. It has gone through technical review and is currently being reviewed by a panel of Extension MGs, municipal foresters, and a green industry rep. We hope to have the course available this spring.
- Land Care Steward Project books are printed and sitting in my office! They are titled *Smart Yard Care: Big Rewards from Small Investments in Stewardship*. Currently the plan is to get one hard copy in every extension office statewide. The entire book will be posted online. Eventually we hope to work out details to print more copies for sale.
- For 2009, we reported more than 334,000 volunteer hours statewide (up from 269,000 hours in 2008) and more than 577,000 contacts (up from 547,000 in 2008). The economic value of that volunteer service exceeds \$6.7 million dollars. Bottom line – THANK YOU!

February News From Across the State

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



Northeast



Chesterfield, Lynne Foote

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

The new seedlings all have mentors and were introduced at a Meet & Greet in January.

Our Grass Roots program has been updated on line and the Woodlake HOA is subsidizing the cost of the program for the first 50 applicants in Woodlake.

Several new public seminars are planned: Homage to the Beauty of Trees, Moss Arrangements, Pruning Crape Myrtles and Wild Horse Behavior and Management.

Hanover, Christy Brennan

Our new class numbers 42, split about evenly between day and evening sessions.

The Youth Education Committee submitted 9 grant applications. The board voted to fund all 9 with \$500 grants.

Newport News, Jim and Nelda Pressly

<http://nnmastergardeners.org>

NN MGs have undertaken a series of rain-barrel workshops in collaboration with the Newport News Waterworks and the Newport News Public Works Recycling Office. The city has provided a source for the barrels and is advertising the workshops in a newsletter inserted in homeowners' water bills. MGs are providing instruction at the workshops and will eventually maintain the schedule of workshops on their own. The workshops are offered to the public on a "first come, first serve" basis with 15-20 participants in each.

Southwest



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

Our new training class has begun, along with apple tree pruning classes at our "adopted" Matthews State Forest orchard.

Northern



Piedmont, Joyce Grunewald

<http://www.PiedmontMasterGardeners.org>

To celebrate the spring thaw, our 2010 Spring Garden Lecture Series will begin in March.

To honor and give thanks to our outgoing Presidents, the Piedmont unit will gift a VMGA Lifetime Membership. The current outgoing president, Jay Gillenwater, received his lifetime membership in January.

Fairfax, George Graine

<http://www.fairfaxmastergardeners.org>

Fairfax MGs will repeat their highly successful "Volunteer Fair and Plant Clinic/Hort Help Desk Sign-Up" in March.

Fluvanna, JoAnne Henry

<http://www.fluvannamg.org>

Our nine new trainees have started class. A new approach to mentoring will be explored with this class.

Plans for the expansion of the Community Garden are well underway.

Green Spring, Joan Richards, Cyndi Bishop

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

MGs will be educators in over 80 classrooms as part of the Ready, Set, Grow 4-H program in February, March and April. Preparations are now being made to go into the Fairfax County classrooms to teach two-hour classes on structure and functions of plants and soil to help prepare 2,088 fourth graders for their spring SOLs. This project is performed in cooperation with Fairfax MGs.

Loudoun County, Ingrid Fovargue

www.loudouncountymastergardeners.org

Our new training class is 32 strong! LCMGs contributed more than 9200 hours in 2009, reaching more than 10,000 contacts.

February News From Across the State

Southeast

**Prince George, Cheryl Sebera**

<http://www.pgmga.org>

The Spring Garden Basics Program starts February 20th and runs through March 20th. Topics include: Pruning Fruit Trees and Brambles, Lawns, Vegetables 101, Rain Barrels, Pruning Ornamentals, and Good Gardening Symposium, whose theme this year is "From the Ground Up...How to get the Most from Your Garden."

Rockbridge Area, David Mims

We welcome a new class of 13 energetic students!



Southeast

**Northern Shenandoah Valley, Ernie Polanskas**

We have 15 new trainees for 2010, whose classes will begin in February.

We have a number of projects planned for 2010, including:

- A consulting project with Mountain Laurel Montessori School to help them landscape their property.
- Landscaping assistance for the Samuels Public Library.
- Installation of a rain garden for storm water management on April 15th.

Celebrate St Patrick's Day with Peas!

By Linda Shotton, Loudoun County Master Gardener

St Patrick's Day is fast approaching and you may have been perusing your seed catalogs thinking 'Spring is SO far away!'. Well, did you know that the appropriate time of year to put your pea seeds into the ground is....St Patrick's Day (get it – green peas on the green holiday?)!! We've been lucky with above freezing temps so spots that are snow free are probably getting enough sun to grow peas. Because peas are the finest early veggie, don't limit yourself to a vegetable patch! Find a sunny spot and throw down some peas! You will probably have to place a stake, or trellis, or ladder, or other handy vertical structure, but the benefit of fresh peas to munch into July will be worth it! You can plant English, snow and snap peas- or do like I do – plant some of each.

Opportunities

Just a heads up to all our Master Gardeners that Sharon Corbin and Leslie Paulson will again be doing the VMGA Silent Auction to benefit the State MG Coordinator Endowment Fund this year. You will be receiving a letter in April asking for donations. Please consider joining us on Thursday and Friday evening of College to see and hear how this event is put together. Changes are in the works and you all will become part of these changes. For now, start talking this up to your Unit and to new Master Gardeners. It would be great, in this year of budget cuts, to really raise some serious funds. Thanks and watch for more information in April. Contact Leslie at ljp665@comcast.net.

VMGA seeks to award scholarships to those deserving members who through their dedicated efforts of volunteerism and VCE goals have demonstrated exceptional leadership potential or significant contributions in their respective Units. All VCE Master Gardeners planning to attend MG College 2010 can be considered for these scholarships. The number of \$100 scholarships awarded is determined by the budgeted amount and donations to the Diane Relf Educational Endowment Fund. *This year, the VMGA Board has authorized two of the six scholarships be awarded to qualified and selected members of Small Units (less than 20 members).* Applications must be received by Friday, 14 May 2010. All application forms must be submitted via the local VCE Extension Agent or Unit Coordinator. For information, visit <http://www.vmganet.org/Endowment/Scholarship2010.htm>. Page 4

The Graine Thumb

What's Bugging You??

By George Graine, Fairfax County Master Gardeners

"The concept of pest is entirely a human notion. There are no pests in nature. For humans, pests get to be pests when they teeter out of balance with their environment and do things we don't want them to do."

-- Eric Grissell in *Insects and Gardens*

For many of us the growing season is nigh. After ogling garden catalogs and taking in some home and garden shows, what's next? Is it time to mow the grass or perhaps execute plans for a landscape makeover? If in fact you decide to make some changes to your landscape, have you also taken into account how the ravages of an insect population can be reduced? Do not fret. Time is on your side so that you can incorporate some ideas into any garden design you perhaps only thought about before turning your plan into reality.

The concept of good bug vs. bad bug (including mites, borers, etc.) is not a new thought. Beneficial insects that fit into the category of predators and parasitoids are considered "good"; therefore, those that pierce, suck, and nibble plants are "bad" and surely are not something to be trifled with. Rather than get into the warring factions of good versus bad, this article emphasizes how one can modify a garden to attract "friendly" insects. Then you can spend more time in other pursuits instead of with a sprayer. Most pesticide products will harm beneficial insects just as easily as the target population that is harmful to plant material. A better strategy is a comprehensive integrated pest management approach as opposed to a hit 'em with a spray product.

The solution to what's bugging you is relatively simple. It is all about diversity of plants in your landscape. Consider flowers that will bloom throughout the growing season. This will provide a better habitat (read food) for the insects you want to keep around. Flowers also supplement their food supply with pollen and nectar. The fact is that a complex environment with flower gardens, trees, shrubs, vegetable gardens, and yes, even some weeds are all lures for many different insects. Essentially this means many different species of insects often gather where they can feed and augment their own species. In effect, you should aim to create a natural ecosystem through biological pest control by encouraging beneficial insects to "hang out" in your landscape. (As an aside, let us not forget to plant flowers and food sources for butterflies.)

It is a fact that in the insect world beneficial insects are more numerous than what you might have imagined. If you thought otherwise it is because you often observe insect "damage" and rarely see, for example, the battle royal taking place between ladybugs larvae/adult and aphids. The flip side of really seeing the results of a parasite is the tomato hornworm covered with a bunch of egg-like pupae of the teeny brachnid wasp. This is an insect David and Goliath happening. It does not get any better than this.

Here's the bottom line. Just as you heard about the need for honey bees, so too should you keep the bad bugs in check by encouraging good bugs to thrive in your landscape. They will work for you at practically no cost. Do not fall for garden catalogs that advertise mantids and other insects as a cure-all. You cannot put a leash on a mantid even though it might seem like a good idea. They have a voracious appetite and after they clean out yummy insects they are off to "greener pastures" so to speak.

As an afterthought, if you have birdhouses and feeders, you will get a bonus because the birds will help to reduce the insect population. Unfortunately, like sprayers, birds are opportunists and may not be particular about what they care to eat.

Graceful Thanks

I want to thank everyone for their cards, notes, and prayers during Bud's last illness and after he went to take over management of Heaven's Garden. It was a rough couple of years in our battle with cancer, but the grace of God prevailed. Fran Gregory, Northern Shenandoah Valley MG Assn

Resources for MGVs

The VCE site has been created by the Office of Environmental Horticulture as an information resource for VCE Master Gardeners and the public. This site lists the most commonly asked questions compiled through a survey of VCE Extension offices and VCE Master Gardeners from around the state. The main goal of the site is to improve the question and answer process while stressing Sustainable Landscape Management based solutions to homeowners and gardeners. Go to <http://www.hort.vt.edu/mastergardener/faq.htm>, then click on "The Top 100 Most Frequently Asked Questions". The questions and answers are divided into these categories:

Insects
Mammals, Reptiles, Birds, Etc.
Plants
General Gardening Questions
Plant Disease

Did you know there is a Virginia Master Gardener Quarterly Newsletter published by VCE? To see the latest issue of *In Season* please visit <http://www.hort.vt.edu/mastergardener/>, scroll over "News" and click on "Newsletter." The current issue is located under Winter 2010 at http://www.hort.vt.edu/mastergardener/newsletter/InSeason_Winter2010.pdf.

The VT Plant Problem Image Gallery is located at <http://ppwsidlab.contentsrvr.net/plant.vesh>. It is a valuable resource for MGs interested in learning more about plant problems commonly encountered in Virginia landscapes and gardens. Thanks to Barbara Brouse, Charlottesville/Albemarle County, for bringing the correct address to our attention.

For all the tree lovers and Tree Stewards out there, VT's College of Natural Resources has a great website at www.cnr.vt.edu/dendro. The forest biology and dendrology website and computer software provides a continuous stream of educational opportunities for natural resource professionals, teachers, students and the general public. Starting with tree identification, they have forest biology education software, online graduate forest ecology education for public school teachers, and scientific investigations for public school students conducted utilizing the Internet.

The CD-ROM based woody plant identification program has over 20,000 color photos covering 840 plants found throughout North America, and there are development plans for a new version with even more species, photographs, and features. The current software contains multiple pictures for each species of leaves, flower, fruit, twig, bark and form of each plant and allows side-by-side comparisons of similar species. Users are also able to take quizzes from customized tree lists. They also have software for teaching tree biology that contains animations on photosynthesis, diameter growth, water uptake, bud break, and even fall color change.

In addition to tree identification, they also have developed landowner fact sheets. These sheets display, in a very efficient manner, basic silvical characteristics for the tree, wildlife value, regeneration practices and fun facts about the tree. Other web-based educational material includes information on fall color, the meaning of Latin names, scenic panoramas from ecosystems around the United States, a "what's blooming" feature (particularly popular in the spring), various identification keys, online text books, and even a tree identification quiz. Check it out!

Finally, a couple of web sites to check out as you consider your 2010 plantings:

- www.pollinator.org. A good reference on the 5Ws of pollinators, with regionalized planting recommendations based on your zip code.
- www.dcr.virginia.gov/natural_heritage/documents/natvripa.pdf. A great list of natives for riparian buffer areas in Virginia.
- www.nwf.org. How to create and certify your yard as a wildlife habitat.

VMGA/VCE VT Meeting Minutes (3 Feb)

Attendees: (VMGA) Christy Brennan, Cheri Haggerty, Bill Scott, Cheryl Sebera, Betty Villers; (VCE) Dave Close, Dr. Brian Calhoun, Dean Dr. Grant, Dr. Roger Harris, Dr. Rick Rudd.

Item 1: Have redistricting lines been drawn and how will they impact the units? There will be some administrative overlays between counties as the districts are reduced from six to four. Dr. Rudd indicated they are drafting a timeline for the programs within the affected districts. They are working with the agents and should have everything in place in 12 - 18 months. There will eventually be some changes but they are attempting to make the solutions the most effective way to continue providing services. The district and regional 4-H competitions are coming up and they will be keeping the competitions the same as the old district map until everything is transitioned.

Item 2: Budget cutbacks: Impact on VCE, local units, MG programs, early retirements. Expecting major cuts to affect the Budget in 2012. Currently thirty-four agents have asked for early retirement that will reduce agents to less than 200. They plan on hiring ten people to fill in the gaps after the transfers. There are also voids at the ARECs and they expect 25 faculty to retire. Expect to hire back 17 faculty in 3 years. There are some areas that have no extension agents and some local agent positions are fully funded by local governments.

There are no target cuts. There are no planned cuts for Master Gardener programs, however, we should anticipate different support, not "no support". Agents will have to help in other areas. Agents with different skills other than ANR will be responsible for MGs. Will be looking for MGs to set up programs where no agent is available.

Received some 12,000 comments during Strategic Planning meetings. In the next couple of weeks they will be reviewing and analyzing 800 pages of comments. A draft will be prepared and they will talk to audiences again. Will be ready for implementation by July 1.

Item 3: Commitment to supporting VMGA in funding the Coordinator Endowment. Dr. Calhoun made the comment that VCE is 100% behind us in funding of the State Master Gardener Coordinator Endowment. Dr. Rudd agreed the position is very important to them. Dean Grant indicated they value and appreciate all we (Master Gardeners) do.

Item 4: Status for distribution of the Pest Management Guides. Orders were placed four weeks ago and they are waiting to get them from the printer. The Pest Management Guide is being printed in-house at Virginia Tech and this is the first year for such a large job. They anticipate a much quicker result in the future. Your local office should be able to download and print it from online as they continue the emphasis on web-based publications.

Item 5: Opportunities for MGs to help at the state level. They welcome publications submitted by MGs. A Fairfax County MG submitted a publication about Hardy Tropicals to their agent, and then it went to Joyce Latimer for approval. The agents have access to the required submission forms. They also indicated that the MG work in Richmond with the legislators in support of the MG Program was very important.

Other VCE Comments:

Dr. Brian Calhoun (representing ANR) reported MGs have been asked by Cumberland schools to come into the schools with programs. Wal-Mart has approached the state to discuss working with MGs and promoting community gardens and growing fruits and vegetables.

They are searching for a replacement for Jim Riddell's (Associate director for ANR) position. Deadline was end of January and interview committee (including Adria Bordas, Fairfax Ext Agent and Jeff Miller from VNLA) will make a selection by end of February or first of March. The new director should be in place by MG College.

Dr. Alan Grant, the new Dean for the College of Agriculture and Life Sciences (CALs) reported the college's goal is research, teaching and Extension Outreach. He realizes the MGs have a very successful program and the College VCE value and appreciate all we do. The student numbers are strong and to provide horticulture education we must work together to get through the hard times.

Dr. Rick Rudd (Extension) reminded us the MG program is the link between the research at VT and the people. Horticulture information is being delivered.

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

Save the Date!! VMGA Education Event



**"The Cutting Edge in Agriculture and Horticulture"
THE FIRST MINI-MG COLLEGE ~ THE FIRST AT VSU**

Limited to the first 200 ~ March 27, 2010
Virginia State University, Ettrick, VA



Opening Plenary session: Biointensive Mini-Gardens
Breakout Sessions (Choice of 3)

- IPM/ Insect Control
- Shiitake mushrooms
- Cut Flower Production
- Tomato Grafting
- Appropriate Technology
- AgrAbility
- Seed Saving
- (Vermi)Composting
- Community Gardens
- Permaculture

- What's new in IPM?
- Hands on and take some home to grow
- Tips on successful cut flowers at home
- Graft an heirloom tomato to take home
- What's new in alternative agriculture?
- Helps individuals with disabilities
- Savor your favorites season after season
- Learn about creating your own compost
- A growing concept in urban areas
- Learn what this design theory is about

Closing Plenary: Community Supported Agriculture
Optional tour of Randolph Farm Horticultural Exhibits following the event

Registration forms are at vmga.net.

VMGA Report
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