



VMGA Executive Board

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February VMGA Bi-Monthly Board Meeting

10 AM - 2 PM, February 13, 2010
 Paul D. Camp Community College
 271 Kenyon Road, Room 124
 Suffolk, VA 23434
 -- Hosted by Suffolk MGs --

President's Message

Betty Villers, VMGA President

HAPPY NEW YEAR! It's the beginning of a new year and time to reflect while planning for the future. We will be celebrating VMGA's 20-year anniversary in February at our next Bi-monthly Board Meeting in Suffolk, February 13th. If you are a former officer or committee chair of the VMGA, we invite you to attend this meeting. It is the leadership of the past that has carried us to where we are today. Thank you!

Early in December, we lost Bud Gregory to a recurrence of melanoma. Bud was loved and admired by all who knew him. Among his accomplishments were his involvement with the Beautiful Gardens plant introduction program started in 2003, his introduction of a multiple bloom lily to the plant world and the sharing of his plants and knowledge with other Master Gardeners. Bud and his wife, Fran, were the unit reps from Northern Shenandoah Valley MGA. We have lost a dear friend.

Your Executive Board will be meeting with the CALS, VCE, and Hort department administration on February 3rd in Charlottesville for our semi-annual briefing meeting. We will be discussing issues and concerns and how we can partner with the College's efforts. If you have any issues and concerns you would like discussed at this meeting, please let me know.

The Education Committee has a Mini-MG College planned for Saturday, March 27 at Virginia State University located near Petersburg. "Leading Edges in Consumer Horticulture" will be limited to 200 active Master Gardeners. Registration forms will be available on the VMGA website mid-January. They have another program scheduled for April 17th on "Community Gardens" in Roanoke. This program is limited to 60 spaces and will be a "How to" teaching event, using Roanoke's Community Gardens information and including information and speakers from Fluvanna and other areas that have worked in this field. Tours of local sites are planned along with data handouts.

It's time to think about MG College 2010. Put the date June 24-27 on your calendar and plan to join other master gardeners for education, workshops, field trips, garden tours, and, of course, fun. The keynote speakers include Rita Randolph, Mike Raupp, and Jeffrey Gillman.

I can tell already this is going to be a busy year. Let's get going.
 -- Betty

UPCOMING EVENTS

15-18 January, “Sustainability Strategies for the Blue Ridge”, Spring 2010 Permaculture Design Course in 4 Sessions, www.vcnva.org

16 January, “Perfect Conifers for Urban Gardens and Containers”, National Arboretum, 1 PM, www.usda.gov

23 January, Hypertufa Mini Water Garden Workshop, Peggy Lee Hahn Garden Pavilion, 10 AM
www.hort.vt.edu/hhg/

30 January, “Terrific Small Trees: Dwarf Conifers for the Home Landscape”, Lewis Ginter, 9 AM,
www.lewisginter.org/events

4 February, 27th Annual Central Virginia Landscape Management Seminar, MLK Jr Performing Arts Center, 8:30 AM,
<http://www.piedmont-landscape.org>

4 February, Remarkable Trees of Virginia, Peggy Lee Hahn Garden Pavilion, 6 PM,
<http://www.hort.vt.edu/hhg>

6 February, “Conifers: Where in the World Did That Come From?”, National Arboretum, 1 PM, www.usda.gov

6 February, “Basic Home Landscape Design” in 4 Sessions, Lewis Ginter, 8:30 AM, www.lewisginter.org/events

13 February, “Spring Pruning for Trees, Lewis Ginter, 8:30 AM,
www.lewisginter.org/events

18 February, “The Sustainable Garden: Magic or Myth?”, Peggy Lee Hahn Garden Pavilion, 6 PM, www.hort.vt.edu/hhg

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

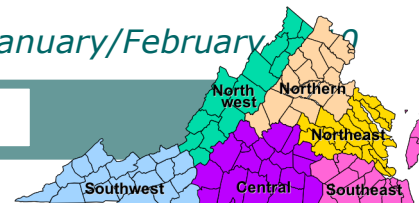
State MG Liaison Report for February

By David Close, Virginia MG State Coordinator

- **Webinar on recycling plastic containers** - Dave asked if there was interest among those present for a webinar on recycling plastic containers. He received a positive response. John Ignosh pulled together a webinar on Plastofuel (a process developed at Penn State for creating a fuel source from recycled plastic); this was part of an effort to explore possible solutions to recycle horticulture waste plastic in VA.
- **Mapping of school and community gardening resources across the Commonwealth** - Dave will be working with Jonah Fogel, a Community Viability Specialist, on this project. This is part of a larger effort to promote the Farm to School program in VA and increase awareness and participation of local communities in community gardening initiatives. Agents in the newly redrawn Southeast District are gathering resources to have a statewide advisory group on community gardening due to the increase in requests for local support of community gardening efforts.
- **Strategic planning meetings completed** - The initial report should be ready by February and everything in place by July 1, 2010 for implementation.
- **Redrawing of district lines** - VCE went from 6 to 4 districts: Northern, Southeast, Central, and Southwest; the four offices will be located in Harrisonburg (Northern - Cyndi Marston), Richmond (Southeast - Lonnie Johnson), Danville (Central - Lonnelle Marsh), and Abingdon (Southwest - Mike Martin). Once the strategic plan is announced and official, it will take 12-18 months to transition through some of the changes.
- **2011 Edition of the Home & Grounds PMG** - With the help of Dr. Joyce Latimer, a team of Extension Agents and Extension MG volunteers will meet in late January to begin the planning process for the 2011 edition of the Home & Grounds PMG. They will meet to identify key issues and create a plan of action to come up with the 2011 edition incorporating the necessary changes.
- **MG Handbook Advisory Team** - We have collected names of volunteers to serve on a MG Handbook advisory team. We will meet in late winter to begin the process of planning the next update to the MG Handbook.
- **State Record Keeping System Update** - The legal counsel office at VT is working with the legal counsel of UC Davis to iron out the details of our contract to purchase their volunteer management system.
- **Extension Publication** - Extension MGs from Fairfax County have completed the first Extension Publication by a volunteer. It is on cold-hardy palms that grow well in VA. It will be reviewed by several agents, and then submitted to VT for final approval and formatting and electronic publishing. We hope to create a series of fact sheets to supplement this initial pub.

December 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>

Agent Susan Edwards began training MGs to become Urban Tree Specialists.

Chesterfield Extension honored our military Veterans with cookies and hospitality on Veteran's Day provided by several MGs.

MGs have volunteered to present 4 new topics for the community through the public libraries beginning in January. They include: Planning the Vegetable Garden, Crape Myrtle Pruning Workshop, Gardening to Attract Birds and Butterflies and Planning the Herb Garden.

One of the highlights of December was the poinsettia tour and advanced training at Boulevard Flowers on poinsettia production, cultivars, selection and care.

Gloucester, Bonnie Bernard

This past summer MGs were working hard preparing a revision to our "Gardening in Gloucester" book and now, hot off the press, the second edition is ready for holiday shopping.

We will start 2010 with a series of public presentations on gardening at the local library. This is a new endeavor we hope to continue in the future

Henrico, Beverly Cochrane

In November our MG Association Board voted to begin a MG Scholarship Fund to offer scholarships to deserving students who wish to pursue a career in horticulture. We also voted to contribute additional monies to the State Master Gardener Endowment Fund.

Southwest



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

We ended 2009 with 54 active members providing 4025 service hours.

Northern



Fairfax-Green Spring, Joan Richards, Cyndi Bishop

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

Cyndi Bishop developed a six slide presentation titled "Why VMGA?" This was presented to the graduating trainees pointing out the importance of joining VMGA. She and Joan Richards presented letters of congratulations from Betty Villers, VMGA president, to the class of 2009. Statistics will be kept to determine the efficacy of the attempt to encourage greater participation in VMGA.

Plans are well underway for the Master Gardeners 6th annual Eco Savvy Symposium to be held on Saturday, February 27 from 8:30 AM to 4:00 PM at the Horticulture Center at Green Spring Gardens. The theme for this year's educational event is "Understanding Your Garden's Life Cycle." Cost for the daylong event is \$45 with an additional \$12 for a boxed lunch of either meat or vegetarian options.

Central



Hill City (Amherst, Campbell, Lynchburg), Deborah Shaw

<http://www.hcmga.org>

Our School Programs in five of Lynchburg's City's Schools have ended for the fall. The program that was conducted with the 3rd graders in these schools was titled "Compost". The children learned about worm composting, how to build a compost bin and what to put in and what not to put in their compost pile. The School Programs will resume in late February. Some of the programs will include the children potting up Spider Plants to take home and planting petunias in their respective school gardens.

(Continued on page 4)

December News From Across the State

Southeast



Norfolk, Don Snipes <http://www.vbmg.org>

We have many projects under way and more requests for new projects than we can staff. Water projects, rain gardens and school horticulture projects are the most heavily requested items.

This has been an interesting year for Norfolk Master Gardeners. Our unit is the only one in the state that is part of the health department. We had to fight with the city to get funding included for our extension agent in the Health Dept. budget.



Photo by Peggy Fox

Southeast



Western Tidewater, Betty Jo Hendrix

We held a Junior Master Gardener camp at Paul D. Camp Community College. We held weekly plant clinics at the farmers markets in both Smithfield & Windsor during the summer. We were instrumental in helping both our agent and other agriculture based groups in setting up the tent and manning the ag tent for the Isle of Wight County Fair. Numerous exhibits of our training and activities were displayed for the community as well as water garden and exotic plant displays, instruction in projects from rain barrel construction to honeybees as pollinators and home food canning and preservation.

Therapeutic gardening with two nursing homes and one senior community is an ongoing project.

Our final project was decorating a Christmas tree for sale at the YMCA Christmas Tree Auction with proceeds going to provide for children to attend the YMCA on a needs basis.

We all had a great time and our interns were some of our most enthusiastic volunteers.

Opportunities

We are looking for MGs to update the VMGA history. Last update was 1993. Would you be willing to write one four-year section of the history: 1994 - 1997; 1998 - 2001; 2002 - 2005; or 2006 - 2009? Historical information can be found in the VMGA minutes and from the newsletters of past years. Archived minutes can be found on VMGA website and I can email you copies of the past years' newsletters. Let me know what years you would like to write. See our website for the history of VMGA: 1988 - 1993. Contact Betty Villers, bettyv@cox.net.

Are you proud to be a Virginia Master Gardener? Then show it and help us raise money at the same time! We have many items for sale, as pictured on our web site at http://vmga.net/Fund-Raising/virginia_master_gardener_gear.htm. You can also make a commitment to donate \$50 for 5 years or a single tax deductible donation or gift directly to the Coordinator Endowment Fund. Contact Bob or Patty Gamace at Rgama38@aol.com or call (540)587-0524.

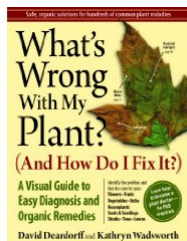
The Diane Relf Educational Endowment Fund Scholarship Committee for 2010 has been formed. There are 6 members from around the state and each member is a former recipient of the Award. Each unit may nominate two candidates. Selectees receive a \$100 stipend for MG College. Contact Leslie Paulson at ljp6651@comcast.net or call (703)330-9441.

The Graine Thumb

No Excuses: Plant Diagnosis Revisited

By George Graine, Fairfax County Master Gardeners

"Nothing in the garden is really difficult. Everything can be managed by an ordinary imbecile; indeed that is why it is the greatest of all amusements." -- "Henry Mitchell on Gardening" (1998)



"If you can see it, you can fix it. Curing a sick plant just doesn't get any easier." This quote is from the back cover of *What's Wrong With My Plant? (And How Do I Fix It?)* by David Deardorff and Kathryn Wadsworth (Timber Press, 2009). The What's Wrong book proposes so-called safe organic solutions for hundreds of common plant maladies. (Sometimes stronger inorganic remedies are noted where others may fail.) Perhaps this book is the missing link to our not so user friendly Pest Management Guide (PMG), although we have been "promised" editorial improvement in 2011.

This superlative book, written in three parts, is "guaranteed" to help every Master Gardener who volunteers at a plant clinic or telephone help line even without knowing the intricacies of plant pathology or entomology. Essentially the book is an easy-to-use *visual guide* to plant diagnosis and organic remedies. **A word of caution is in order because you must be aware of the VCE liability issues associated with any book solutions outside of the PMG when you provide answers to citizen questions.**

Part 1. "What's Wrong" supplies clear, illustrated flow charts, organized by plant part, that help to diagnose and identify what is the plant ailment. Additionally, remember to ask your client about the plant's growing conditions, environmental factors, and when they first noticed the problem. Also, inquire about any prior treatment. Think of this approach much like those keys you might have used to help identify a tree.

Part 2. After diagnosis and identification, the next step is "How do I fix it?" using mostly natural solutions and organic remedies. This section is organized by a variety of causes such as viruses, bacteria, fungi, and insects. Many color photos and illustrations help to determine the particular problem and then leads you through a treatment plan.

Part 3. This is essentially a summary section that also includes many color photos and illustrations of common problems. This is the "What does it look like?" section of the book. Indeed, as you may have heard, and it is true in this case, a picture is worth a thousand words. Following this step-by-step procedure, you can be confident in your recommendations before you end up going to the PMG for the *approved solution* to the problem.

A glossary and index also help to rapidly find a suspected problem; however, do not hurry or jump ahead in the diagnostic process as some problems appear to have similar characteristics. This is why you always need to look for signs and symptoms. Trust the Grainthumb when he says you will want to have this book with you whenever your client asks....Please tell me "What's wrong with my plant? And how do I fix it?"

Disclaimer: The views and opinions expressed in this article are those of the author and do not necessarily reflect the official policy or position of VMGA, Inc., its executive officers or its members.

Tips for MGVs

-- From the Rockbridge MG January 2010 Newsletter

The VT Plant Problem Image Gallery, <http://www.sidlab.contentsrver.net/plant.vesh>, is a valuable resource for MGs interested in learning more about plant problems commonly encountered in Virginia landscapes and gardens. The website contains images of actual plant problems that have been diagnosed in the Plant Disease Clinic. Information on tactics to avoid and/or control the problem accompanies most images. This website is a work in progress, and new images and problems will be added annually. MGs can also link to other Virginia Tech plant problem websites from the Plant Problem Image Gallery's navigation bar.

She Has Got to Go!

By Joyce Williams, Virginia Beach Master Gardener (and Maggie's Custodian)

I have had it! All she does is sit there and make a mess that I have to clean up daily – I want her gone NOW! These were my parting words as I left for Master Gardener College in June. Thankfully, my husband didn't listen to me because she was still there when I returned with my new appreciation of her presence in my life. You might think I'm talking about a teenager or an unwelcome guest, but I am talking about Maggie, my huge Magnolia. Maggie found a home in our yard 28 years ago and obviously likes it here because she has grown so large she towers over my house. I recently had an arborist out to check on another tree and he commented on Maggie, saying that she was a one acre tree – you need an acre to grow her – we don't even have a half acre of land. I'm not saying that Maggie can stay here indefinitely, but while I have the yard, she can stay.

What changed my mind about Maggie? I took a very interesting class at Master Gardener College, led by Suzie Leslie, called *Gardening for Wildlife*. Since my yard is a Certified Wildlife Habitat, I thought I had all the bases covered, BUT, how many native plants did I have for the birds and critters? Native birds and critters want native berries and I realized I was negligent in that area. This summer I made a concerted effort by replacing some of the "imports" with native plants, shrubs and trees and I'm hoping to change even more as time goes on. Wildlife loves hedgerows and I have begun planting those on each side of my property and hope, in time, they will be the highway that the birds and critters use to get around. The class not only showed me where I could improve my yard, but it also showed me that I wasn't doing that badly either. Over the years I have replaced the lawn with plants and shrubs and have very little lawn to maintain. I have lots of flowers for the butterflies and the pollinators and I do have logs scattered around my yard which provide a place for the birds to get the grubs and insects they need for their diets.

Suzie did not advocate having bird feeders. She wants us to plant natives which will produce berries the birds need for their diets. While I agree that we all should plant native berry producing plants, I still love to watch the birds using my feeders and will continue to do that. She also recommended a very good book on the subject of sustaining wildlife with native plants and I found it to be very interesting and informative: *Bringing Nature Home* by Douglas W. Tallamy.

Why did I decide to let Maggie stay? Suzie suggested that before we cut down a tree we should sit for a while and watch the wildlife using the tree. So, one day Mic (my dog) and I sat on a bench and watched Maggie's love affair with chickadees, nuthatches, cardinals, titmice, robins, and numerous other birds. I realized that she may be messy, but they loved her despite her faults. I just wish they could help me rake up her mess.

Mark Your Calendar!

You can join Joyce and hundreds of other Virginia Master Gardeners this June at Master Gardener College. It is scheduled for 24 – 27 June and will be held on the VT Campus. A great speaker lineup is already committed. You can go "buggy" with Mike Raupp or participate in group "plant lust" with Holly Scoggins. Bonnie Appleton and Joe Murray will both, once again, rock our understanding of trees and how to care for them.

In addition to the great classes, you can start now in planning for the "Search for Excellence" competition. There are hints for what the judges look for on our website. Winners in each class are automatically eligible for the national competition. You work and play hard, so why not get a little recognition for your efforts and your team?

If you want to engage with planning for the event, we are still looking for someone(s) to take on the Silent Auction. There are always great entries and lots of participation. Proceeds go to our VMGA State Coordinator Endowment Fund, so your help is doubly important. Contact Betty Villers, bettyv@cox.net, to volunteer.

By popular demand, the Sunday session is back with a great plant sale at the Hahn Horticulture Garden to round out the experience.

Don't miss this opportunity to connect or reconnect with your fellow gardeners....or just take this opportunity to hang out with your local MGs in a relaxed and plant-centric setting.

Snags in the Garden

Making Use of Dead Trees

By Dave Lear, Green Springs Master Gardener

In forestry, a snag refers to a standing, partly or completely dead tree, often missing a top or most of the smaller branches. In life, hitting a snag means coming face to face with an unforeseen obstacle. In the garden, a snag can provide many unforeseen benefits to both the landscaper and naturalist.

The on again, off again droughts we have been experiencing can leave a legacy of weakened, dead and dying trees in many home landscapes. Many times, the dead tree is left in a position where it can create problems for the homeowner, in threatening the house or children's play areas. Perhaps just as often however, these dead trees, snags, are left in places where they can provide a unique opportunity for the home gardener and amateur naturalist.

Standing snags provide critical habitat for many species. Snags provide food, shelter, and nesting places for many birds, mammals and other animals. Many species of birds in Virginia nest in holes made or found in snags. A woodpecker fashions a hole in a snag and uses it for nesting. If the location is right, chickadees, owls, titmice, wrens, swallows—even bluebirds—may use the cavity when the woodpecker is done. My own observation of hummingbirds in my yard is that they perch most often in dead limbs rather than living ones. Snags provide insect-eating birds, such as nuthatches and woodpeckers, with a reliable food source. These birds also eat insects in the surrounding area. A snag can persist for years, depending on two factors: the size of the stem, and the durability of the wood of the species concerned. Some species of snag can persist for many years in Virginia with little chance of falling.

In and around my home garden, there are two prominent snags. One, a large white pine in my neighbor's yard, provides housing for woodpeckers and bats that frequent my own garden, eating insect pests.

The other snag is a small black cherry perhaps 6 years old and 8 feet tall that volunteered near my vegetable garden. I was tempted to remove it when it died last year, but instead I planted it with pole beans and now have a "bean tree" that serves as a conversation piece and yields many a meal's worth of tasty beans each year. In a few more years, it will fall and I will remove it, but for now, it's fun and useful.

State MG Liaison Report (continued)

- **MG College Advisory Team Meeting** – Scheduled January 18. So far the following individuals have been lined up as keynote speakers: Rita Randolph, Mike Raupp, Jeffrey Gillman & Kirk Brown portraying historic botanist, John Bartram. In January, we will complete the agenda. The registration fee for 2010 will be \$150, up \$25 from the past 5 years. Sunday morning is back!
- **The MG website has been updated** - Check out the new look and one new feature: an adobe connect session on risk management has been uploaded to the site for anyone to download and watch. It lasts just under one hour. Similar sessions can be held and/or recorded for future use. Intent is to record one on what it means to be a VCE MG volunteer and post it in January.
- **New Dean for CALS** - Dr. Alan Grant began on October 1. Dave met with him on November 20 to bring him up to speed on the VCE MG program. He is familiar with the MG program and has a positive impression of it already. He will be making an appearance at the 2010 MG College.
- **Interim VCE Director, Dr. Rick Rudd** – We met on December 4 to discuss how we can proactively plan for the impending restructuring of VCE statewide and how it will affect local Extension MG programs. There is still not much information available.
- **Emerald Ash Borer Project** – Dave is developing an online module about EAB to increase awareness in VA and nationally on the presence and impact of EAB. We are working with agents in NoVA to increase public awareness through garden shows and events.
- **Land Care Stewards Project** – A contract with the National Park Service will conclude on December 31 and an announcement will be made when the new book is available online.
- **Volunteer hour totals due** - Dave needs every MG unit to submit their annual totals of volunteer hours and contacts for 2009 as part of the VCE annual faculty report.

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 opens mid Jan. 15, 2010. Check for forms at vmga.net.

VMGA Report
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