



# The VMGA Report

A Voice for Virginia Master Gardeners

vmga.net

September/October 2018

Volume 24, Number 2

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Wanda Gerard, Suffolk

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Georgianna Hall,  
Loudon

## Looking forward...

Wanda Gerard, Suffolk, President

Hello-

If you are like me, you're asking "Where has summer gone?" My answer to that goes something like this: I've continued my quest to conquer and properly install garden spaces that just aren't working in my little part of the world. Many of the ideas for my gardens came after I took some of the wonderful New River Valley garden tours before Master Gardener College! Thankfully, I didn't try to do all of those wonderful ideas at once or I'd have a real disaster on my hands. Some of the plants in my gardens that I had hoped would provide wonderful flowers and food for nature's creatures just didn't work out, others planted in part shade but prefer full sun are flourishing, and those unwanted four letter word plants add to the overall challenge, yet, it's mostly "all good." My gardens are abuzz with insects, birds, amphibians and reptiles. I've planted trees in my shade garden because my husband has heard me mention too many times that a good garden needs sun and he's taken some down in the surrounding woods! And since one does not grow younger in the body, I'm creating a meadow in the sunny gardening area that sits near a main road (and yes, two vehicles have become temporary garden structures in just three years.) While I tend to all of this and the many volunteer things I'm involved with, I think of gardening overall (plants, their characteristics, soil, etc.), but I find myself pondering how we can improve the Virginia Master Gardener Association. From my early days in the military, the commander always had an open door policy, so my version of that is: "You are welcome to share your thoughts for our future with me!" Several of you have reached out to me already with ideas, and I'll stash those away in a notebook or electronic file for reviewing and figuring out if and how they can be used, revamped, etc. I have lots of ideas from my own life's experiences, travels, books, and yes the internet, but I am just one of VMGA's members, so input and suggestions from you are truly welcome.

As we look forward to cooler temperatures, apple cider, pumpkins and our fall gardens, don't hesitate to send me an email, or perhaps come visit if you are close enough to Suffolk to do that. I look forward to seeing many of you at our Educational Event in just a few weeks – and thanks for all that you continue to do as a Virginia Master Gardener and VMGA member.

Wanda

## FROM THE EDITOR

It's great to be back at the keyboard pulling together news and notes from around the commonwealth to keep you informed. My hope is to feature each unit in forthcoming issues. I'd also like to recognize in a "spotlight" those special individual volunteers who excel at being a VCE Master Gardener Volunteer. If you know of someone whose extra-ordinary efforts have promoted and furthered the outreach of VCE and the Master Gardener Program, please let me know.

We'd love to feature your unit's announcements, events or articles in the next issue. Articles can be about favorite plant, tree, project, book review. This will spread involvement around the state, getting more involved.

Please send to:

Peggy Fox,  
VMGA Newsletter Editor  
Newport News unit  
[peggyfox@hotmail.com](mailto:peggyfox@hotmail.com)

Deadline for Nov/Dec issue:  
October 27, 2018

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## VCE MG Coordinator's Report

Dave Close, Consumer Horticulture and Extension Master Gardener Specialist

John Freeborn, Assistant State MG Coordinator

Leadership Trainings – We will offer three trainings this fall. Here are the tentative dates by district. We will be narrowing down to specific locations soon:  
November 2 – Northern District  
November 6 – Central District  
November 15 – Southeast District

The Department of Horticulture has officially merged with two other academic departments within the College to become the School of Plant and Environmental Sciences. Dr. Mike Evans is the Director of the school. Academic majors have remained intact. Working through the merger of three budgets and establishing the administrative teams needed to perform the business operations of the school (HR, fiscal, and teaching).

Questions were raised about the dates of the 2019 college and the reason for changing the location. Wanda explained that the dates were changed to avoid conflict with the International Master Gardener College to be held in June in Valley Forge, Pennsylvania. The location was changed to serve as a practice run for the 2021 IMGCC meeting to be held in Norfolk, VA

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## CHALLENGE MET!

### MASTER GARDENER PROGRAM COORDINATOR ENDOWMENT FUND

**2018 Matching Challenge  
generated  
\$26,585 in contributions  
to the endowment  
in less than 90 days.**

An anonymous friend to the Virginia Master Gardener Extension program will generously match every dollar donated, through December 31, 2018, to the VMGA Coordinator Endowment fund, up to a total of \$25,000.

Don't stop the momentum. Donations to the fund are still needed and appreciated.

It's easy to make your donation online just click **here**.  
Or **click here** to make your donation by mail.  
Pledge \$50 for 5 months and you've done a good thing!

Funds raised since 2004: \$440,000      Goal: \$1,000,000

## VMGA

Membership has its advantages:

- Unit Support
- Scholarships
- Newsletter
- Advanced Training
- Discount event fees
- Membership Directory
- Statewide Networking

### JOIN OR RENEW NOW

The Annual Roster will be sent electronically in October therefore the deadline to renew or join VMGA and be included in the next current roster is September 15<sup>th</sup>.

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## Good to know....Boxwood Blight video series

It's still September and the temps are continue to hover near 90 degrees with humidity to match. Are you thinking ahead to the cooler temps of winter holidays? Will a wreath of holly, ivy and/or boxwood decorate your door? Did you know, boxwood blight can be transmitted through that wreath if the leaves of the boxwood are infected with the spores? Learn what the disease is, its symptoms, how it spreads and how you can prevent its spread. An series of short yet informative videos hosted by Virginia Tech Plant Pathologist Mary Ann Hansen is available for viewing anytime at:

<https://ext.vt.edu/agriculture/commercial-horticulture/boxwood-blight.html>

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## From VCE Facebook page

Fire ants are in Virginia! Currently, the counties of James City and York, as well as the cities of Chesapeake, Hampton, Newport News, Norfolk, Poquoson, Portsmouth, Suffolk, Virginia Beach, and Williamsburg are under Virginia's Imported Fire Ant Quarantine. Learn more about fire ants: [eXtension.org](http://eXtension.org)



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## Come to a VMGA Meeting!

Erica Jones, New River Valley

VMGA meetings are held, by design, scattered around the state, hosted by various MG units. Each meeting follows a routine agenda: munchies, caffeine and talk at 9 am and the meeting starts promptly at 10 am with committee reports and key VCE updates by Dave Close and/or John Freeborn. Meeting lengths vary depending on how carried away the committee reports get but rarely does the morning session go more than two hours. Then we break for lunch. After a lively lunch hour spent catching up with fellow MGs, the meeting continues with New Business. Previous presidents have then an opened discussions session on pre-arranged topics. The discussion topics are the best part of the meetings.

In August, we discussed techniques for keeping up membership in our local organizations. Some ideas were:

- o Provide complimentary membership to VMGA for trainees
- o Issue small calendars to members to keep track of service hours
- o Scholarships to non-MG College educational events
- o Field trips to other locations (even better, arrange transportation too!).

One unit splits up meeting locations by region within the unit to cut down on travel time for volunteers. Another unit arranges a public Thank You and photo session for project managers who have completed their project(s). Some units do a lot of socializing.

We also discussed listservs, such as VMS communication. A lot of units reported that communication via email to MG members in their unit can only be done by the coordinator or agent.

The meeting often concludes with a drawing for door prizes provided by the hosting unit. By the way, some of you get a bit carried away with door prizes but most of us are not complaining. The Monarda I got last year is doing fabulously!

The August 2018 meeting was held on the campus of Washington and Lee University in the law school building (did YOU know they had a law school? Not me). The campus is adjacent to Woods Creek and the Maury River, both of which have trails alongside them. The west end of campus has the limestone ruins of the building which housed the Liberty Hall Academy. This was the precursor to Washington and Lee University.

Mark your calendar for the October 13 VMGA meeting to be held in Fredericksburg. For more information on this meeting as it becomes available, please visit the [VMGA website](#).

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## A Food Focus - Summer Squash

Wanda Gerard, Suffolk

You probably love or hate those two words! It takes only a few healthy and robust plants to provide what you need for your family before you start searching for methods to 'dispose' of the excess harvest. Perhaps we should start a list of all the ways to use it creatively in our kitchens or ask our congressmen to establish a 'share a zucchini day' here in Virginia. All kidding aside, yellow crookneck, yellow straight neck, zucchini, scallop, patty pan, and several others are the fruits in the squash family that are to be harvested before their skins harden like the winter squash varieties do. Their plants tend to be bushier than some of those winter varieties too.

We should harvest when the fruits are small. Larger fruits mean the plants are losing strength for producing more of those smaller fruits. A good rule of thumb is to check your squash plants over every other day so you don't miss any hiding giants.

Summer squash nutritional value lies in the skin so don't peel them if you're expecting to help your healthy diet. Eat them raw, steamed, grilled, sautéed, fried, or use in stir fries. Perhaps introducing the squash blossom into your culinary practices is a way to slow down the harvest and add a yummy food to your palate. Why not consider getting creative by using grated zucchini in breads, cakes or brownies.

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## Education

Erica Jones, New River Valley

### **Bats Birds and Bugs: Gardening on the Wilder Side**

Holiday Lake 4-H CENTER

**Registration by mail** only with payment must be received NLT Sept 11

Check-In: 8:30am

Program: 9:00am – 4:00pm

Your ideas for future educational event planning are needed. Next event tentatively scheduled for late winter 2019. Please contact Erica Jones, New River

Valley MG, with subjects you'd like to see offered as advanced training.  
[emjones@vt.edu](mailto:emjones@vt.edu)

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Make plans to attend **2019 International Master Gardener Conference**  
June 17-21 in Valley Forge, PA.

Special learning opportunities from:



- Longwood Gardens
  - Mt. Cuba Center
  - Rodale Institute
  - Winterthur
  - Morris Arboretum
  - Southeast Agricultural Research and Extension Center (SEAREC)
  - Barnes Arboretum
  - The Scott Arboretum of Swarthmore College
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## STATE FAIR OF VIRGINIA AT THE MEADOW

### Master Gardener Volunteers help at the State Fair

Sept 28-Oct 7

Christy Brennan, Hanover

It takes a lot of volunteers to make the Virginia Master Gardener booth a success at the State Fair of Virginia. Master Gardeners volunteer from all over the state to staff the booth. Hanover Master Gardeners provide hands-on demonstrations which are used during plant clinics. The demos are crucial in getting visitors to explore the booth which is part of the State Fair outdoor classroom and loads of school children come by to visit the booth. The younger kids will be learning how to eat a rainbow everyday by including colorful fruits and veggies in every meal. State Fair details can be found here: <https://www.statefairva.org/>



To learn what shifts are still available for unit volunteers, contact Christy Brennan at [ctb47@comcast.net](mailto:ctb47@comcast.net)

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### 32<sup>nd</sup> Master Gardener College 2019 - Norfolk, VA

Wanda Gerard, Suffolk

I hope that you on planning on attending next year's MG College which will be held in Norfolk in the early part of fall after the tourists have departed and children return to school. What a beautiful part of the state to travel to if you've never done this. There are numerous beaches, wildlife sanctuaries, historical sites, botanical gardens, the Virginia Zoo, and more to check out! In our next issue, we'll try to have a list of special events that area attractions might have. [Explore Coastal Virginia](#). For example, you might want to check out the Eastern Shore if you've never been this far east. Or maybe stroll through Colonial

ABOUT THE VIRGINIA  
MASTER GARDENERS  
AND VIRGINIA  
COOPERATIVE  
EXTENSION

Virginia Master Gardeners are volunteer educators who work within their communities to encourage and promote environmentally sound horticulture practices through sustainable landscape management education and training. As an educational program of Virginia Cooperative Extension, Virginia Master Gardeners bring the resources of Virginia's land-grant universities, Virginia Tech and Virginia State University, to the people of the Commonwealth. Extension is a joint program of Virginia Tech, Virginia State University, the U.S. Department of Agriculture, and state and local governments. Virginia Cooperative Extension programs and employment are open to all, regardless of race, color, national origin, sex, religion, age, disability, political beliefs, sexual orientation, or marital or family status. An equal opportunity/affirmative action employer.

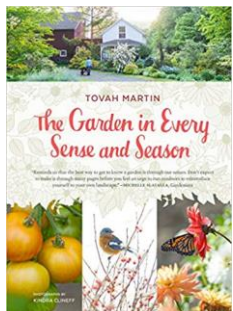
Williamsburg. Or the Great Dismal Swamp. Or ... lots of places! Maybe start thinking about turning the weekend conference into a weeklong vacation. And oh, yes, attending MG College itself is the best reason to travel because Dave and John and the entire Advisory Team put their all into providing excellent speakers for advanced education. If you haven't yet heard, Virginia will be hosting the 2019 International Master Gardener Conference at the very venue where we'll be holding MG College.

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## The Grainethumb

### SENSING THE GARDEN IN EVERY SEASON

George Graine, Fairfax



"The way it works is this: summer is hot and winter is cold and the other seasons fall in between. Gardeners who every year go off the deep end at the first slight variation in mean temperature should try to get that sentence fixed in their heads."  
---Henry Mitchell (1923-1993)

Have you ever wondered why gardening magazines often feature benches and the iconic Adirondack chair? Could it be because they are suggesting you need to introduce yourself to the garden as your personal oasis? Set that aside for a moment. Today we are fortunate to have Tovah Martin, a star in the world of garden writers who teaches us with her recent book about "The Garden in Every Sense and Season" (Timber Press, 2018). In an essay-like style, Tovah provides a different way to think about your garden. Kindra Clineff accompanies this book with beautiful color photos that add a welcome pictorial to the text. The key point of the book is to get you to know your garden through your senses and understand what is happening as the seasons change. Tovah's coming to my **one's** senses introduction to the text is a wonderful starting point for a garden story about her own garden. The first line of the book introduction is "This is the story of a nose and how I followed it through the year." That sets the stage for what is to come. Surely with such an opening statement, your curiosity should be more than a little aroused.

Tovah does not scold readers of her book because they often make unfulfilling do-lists or other head scratching schemes. She wants you to have a personal relationship with your garden instead of frowning because so much of your time is spent on weeding, pruning, digging holes, raking leaves, fertilizing, watering, eliminating critters and more. Do you recognize this as yourself? If this is you versus nature, then perhaps it is time to develop a change in attitude and purpose and take time to enjoy your garden as a creation for your senses. The reason to read and understand what Tovah teaches us is to be made aware of the feel good nature of her gardening advice. To be sure, it is based on her years of gardening experience and reflections of her own garden. The aim of this book is to inform without being preachy. Unlike many other gardening books, Tovah provides a perspective that differs from the often thou shalt type of gardening admonitions. To stop and smell the roses is not what this book is about because that is too limiting. Rather, why do that when you can enjoy and appreciate how you helped to create your own heaven on earth.

Each of the four seasons includes introductory remarks followed by sections on our five senses; that is, sight, smell, sound, touch and taste. Indeed, this is a unique and welcome approach to garden writing. You will experience a full-on sensory potential so that you too can have this in your own garden. Tovah's book

can be summed up in her own words as sensory illumination and awakening. She wants to awaken your senses so that you become attuned to what is happening every time you step outside regardless of the season. After reading "The Garden in Every Sense and Season" you will realize that the four seasons truly interact with your senses and ultimately you will realize an endless inspiration for why one should garden.

*Editor's note: I too have read this book. The prose of Ms. Martin will have you reminiscing and reliving the scents, sounds and sights of your garden. A must read any time of year.*

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## Thank you!

Peggy Fox, Newport News

Thank you to all of you who took time to share your well wishes with me in a very special card. It brought sunshine to my day. I'm well on my way to a full recovery. The crutches, boot, wheelchair and walker have all been retired and I'm hobbling my way around. Can't wait to get out and get dirty in my "fall" garden. I promise to watch where I'm walking this time.



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## Calendar 2018

- Sept 15** **CANCELLED DUE TO HURRICANE FLORENCE**  
[VA Beach MG Fall Gardening Festival](#)  
HRAREC, 1444 Diamond Springs Rd. – Virginia Beach, VA
- Sept 22** [Heritage Gardening Festival at Monticello](#)  
[American Horticultural Society Gala](#)  
AHS River Farm headquarters in Alexandria, Virginia
- Sept 28-Oct 7** [State Fair of Virginia](#)  
Look for our booth in Horticulture
- Sept 29** [Bats, Birds and Bugs: Gardening on the Wilder Side](#)  
[Holiday Lake 4H Center](#)
- Oct 27** [Central Shenandoah Valley Garden Symposium: Going Native](#)
- Oct 13** VMGA Bimonthly Meeting, Hosted by  
[Central Rappahannock Area](#)  
1739 Jeffers on Davis Highway, The Rowser Building, Stafford, VA
- Dec 8** VMGA Bimonthly Meeting, Hosted by  
[Suffolk Master Gardeners](#)
- 2019**
- April 26-28** [Colonial Williamsburg 73<sup>rd</sup> Annual Garden Symposium](#)
- June 17-21** [IMGC](#)  
Valley Forge, PA
- Autumn** 32<sup>nd</sup> Annual Virginia Master Gardener College  
[Norfolk, VA](#)
- Other events around the state: [Virginia Is For Lovers](#)