



# The VMGA Report

A Voice for Virginia Master Gardeners

vmga.net

March/April 2019

Volume 24, Number 5

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Peggy Fox  
VMGA Newsletter  
Editor,  
Newport News  
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## From the President

Wanda Gerard, Suffolk, President

Unbelievably, we are in the month of March already, which means our springtime gardening tasks will soon begin. Why not take a few minutes to look ahead to your gardening goals for the year while we are in these last days of winter? Maybe you realized the efforts for some gardening areas were not worth the last year's results or you're contemplating replacing ornamental type plants with natives to help the pollinators in your area. A farther stretch might be that you decided to totally downsize some garden beds to allow time to do other things besides being obligated to the gardens. Perhaps more volunteer work?

Since Virginia Extension Master Gardeners are required to get eight hours a year of continuing education, have you considered doing something a little out of the ordinary and attend the 2019 International Master Gardener Conference being held in Valley Forge, PA in June? Of course, we hope you'll attend our own Master Gardener College being held in Norfolk in September. Numerous other educational opportunities across the state and region are available during the year. If you're like me, you attend as many as you can because you find them interesting. Be sure to check your calendar to see if scheduling allows you to attend our Education Day event on May 4<sup>th</sup> to be held in Roanoke. So that we can brainstorm and be able to offer additional events, our own VMGA education committee would love to have additional members. Ideas from around the state shared within this committee are needed. Please consider helping - most of the work is done via email or phone.

We are all good at growing plants and should continue to grow our association while we are at it. It's as easy as talking about our great VMGA while you work on your unit's gardens or spring projects. Happy spring!

Wanda

# VMGA

Membership has its advantages:

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

## FROM THE EDITOR

Deadline for  
May/June issue:  
April 27, 2019

We'd love to feature your unit's announcements, events or articles in the next issue. Articles can be about a favorite plant, tree, project, book review. This will encourage 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)

## Bi-monthly Meeting

**Saturday, April 13, 2019 10:00am**

Community Hospitality Center  
52 Franklin St., Rocky Mount, VA

Hosted by Franklin County

Save the Dates:

June 8

August 10

September 19-22

December 14

Goochland Powhatan Master Gardeners

Greenspring Master Gardeners, Fairfax County

Master Gardener College, Norfolk

Northern Shenandoah Valley

## News and Notes from VCE Liaison

Dave Close

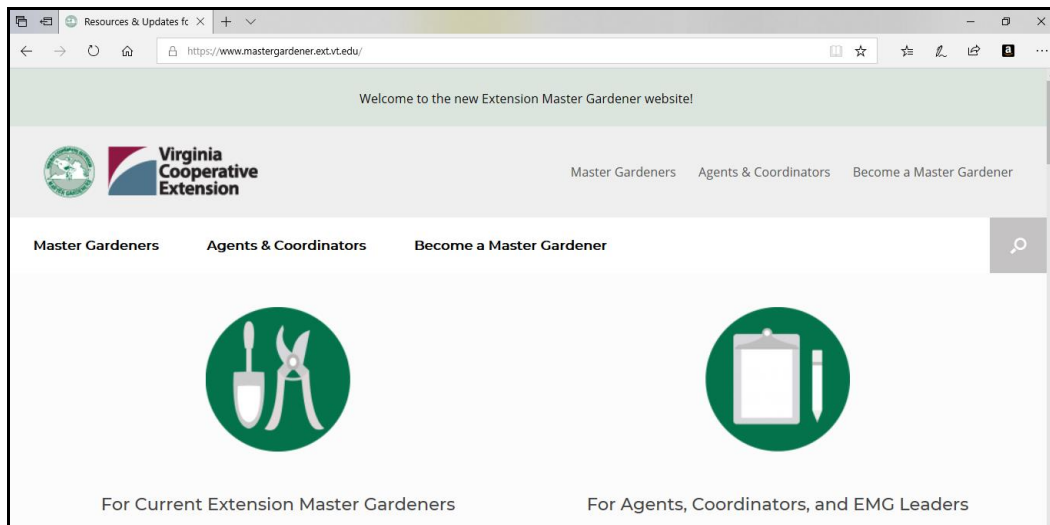
Consumer Horticulture and Master Gardener Specialist

State Program Leader for Agriculture

School of Plant and Environmental Sciences

Website News: New Look. New Address.

<https://www.mastergardener.ext.vt.edu/>



[www.mastergardener.ext.vt.edu](http://www.mastergardener.ext.vt.edu)



## A Crash Course in Hydroponics

Erica Jones, New River Valley MG, VMGA Education Chair

Tim Durham, Assistant Professor of Agronomy at Ferrum College, offers seminars on the subject of his hydroponic greenhouse. Ferrum

**ABOUT VIRGINIA  
MASTER GARDENERS  
AND VIRGINIA  
COOPERATIVE  
EXTENSION (VCE)**

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 VCE, 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. VCE 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.

College is a tiny, private college located in rural Virginia which specializes in educating students who might not feel at home at a large university. Ferrum prides itself on taking advantage of its very rural location. Yes, you will need a GPS to find your way there, but it is worth the drive.

Tim Durham grew up on a vegetable farm on Long Island, New York. There he learned vegetable production on land. Before gaining a grant from the tobacco people, he had no experience with hydroponics. The grant enabled him to build and outfit a 25' X 30' greenhouse, complete with transparent sides and propane heat.

Over the course of nine weeks, head lettuce grows from seed to harvest. Crops are grown throughout most of the year, excluding the summer months when temperatures are too high and student help is unavailable. Mr. Durham grows enough lettuce in the greenhouse to supply about half of the college cafeteria's needs. The remaining lettuce harvest goes to local food banks. He has successfully experimented with supplemental lighting in an effort to shorten the length of time from sowing to harvest. Supplemental lighting has also changed the appearance of the leaves, particularly on the romaine, which resulted in leaves with more puckers or bubbles.

The growing cycle proceeds as follows:

- Germination of seeds in rock wool cubes (see photo below). One sheet of rock wool is scored into cubes approximately 2"X2"X2". These are pulled apart and inserted into holes drilled into growing trays. Multiple seeds can be planted per cube but will need to be thinned once they sprout. Overcrowding should be avoided. At 2-3 weeks, seedlings are large enough to transplant.



- Transplant seedlings. Seedlings are transferred into holes in trays. Hoses, which deliver water and nutrients, are then attached to the growing trays. Trays are pushed together during production but can be slid around for access to the plants. (see photo at right)
- Grow. Seedlings grow under natural light or with supplemental lighting.
- Harvest. At seven-nine weeks, the harvest begins. Leaves are cut at the base of the plant with a sharp knife, taking care to keep the leaves together. If mature plants remain too long in the growing trays, the flavor of the leaves becomes bitter.
- Cleaning of trays. Roots and rock wool are knocked out of the growing



## **Resources**

Find out more here:

[Extension Master Gardener website](#)

[VMGA.NET](#)

[Facebook](#)

[YouTube](#)

[VCE MG Program-- Blog](#)

[VCE—Facebook](#)

[Volunteer Management System](#)

[Online Learning Opportunities](#)

[VA EMG Bi-weekly Update](#)

Links to other events around the state:

[Virginia Is For Lovers](#)

[Blandy Experimental Farm](#)

[Hahn Hort Garden](#)

[Norfolk Botanical Garden](#)

[Lewis Ginter Botanical Garden](#)

[Maymont](#)

[Williamsburg Botanical Garden](#)

[Meadowlark Botanical Gardens](#)

[Edith J. Carrier Arboretum at JMU](#)



also purchased. The growing trays are 10'x8"x4" and are predrilled to receive the 2" cubes, perfectly spaced for romaine and bibb lettuce.

During the afternoon session of the seminar, after a thorough washing of hands, attendees cut, harvested and packed the lettuce, took pH and soluble salt readings and replenished the fertilizer solution. The hours required weekly to maintain the trays and harvest the lettuce are minimal. Cleaning the benches after harvest is the most time consuming task.

In order to maintain a steady supply of lettuce for harvesting, seeds are sown every 1-2 weeks.

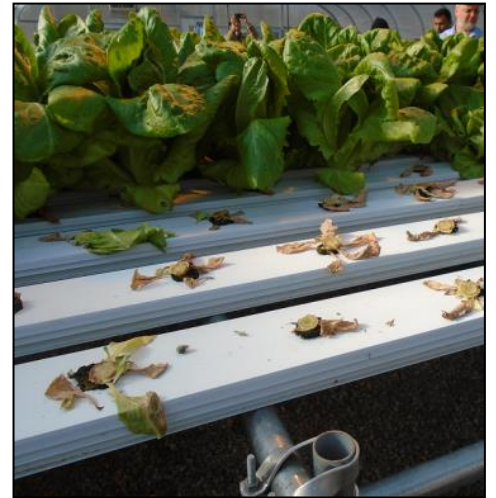
Growing hydroponically is not without its problems. Some of those experienced are:

- A power outage means plants will wilt quickly due to lack of circulating water/nutrient combination and roots are then exposed to the drying effects of the air.
- Nutrient supply lines can get clogged.
- Algae can grow and clog the inside of the lines. Removal of algae is the biggest time consuming task of cleaning the trays.
- Trays and hoses can develop leaks.
- The ventilation system requires screening to keep out insects.
- Careful attention to the pH of the water and fertilizer solution is necessary. Some nutrients become less available to the plants if level is too high or too low.
- Becoming labeled as "organic" required too many "hoops" to jump through.
- Aphids. Fortunately, white flies and scale have not been a problem.

I attended the fourth seminar he has done this year. I encourage people to take advantage of educational opportunities like this, even if they involve a bit of driving for you.

trays, which are then scrubbed with bleach. The rock wool is discarded and the roots go into the compost piles. There has been some thought given to feeding the roots to livestock but Mr. Durham admitted that delivery would be a problem.

This hydroponic system consists of 4' high raised benches with a 2 degree slope, tongue and groove growing trays, tubing to "feed" the trays and a pump to move the liquid fertilizer to the trays. A large storage tank to hold the liquid fertilizer was



## In the news:

Has your unit or have members of your unit been featured in your local newspaper? Let us know!

Send links to:

[peggyfox@hotmail.com](mailto:peggyfox@hotmail.com)

## eXtension Webinars

# All Bugs Good and Bad

## 2019 Webinar Series

First Friday of the Month 2:00 pm (Eastern)



### Join Us for This Free Webinar Series on Pests

- Ins and Outs of Termite Treatments
- Batty for Bats!
- GMOs and Their Effect on Insect Populations
- Ouch! Red Imported Fire Ants in the Landscape
- Scale Insects on Ornamental Plants
- Spiders Commonly Found in Houseplants
- Reintroduction of the Red-cockaded Woodpecker

For more information on the series and how to connect to the webinars, visit:

<https://articles.extension.org/pages/74786/>

## 2019 National Seed Swap Day



National  
Seed Swap  
DAY

Kathy Jentz, Editor/Publisher of the Washington Garden Magazine, created the first annual Washington Garden Magazine Seed Exchange on January 26, 2006. Now held annually on the last Saturday of January, it has come to be known as National Seed Swap Day. A day for gardeners to exchange seeds from rare or uncommon plants, heirloom plants or just plain plants in order to perpetuate varieties, save money and meet others who share a love of gardening.

Here, across the commonwealth, several units hosted seed swaps of their own:

**Central Rappahannock** 3<sup>rd</sup> annual Seed Swap, January 26, 2019

By Anna Victoria Reich



I am so glad to have gone to this year's Seed Swap (3<sup>rd</sup> Annual) put on by Master Gardeners. Along with the seed swap, there were three classes

to attend:

- Moles, Voles and Shrews with Guy Mussey
- Spring Clean Up with David Roos and
- Gardening in Virginia Clay with Pat Reilly

All of these classes were very helpful. There was a lot of entertainment from the speakers and a great amount of knowledge that I learned in each class. As a Master Gardener, this helps with the education hours one needs to keep accreditation each year! I also liked where the Seed Swap event was held, at the Rowser Center, where Virginia Cooperative Extension is located in Stafford County. All in all, this was a great event and I am looking forward for the event to be held next year!

### **Rockbridge Area** Inaugural Seed Swap, January 24, 2019

By Karen Lyons

On January 24<sup>th</sup>, RAMGA launched its inaugural seed swap at the potluck dinner honoring our 2019 trainees. Participants enjoyed sharing seeds ranging from common zinnias, marigolds and cockscomb to more unusual specimens including cardinal climber and hyacinth bean. We plan to educate members on the fundamentals of seed production and harvesting in hopes of expanding our event in the coming years.

Other units who hosted swaps included:

- **Norfolk** Jan 26 Featured in **The Virginian-Pilot**



Gill Gillespie, Norfolk EMG

- **Northern Shenandoah Valley** 9<sup>th</sup> annual held on <http://nsvmga.org/projects/blandy-seed-exchange/>

Did your unit host a seed swap? Tell us about it!

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## Who do we think we are, anyway?

Jim Davis, Rockbridge Area Master Gardener

<https://www.ramga.org/>

(reprinted with permission)

My mother was a great gardener and I inherited her love of nature and plants. Routine things, such as establishing a career and helping raise a couple of children, delayed my full attention to this love but soon after retirement from both endeavors I discovered Master Gardeners and applied to take the Class. In my interview, required here in the County for prospective members, I had a question even before anyone had a chance to ask me one: "How can one become a master of gardening in

only a few short weeks?" This must have been taken as an attempt at humor, as not one of the interviewing committee responded. (No one laughed, either.) Nevertheless, I was accepted.

I still don't think I've become a master of gardening and I've never ceased feeling a little uneasy using the term *master* applied to myself as a gardener. Can my experience be different from other Master Gardeners? Apparently not. If you Google the term, you'll see that many would find "Extension Volunteer" more accurate for our organization and that it would erase any resentment harbored by some unit members or the public.

When David Gibby of Washington State University Cooperative Extension founded the Master Gardener program in 1973, no doubt he wanted the organization to sound worthwhile and chose the term *master* over any other. But what, exactly, did he have in mind? Surely, most of us would readily accept that the term *master gardener* denotes an experienced and educated gardener who has attained more knowledge than the average person about gardening.

But *master* has many meanings. Would you say that in our case it means the same as *master* in "master's degree"? I'd think not quite. How about "one who has consummate skill in, say, playing the tuba"? Maybe that's a bit too strong a term. In the eighteenth century (and beyond), *master* could refer to a grade-school teacher, hence the term *headmaster* for the official we call *principal*. Well, that makes pretty good sense, inasmuch as we are charged with teaching the public sound gardening practices. Unfortunately, not many of the public are aware of that obsolete meaning. (If they were, would our Extension agent Tom Stanley be called "headmaster"?) And a boy too young to be called mister is still sometimes "master"; the skipper of a merchant vessel is the master; and nowadays, who sleeps in the master bedroom? A worker or artisan qualified to teach apprentices, as in "master plumber," seems to fit pretty well, unless it suggests, for some, merely a step above handling wrenches—or hoes.

I tend to agree with Dr. Gibby's (apparent) choice of words. I'm inclined to think that our public construes Master Gardeners as folks who are quite capable and if the term sounds a bit grand, well, perhaps we've earned the honor. I'll bet we can trust our newly formed publicity committee to convey the idea that we're not trying to be highfalutin' but that we can be respected while down to earth, and yet figure out what's eating the plants.



## A destination to explore

Elaine Specht, Northern Shenandoah Valley Master Gardener Association

**Glen Burnie Gardens.** Located on the western side of Winchester along Route 50 between downtown and the hospital, the Museum of the Shenandoah Valley (MSV) has much to offer patrons with interests in art and history, but the gardens are equally worth a visit. The museum complex includes a restored 18th century home, Glen Burnie, initially constructed by the son of early Winchester settler and surveyor, James Wood. For nearly two centuries, the home remained in the hands of Wood descendants, the last being Julian Wood Glass, Jr. Together with his partner, R. Lee Taylor, Glass designed the Glen Burnie Gardens, beginning in 1956. The gardens continued to evolve throughout the rest of the 20th century, and today they are maintained by the MSV. Brick walkways, stone walls, and hedges divide the garden space into many separate garden rooms. Formal spaces include a Parterre Garden, recently redesigned Rose Garden, and Perennial Garden. Even the Vegetable Garden has a formal flair. Stone and metal sculptures and water features are integrated as focal points throughout all the gardens. Along the northern edge, Kathie's Spring Garden, completed in 2015, is cheery in the spring but also alive with blooms throughout the summer and fall.

**Glen Burnie Gardens** are open for self-guided tours April through October. Visit MSV's website at <https://www.themsv.org/visit/the-gardens> to learn more about the gardens.

(Reprinted with permission from:

<http://nsvmgga.org/wp-content/uploads/2019/02/nsvmgga-newsletter-2019-winter.pdf> )

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## THE GRAINETHUMB

LANDSCAPES: BEYOND THE ORDINARY  
George Graine, Fairfax Master Gardeners

"Plans should be made on the ground to fit the place and not the place made to suit some plan out of a book."

---William Robinson in "The Garden Beautiful" (1907)



WOW....It's hard to write about a book when the introductory chapter exclaims it is "A New Kind of Garden: livable, relatable, original, free spirited." Good grief! What is there left to write? After this initial brain drain, I found a lot to explain how gardening can be a wonderful and fun experience. Let's start with a question out of the blue. When you think about buffalos, what comes to mind? Perhaps football (Buffalo Bills), the western plains where buffalo roam or the Buffalo soldiers of long ago.



Have you heard about "Buffalo-Style Gardens"? That is the title of a book published in 2019 by St. Lynn's Press and authored by Sally Cunningham and Jim Charlier. As an aside, Buffalo, New York will celebrate its silver anniversary of garden walks. Buffalo and environs are home to some of the largest residential gardens on private tour in North America. To be sure, these are very different types of landscapes than those portrayed in most other landscape texts. Something wonderful must be happening in Buffalo because more people tour these gardens than the combined attendance of two Disney parks.

If you are a big fan of color in the garden then consider the sub-title of "Buffalo-Style Gardens" that teases what is between the covers -- "Create a Quirky, One-of-a-Kind Private Garden with Eye-Catching Designs." This is a book where one can see how riots of color and whimsy are personified. The book goes beyond the usual use of colorful flowers and shrubs as it includes the total integration of other plant material with hardscape (e.g., walkway), furniture (perhaps repurposed) and more. In this regard, psychologists use the word gestalt. Funk &



Wagnall's Standard Dictionary of the English Language defines gestalt as an arrangement of separate elements of experience, emotion, etc., in a form, pattern or configuration so integrated as to appear and function as a unit that is more than a simple summation of its parts. That nails the essence of a Buffalo-style garden.

In just a few words, a Buffalo-style garden is where creativity meets design that is forever changing. It is all in how it looks and not what the plant is. The authors refer to this as a "... garden design laboratory for our 21<sup>st</sup> century sensibilities and lifestyle." Perhaps you should think in terms of being smart in a way that creates a garden that captures your imagination. Regardless of what appears to be quirky creativity, the fact remains that a nice-looking garden should adhere to recognizable design elements a.k.a. principles alongside of common gardening practices. This allows for the personal touch and ingenuity you most likely are seeking to achieve. You also need to key in on balance and proportion. Balance does not necessarily mean symmetry similar to a butterfly. Asymmetry is so

much more creative and surely not boring to look at. As for proportion, this is essentially the relationship of plant materials to your house. For example, if you have seen an overgrown conifer that hides a house or entranceway, you might get the idea that someone did not check the growth habits of the plant. Now the plant does not fit into the available space. Also, you must be cognizant of uncontrollable environmental factors because they are forever changing. You need to learn about these changes because change is inevitable -- think weather, seasons and even climate.

The chapter featuring "Your Yard and Garden Wish List and Needs Assessment" is critical to the achievement of a Buffalo-style garden, the reason being that the gardens included in the book are for the most part installed and maintained by homeowners. Of course, they may have had help from landscape designers, garden coaches and folks in the trades, such as a fencing company. The fact remains that gardeners need to know their own strengths and limits. In other words, recognize the difference between a wish list and an assessment, i.e., be realistic regarding what you *want* to do and what you *can* do in order to care for your garden. You need to be honest with yourself by recognizing your personal limitations and budget if you need outside help. This will go a long way toward your ultimate satisfaction for the garden you create. A line in the book is very apropos -- as Polonius said to Hamlet "To thine own self be true."

If you have gotten the idea that a Buffalo-style garden has gone off the rails, nothing could be further from the truth. Authors Cunningham and Charlier came up with the idea of site premise and plant principles. This is shorthand for working with reality. Using common sense beyond the gardener's mantra of right plant -- right place, and one day right purpose, you need to consider a site analysis. This is necessary in order to achieve what and where to grow any plant material. To this end the authors included many checklists that will help as reminders. All of this information is written in an easy to understand manner and without technical jargon. Following these "instructions" should result in a positive landscape experience. Design features make a major difference as the authors spend a lot of ink that helps to define your garden space when considering hedges, walls and fences. This is the big picture to an outsider, whereas the gardener is prone to look at plants. It is up to the gardener to also integrate what surrounds the garden as well as what is in it.

Toward the end of the book you will find out how to make your garden personal and how a Buffalo-style garden is achieved. Words and colorful photos do justice to the understanding of what these type gardens are all about. You too can emulate your inner being. Color up those drab Adirondack chairs, use sculpture, go to the thrift store and look for an out of the ordinary bench to color. If you are a collector of (you name it), show it off. These are all personal statements, so make this a **YOU** garden or, as the book says, go bold or go home.

In summary, now you know how many Buffalo, New York gardeners

address the universal issues that all gardeners face every time they go outside. You too can create a unique garden. Surely it is not a Japanese-like garden, English garden, rose garden, pollinator garden or any other kind of specialty garden. Now you have created a one-of-a-kind Buffalo-style garden. Good for you or as noted at the opening -- WOW!

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## **MG PROGRAM STATE COORDINATOR ENDOWMENT FUND**

### **What is it and how will it be used?**

Begun in 2005 with a campaign of "\$50 for 5", the endowment was started to ensure that Extension Master Gardeners in Virginia would always have a faculty position in place to coordinate and support the Extension Master Gardener program in Virginia, the State Coordinator Endowment also supports:

- Development of online training modules covering eight different horticultural topics
- Maintenance of online modules and expansion of online training resources
- Development of education video content, including a YouTube video highlighting common diseases and pests in the landscape and garden.
- Graphic design and marketing efforts, including a series of infographics customized for each Extension Master Gardener unit

Fast forward to today, fourteen years later, we're nearing our goal of one million dollars, but we need your help to keep the fund growing.

Answers to many FAQ's can be found at: [www.vmga.net/endowment.php](http://www.vmga.net/endowment.php)

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### Calendar 2019

#### April

- |          |  |                                 |
|----------|--|---------------------------------|
| 19-20    | 22 <sup>nd</sup> Annual Mid-Atlantic Garden Faire              | Washington County MGs, Abingdon |
| 26-28    | Colonial Williamsburg 73 <sup>rd</sup> Annual Garden Symposium |                                 |
| 27-May 4 | Virginia's Historic Garden Week                                |                                 |
| 30       | Horticultural Horizons Chesterfield MGs                        | Lewis Ginter Botanical Gardens  |

#### May

- |     |                            |   |
|-----|----------------------------|---|
| 4   | VMGA Education Day         | Virginia Western Community College, Roanoke |
| 4-5 | VA Beach Spring Plant Sale |   |

	<b><u>June</u></b>	
1		Garden Fest at Belle Grove Plantation Northern Shenandoah Valley MGs, Middletown, VA
17-21		<u>IMGC 2019</u> Valley Forge, PA registration at: <a href="http://www.cvent.com/d/hgqxlpl">http://www.cvent.com/d/hgqxlpl</a>
	<b><u>September</u></b>	
19-22		32 <sup>nd</sup> Annual Virginia Master Gardener College Norfolk, VA

Save the dates:  
**The VMGA Report**

Upcoming dates for submitting articles and the newsletter publication.

VMGA Report Issue	Newsletter Articles due NLT	Newsletter publication date
January/February	December 22, 2018	January 5, 2019
March/April	February 23, 2019	March 2, 2019
May/June	April 27, 2019	May 4, 2019
July/August	June 22, 2019	July 6, 2019
September/October	August 24, 2019	September 7, 2019
November/December	October 26, 2019	November 2, 2019