



VMGA REPORT

Early Winter Edition

Volume 28 Issue 12
November/December 2015

President's Message



Wow! How fast has the weather changed? We can all be glad that fall is here and it's a great time for planting. Master Gardeners might be a little bit plant crazy so it's our time to go forth divide and conquer. If only we could convince everyone else!

The Executive Committee and VCE held a planning meeting in September to discuss ways VMGA and VCE can support each other in a cooperative effort. The minutes of this meeting were approved at the last VMGA bi-monthly meeting and will be posted on VMGA net.

VMGA is proud to offer quality continuing education opportunities to VMGA members and Master Gardeners. Thanks to Robyn Puffenbarger, Education Committee Chair, and the committee members who planned and worked so hard to make the fall educational event a reality. The symposium on Native Plants: Their Use in Beautiful & Sustainable Landscapes was well attended and everyone enjoyed the presentations and the speakers. Please let VMGA know if you have topics, suggestions or recommendations of a location for future education events.

VMGA would like to add your events to the calendar page on the website to help inform members about additional events. Send your event announcements to the VMGA webmaster at calendar@vmga.net.

What a year for the State Fair of VA! It rained almost every day and the threat of severe weather made the Fair officials close at 7 p.m. on Oct. 1 and the fair remained closed for the remainder of the 2015 season. Nine different Master Gardener groups volunteered to staff the MG booth during these conditions, and I cannot thank you enough. New this year was a mission to go almost paperless by using QR codes to direct fair visitors to the VCE Master Gardener Coordinator and VMGA web-sites. Master Gardeners took turns at the State Fair vegetable garden answering questions and staffing the children's ' activity table and MG Booth. VCE day was Sunday and the rain actually stopped for the event. Although attendance was less than last year, it seemed to be a successful event educating visitors on the mission of VCE. It takes a lot of dedicated volunteers to help with this event – thank you to everyone that helped with this huge event.

VMGA has really been successful with our State Master Gardener Coordinator Endowment. We are very excited that the interest from the endowment is being used to help the MG program today by development of on-line training modules. We are excited that some of these on-line modules are nearly complete and will be available soon.

Remember that you can always support the endowment by purchasing VMGA merchandise, submitting a donation or choosing the endowment as part of your estate to help ensure that the Master Gardener program remains strong.

Happy Planting,

Christy

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Christy Brennan, Hanover

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THE GRAINETHUMB
GO GREEN WITH MOSSES

By George Graine, Fairfax County Master Gardeners

Many things grow in the garden that were never sown there.

---Thomas Fuller in Gnomologia (1732)



Many gardeners seem to have a love or hate relationship with moss. The Grainethumb suspects that the latter is more prevalent because gardeners often consider moss as some kind of pesky plant that is out-of-place, even incorrigible and must be destroyed. Why is moss given a bum rap and often a victim of the garden rake or some potion to rid your landscape of this emerald green beauty? Let's take a few steps back and call a truce on moss. Annie Martin (aka Mossin' Annie), author of *The Magical World of Moss Gardening* (Timber Press, 2015) may change your attitude because she has the right ticket that may convince you to give moss another chance. Why? Because moss can add interest to special places in your landscape where it can grow and thrive with minimum effort on your part. Furthermore, Mossin' Annie has written a book in such a manner that the reader is provided with inspiration, environmental justification and practical advice.

No doubt you are familiar with mosses in natural areas and parks and they might even be a common occurrence in your neighborhood as well – in the grass (ugh!), brick and paver walkways, tree stumps, etc. If you did not plant this moss, how did it get there? Suffice to say, spores were probably dispersed by wind or rain, a bird, some critter and maybe your shoes. This is how moss reproduces since they do not have flowers or seeds. Moss is a natural “encroachment” and yes, sometimes seen as a petty annoyance. Moss is like a hidden jewel and provides many attributes that heretofore may not have been considered in a positive way. Why not give moss a chance and allow yourself to consider that moss is not the scourge in your landscape.

Can a book on moss fill close to 250 pages of text including full color photos throughout? Absolutely! If you are a gardener that does not have a positive relationship with moss this may be because you are probably not aware that moss can enhance your landscape. Set aside your bias for now and you will be pleasantly surprised to find that moss can be like the Holy Grail for gardeners, that is, four seasons of interest if given an opportunity. Given the right attitude, moss can be a relief from a part of your landscape that needs some pop. For example, as moss grows you can often observe a change in color tints, and during its reproductive change (spores), you can expect even more color change. If you think of the color green associated with fruits, vegetables and even crayons, then you will realize that likewise not all moss color is the same. The environment (moisture, sun, shade) also plays an important role regarding color. Mosses do not have to live as a monoculture. In fact, different genera of mosses can live in harmony. This feature can provide differences in color, texture, shape and height. For self-study, the moss book includes a selection of resources and references and of course the internet always has a lot of information.

Before proceeding about other moss specifics it is worth knowing about many public and private moss gardens and their truly green grandeur. Almost 40 pages of the book are guaranteed to help you rethink about moss in the landscape. These gardens show how moss is integrated with familiar trees and shrubs, boulders and big rocks and garden art. Close to Virginia is Duke University in Durham, NC. Their moss garden was established in 2013 although the Duke Arboretum started in 1984 and it included some moss even then. Plans for expansion are underway so that this garden should be even more spectacular.

To sort out some positives about the myriad types of moss, there is a chapter containing at least two dozen recommendations that show the variability of moss types in pictures and text. Explanations include some cautions such as heavy foot traffic, repair damage due to birds looking for whatever and the need for good drainage. Installing moss is simpler than planting flower bulbs.

continued on page 3



Go Green with Mosses continued from page 2

There is no need for a shovel or soil amendments. Most mosses prefer acidic soil which is often prevalent and moss does not have a root system as we know it. They receive nutrition through their “leaves.” Moss is the eco-friendly substitute for at least a part of your lawn. You can eliminate fertilizing and mowing. Pesticides and herbicides are not necessary because most garden insects and critters do not eat mosses. Mosses do require moisture but not anything close to the one inch of water per week that is the standard recommendation for cool season grass such as turf type tall fescue or Kentucky blue grass. To be fair and balanced, note that moss is not a good choice for water-wise gardening although a misting system will work wonders for moss. In other words, moss does not do well with a heavy hand wielding a hose.

A chapter on the basics of moss gardening provides practical knowledge. By exploring the special features of mosses you can learn how they can influence gardening decisions. Designing with mosses follows the garden mantra of right plant, right place. You can create innovative designs with companion plants that likewise thrive in the same environmental conditions as moss. In order not to overwhelm moss, use miniature plants such as Stepables™ and Jeepers Creepers™ that are often available at full service garden centers. The last two chapters are invaluable because they indicate the correct way to establish and maintain your moss garden including troubleshooting. As an aside, beware advertisements regarding moss propagation using a kitchen blender. The results of a moss “milkshake” is a haphazard way to achieve satisfactory results. If you do have success, consider yourself lucky because you are an exception. More positives include the ability of moss to survive under a blanket of snow. Once the snow melts, voila – green again. Moss can be ideal for steep areas and if you have a soil erosion issue, moss will help reduce wasteful water run-off problems.

Has Mossin’ Annie convinced you that moss should receive a second look (read planting) in your landscape? You could start small, say around a rock outcropping, “decorate” a hypertufa container, or to relieve the monotony of pavers by cultivating moss between the cracks.

Let’s hear it for moss or as they say in botanical Latin....all hail bryophytes!

A graphic with the text "MEMBERSHIP REPORT" in white, bold, sans-serif capital letters on a dark grey background, framed by a thin orange border.

MEMBERSHIP REPORT

On October 1st, the membership roster spreadsheet was purged of non-active members and non-renewals . Ninety-eight non-active/non-renewals were removed. Tom Bolt compiled the membership roster emailed it to all members.

Please let the membership chair know of any corrections.

As of today we have 527 members and of those: 363 are active members, 4 are auxiliary members and 160 are lifetime members.

Compared to our previous membership roster, our total membership dropped by 63 due to the purge. We usually purge about 125 – 150 members. When compared to the beginning of the 2015-2016 year we had only 7 more folks on the roster.

Each Unit Representative was sent a list of the VMGA members in their unit and were asked to go through the list and make sure those folks are still active Master Gardeners, including the lifetime members.

Representatives, please go through your list and remind people that the membership chair needs a filled out membership form **as well as** payment for new or renewal memberships.

Thank you,
Deb Straw, Chair



Stand out in a crowd.
Show pride in your organization.
Order your MG Gear at VMGA.net,
or look for the sales table at the next VMGA event.

New Items



Available December 12, 2015
Pullover hoodies
Long-sleeved T's



All proceeds benefit the
Coordinator's Endowment Fund



On Saturday September 19, 2015 Education Committee presented a symposia entitled, "Native Plants: Their Use in Beautiful and Sustainable Landscapes." Four speakers presented on design, pollinator and plant topics with sixty master gardeners and guests in attendance. Virginia Master Gardener Association (VMGA), Virginia State University (VSU), and Virginia Cooperative Extension (VCE) all sponsored the symposia.

The first speakers was Karl Shank of the Native Gardener in Harrisonburg. Karl did the master gardener training and says the bedrock of his knowledge goes back to the age of three when he first began raising plants and animals with his family on their very large, productive vegetable & fruit garden and mini farm. By integrating increasingly sustainable practices, the Shank family transformed a sprawling fescue lawn and pasture into a healthy and beautiful oasis to eat from and call home. Karl's presentation showed how hardscaping can play a role in a naturalized landscape design.

Jim Revell was up second. In 2001, Jim took advantage of the first ever master gardener training offering from VCE and Bedford Area Master Gardeners Association. He has been an active volunteer and leader since earning his certification. Jim served four terms as Bedford's Master Gardener Association President, five years as Training Coordinator, and is a current member of the Master Gardener College Advisory Team. Jim has long had an interest in insects. His presentation introduced the audience to the range of native pollinators in Virginia. Over 80% of the food crops used are pollinated by biotic or living creatures. While butterflies, bats and moths are the super-sized, super stars of the pollinator world, it is much smaller bees, beetles, flies and wasps that are the super-workers. While many master gardeners are familiar with the now naturalized European honeybee and its work in crop pollination, it turns out our native bumblebees, mason, squash, sweat, leaf cutter, digger, carpenter, and longhorn bees that also do major work in our gardens. Flies and beetles are also major pollinator in Virginia. Jim was incredibly informative. He had a wonderful display of posters and native pollinator homes for attendees to see. For more information, check out Jim's talk online (<http://www.vmganet.org/PDF/Jim%20Revell%202015%20Talk.pdf>).

The next speaker was Anita Tuttle, Master Gardener since 2000 and a member of the Virginia Native Plant Society since 1999. She has her Bachelor's (1988) and Master's (1995) in Horticulture from Virginia Tech. Her Master's thesis was entitled, "Approaches to Native Meadow Establishment." Her talk was "Wild Natives for Civilized Gardens" and can be found at the VMGA Education website (<http://www.vmganet.org/PDF/Anita%20Tuttle%202015%20Talk.pdf>). Anita presented an amazing amount of material on natives with incredible clarity. She was also quick to point out with humor the image many of us might have about a 'native garden' as an overgrown and unkempt space. Anita taught us about a number of wonderful native plants that are her favorites while meeting four criteria: 1) Attractive most of the time, 2) plays well with others, 3) not a princess – thrives on neglect, and 4) serves the greatest number of ecosystem services. One very interesting plant to add to any garden is golden Alexanders (*Zizia aurea*), a native parsley with a lovely yellow bloom from April to May, it will tolerate wet clay soils, and it is a host to the black swallowtail butterflies! According to Anita, golden Alexanders is much preferred by the black swallowtail so you can protect your dill and parsley by adding it to your garden. This talk really proved you can have a spectacular garden of well-behaved natives.

The final speaker of the day was Bryce Lane, now Alumni Distinguished Undergraduate Professor Emeritus and Lecturer Emeritus from the Department of Horticultural Science, NC State University. He has gardened in the same spot for 31 years, done TV programs on horticulture, and gives many lectures per year. Bryce was so engaging and he frequently made references to the previous speakers to reinforce the lessons learned. Bryce is one of the speakers that you always look forward to hearing again and if you have the chance to see, you should not miss. He was also incredibly funny with the most self-deprecating sense of humor. His talk emphasized guidelines for creating a garden that attracts wildlife using these principles, 1) "if you build it, they will come" with soils as a key, 2) variety is the spice of life: plant selection, 3) water attracts all kinds of wildlife, 3) reduce lawn square footage (!!!), 4) natives work better with natives, and 5) reduce pesticide usage since it kills beneficial insects it will also save you money (that you can use to buy more plants!) Bryce's talk is a large file and is also located on the VMGA Education website (<http://www.vmganet.org/PDF/Bryce%20Lane%202015%20Symposia%20Talk.pdf>).

Symposia Continued from page 5

The native's symposia in 2015 was an incredibly informative event. While overlap in topics might have been a concern, the audience evaluations were very pleased with the reinforcement between speakers while not being too repetitive. For 2016, the VMGA Education committee is pleased to announce our collaboration with Lewis Ginter and Maymont in Richmond. We will have a speaker at both locations on themed gardens with a tour. Stay tuned for more information about this incredible event.



Thank you to everyone that organized and participated in the Virginia Cooperative Extension Day at the State Fair on Sunday. The rain held off (thank goodness) and everything went as planned. Without your help and the help of our volunteers and 4-H'ers this event would not have been possible. I know we engaged hundreds of fairgoers and in many cases exposed them to Extension and 4-H for the first time. Once the dust settles, I'll be soliciting your feedback and suggestions for future activities at the fair.

Thanks again for all of your help.

Sincerely,

Lori

Here is a link to some photos that were taken at the fair: https://drive.google.com/a/vt.edu/folderview?id=0BzS_tlEx3bglaWZaejl3dGRBTg&usp=sharing

Lori Greiner
Virginia Cooperative Extension
Communications Manager

Additional photos on page 7

VMGA will make reasonable attempts when emails to you bounce, but you can do your part:



Email the [Membership Chair](#) with changed email addresses

Make sure you have no blocks on emails from VMGA

Don't let your Inbox get "full". Renew online. Thank you!



STATE*FAIR

OF VIRGINIA AT THE MEADOW



WHY MASTER GARDENER COLLEGE - 2016



Master Gardener College, our annual state conference will celebrate its 29th anniversary from Friday June 24 to Monday June 27, 2016 at Virginia Tech, Blacksburg. A lot has changed since the earliest days of College and you can be the beneficiary of many improvements including the scholastic experience, dormitory facilities and even the meals. Opportunities abound for all to participate in academic subjects, laboratories, workshops, tours and still have time for fun with other serious-minded gardeners from across the state. You will make new friends. You will have plenty of time to see how other MGs go about their activities during breaks, meal times and in the evening. For an overview about MG College go to VMGA.net > Education Events > MG College > About MG College. Later in 2016 more pertinent information will become available concerning registration for classes, on-campus dormitory with air-conditioned private room and bathroom, and meal ticket for all meals while attending College at the award winning dining hall food courts. Other room accommodations are available both on and off campus. For those staying off-campus, you are welcome to take any meal in the university dining hall. The cost is reasonable and always all you can eat.

In simplest terms, Master Gardener College is a place to learn, meet other MGs and even have time for some fun. These three points on the positive experience of College are expanded below. It is important to continue our College at Virginia Tech for the obvious reason that professors, research facilities, laboratories, etc. are located on the greater Blacksburg campus; therefore, we are able to take advantage of this single location.

LEARN (opportunity for self-development)

- Listen to excellent presentations at general and breakout sessions
- Find out about current horticultural research
- Learn about current horticultural trends
- Become aware of issues that are of importance to MGs
- Learn about unfamiliar topics
- Attend and perform hands-on laboratory techniques
- Reinforce information about familiar topics

Meet People (networking)

- Hear about effectiveness of new MG programs and projects
- Interact with MGs from other parts of the state
- Renew old acquaintances and start new friendships
- Promote information exchange
- Help others who are new to the College experience

Have Fun (the other side of academia)

- Enjoy the always new features and plantings in the Hahn Horticultural Gardens
- Experience comfortable and safe surroundings on campus, downtown Blacksburg (walking distance from College) and other nearby locations
- Participate in a silent auction where the proceeds go towards the State Master Gardener Coordinator Endowment
- Again, enjoy a lasting on-campus opportunity for fellowship and networking with other MGs



CORRECTION

In the September /October 2015 Issue of the VMGA Report an article was published on the York Poquoson, Extension Agent, Dan Nortman, leaving his position. The author of the article was not credited which may have led readers to assume that the article had been written by the editor of the VMGA report or another individual. Therefore the VMGA Report is reprinting the article in this issue giving full credit to the author. The editor is deeply sorry for and accepts complete responsibility for this lack of oversight.



Dan Nortman, York-Poquoson Extension AG Agent Leaves Position

"Elvis has left the building." In case you were not at our May meeting, Dan made the announcement to those present that he is leaving the position of York/Poquoson Cooperative Extension Agent, a position he has masterfully and graciously held since September 2008. Dan's girlfriend, Emily accepted a PhD position in Illinois, and Dan plans move with her this summer. With a new Master's degree from Virginia Tech on his resume, things should work out just fine for the couple. Meanwhile, a transition team of your peers is in place, along with Sally Brooks and Becky Wells to facilitate things running smoothly, while the search for a new Environmental Horticulture Agent is conducted, and the position eventually filled.

Steve Dodson – Master Gardener Coordinator
York/Poquoson Master Gardener Unit of the Virginia Cooperative Extension



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.

VMGA Bi-Monthly Board Meeting

When: December 12, 2015

Where: Williamsburg Regional Library

For more details see vmga.net/meetings.htm

All units: remember when planning unit events to go to VMGA.net to the calendar page to update unit event information including dates, times and location



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VCE Master Gardener Program

VMGA
A Voice for Virginia Master Gardeners

Deadline for November/December Newsletter is December 15th, 2015
Please submit any announcements or articles to be included in the next issue to:

Jan Worthy, editor
Central Shenandoah Valley MGA
jancwva52@gmail.com

Grow Some VA



Grow Some VA!TM Is a social action campaign of the Virginia Green Industry Council that encourages homeowners to reduce water runoff from their yards and gardens into local waterways that flow to the Chesapeake Bay by applying recommended conservation practices and by planting 'Virginia Grown' plants. Improving water quality in our streams, rivers and Chesapeake Bay is everyone's responsibility. Plants grown in Virginia are acclimated to the local growing conditions, varieties that do well in the Virginia climate are readily available in local nurseries and more and more 'native' plants are also available for the benefit of wildlife. So Grow some VA is more than a catch phrase; it is a challenge to everyone to do their part at home, at the work place and in your community.