



VMGA REPORT

Early Fall Edition

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President's Message



Hello Everyone,

It seems like just yesterday when we all met for the 2015 Master Gardener College in Blacksburg. In addition to the wonderful educational and networking opportunities, Master Gardeners and Master Gardener units readily accepted the VMGA challenge to add to the State MG Coordinator Endowment. Several units participated in the Gift Basket Challenge and worked extremely hard to find regional products in a creative and fun display. A big "Thank You" to these units and their creative and dedicated individuals! The VMGA Silent Auction has been a huge fund raiser for the Coordinator Endowment and we are always looking for new and creative ideas and help to make this task work. Thank you to Pat Reilly and her special team of volunteers!

Master Gardeners and Master Gardener units accepted the VMGA matching challenge of \$6000.00 – in fact, you exceeded the goal in record time! These donations help to support the Master Gardener Program now and assure that the program will have leadership in the future.

As fall approaches, Master Gardeners are gearing up for the State Fair of Virginia and the VMGA fall education event at Virginia State University. Robyn Puffenbarger and the education committee have planned a wonderful event and registration is open on www.VMGA.net.

A planning meeting with the VMGA Board and VCE Master Gardener Coordinator Dave Close and John Freeborn was held to address opportunities and goals for next year. Stay tuned as we start to move towards these goals. We can be proud of such a strong association and all of the work we do for the Master Gardener Program and VCE.

Please consider hosting a bi-monthly meeting. Just let me know if you have any questions if your unit is interested.

Christy

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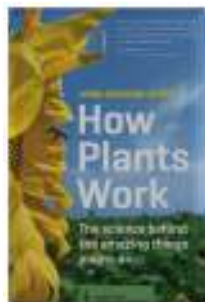
Secretary

Joan Richards, Fairfax/Green
Spring



Inside This Issue

President's Message	1
Solving The Mystery to Good Gardening	2
VMGA Scholarship Report	3
Northern Neck	4
Vegetable Garden	
50 Reference and Reading Suggestions	6
Garden Writers Silver Award	8
Farewell To Dan Nortman	8
Interactive Plant Tags	9
Endowment Update	10
Garden Therapy	10
Growing Fruit Trees in Virginia	11
Silent Auction	12
HCMGA Project	14



THE GRAINETHUMB SOLVING THE MYSTERY FOR GOOD GARDENING

By George Graine, Fairfax County Master Gardeners

If you wish to make anything grow, you must understand it in a very real sense.

“Green fingers” are a fact, and a mystery only to the unpracticed. But green fingers are the extension of a verdant heart.

---Russell Page

The rhododendron outside my kitchen window has been a reliable source of information about winter cold weather. Why do all of the leaves curl up and look like a cigar wrapper? My clematis vine supports itself on butcher twine from the top of the carport to a stake in the ground. Surely not the most elegant design but it works well because the clematis tendrils do not seem to mind. How does it know how to climb up a simple piece of twine? And – can anyone explain the curled and twisted stems and leaves on Harry Lauder’s Walking Stick? Is it any wonder why the botanical Latin for this shrub is *Corylus ‘Contorta’*. (This plant was discovered about 1863 at Frocester, Gloucestershire, England in a hedgerow.)

If you are curious as to how and why plants respond to different environmental stress, then a new book by Dr. Linda Chalker-Scott, *How Plants Work: The Science Behind Amazing Things Plants Do* (Timber Press, 2015) is a near perfect antidote. This book explains, by citing many examples, various plant phenomena in useful and understandable terms. By including color photos and illustrations adjacent to the text, this further clarifies the information. Quoting the author, “What we gardeners most want to know is how plants work so that we can have gardens and landscapes that are healthy, beautiful, and don’t need constant attention for fertilizers and pesticides.” Can I hear an amen for that quote? Furthermore, the author recognizes that most gardeners are not scientists; however, she is able to write about science so that a gardener’s inquiring mind will usually be satisfied with answers on many practical topics without going into detailed scientific jargon.

Gardening the “right way” will often save you time and money but you need to set aside some past practices. Often these have been handed down and even described in books that are out-of-date and can best be described as myths. A full service garden center often has a garden “apothecary” full of all kinds of potions and is surely willing to sell unneeded products for the garden. Dr. Chalker-Scott makes many excellent points to help stop this nonsense. Below are ten garden myths that are worth exploring. All of them and others are clearly explained in the text.

- | | |
|---|----------------------------------|
| 1. Vitamin B1 for transplants | 6. Epsom salts |
| 2. Biostimulants | 7. Compost tea |
| 3. Amending soil before planting trees and shrubs | 8. Water crystals (hydrogel) |
| 4. Landscape fabric (geotextile, weed barrier) | 9. Antitranspirants |
| 5. Gypsum | 10. The season for tree planting |

Even if you have been paying only scant attention to garden media (newspaper, TV, radio) you must have read or heard something like this: GET A SOIL TEST! Do your eyes roll and perhaps tune out this advice? To be clear, the author does not limit her words on why this is an essential requirement. Perhaps best put in human terms this is like having your blood tested in order to find out many things that are right and those that are recommended for change. In a similar vein (no pun intended), a soil test will determine which nutrients are in sufficient amount and which need to be supplemented. Note that an excess of nutrients could be toxic to plants much the same as an excess of some vitamins could be harmful to a human. Thus, it is a good reason to have your soil tested before you fertilize turf, vegetables or other parts of your landscape. It is important to spend some more words on this vital topic because much of your garden success is dependent on the composition of your soil. In other words, testing your soil really matters or as they say these days, has consequences. Home soil test kits are limited in explaining the remedies regarding nutrient deficiency and how to rectify the situation. It is far better to have your soil tested at a university laboratory such as Virginia Tech, our land grant college in Blacksburg. Soil test kits are often available at public libraries. The cost is minimal when you consider the money spent on your plant material and realize the potential success as you yardabout. Let’s get off the soil test soap box even though Dr. Chalker-Scott has a lot more information about this topic.



Solving the mystery for good gardening cont.

If you believe in four-season gardening, then the chapter on “Why Leaves Can Turn Red Anytime, Anyplace” and another chapter “How Plants Tell Time” are good reads. It is all about available light and this is “the most important and reliable environmental signals plants receive.” Does sun, part-shade, shade come to mind when you read a plant tag?

In summary, *How Plants Work* reveals the science of plants with understandable writing and information that will help and perhaps change the way you interact with your gardens. The author is a fine teacher and we can learn a lot from her. (She is an associate professor and extension urban horticulturist at Washington State University.) Dr. Chalker-Scott provides what and why of gardening in order to achieve the greatest benefit. Although we cannot control Mother Nature, we should be able to garden smarter. Your garden will thank you even if it does not speak in words.

By the way, The Graethumb does not have an answer regarding Harry Lauder’s Walking Stick’s extremely contorted branches. Nevertheless, if you are looking for a plant with interest, you will not regret having this plant as part of your landscape. Additionally, a few branches in a vase make a great statement. You could leave it plain or hang small ornaments on the branches. If you share some branches with someone who practices Ikebana, they will be forever in your debt.



VMGA SCHOLARSHIP REPORT—2015

The committee comprised of Wanda Gerard, Lynn Jones, MaryAnn Kincaid, Ted Munns, and Marilyn Riddle proved to be hard working and congenial in our task to select MGs who exhibited some of the most outstanding characteristics of that group found in the commonwealth. In short, they made us proud! CONGRATULATIONS to:

Kari Abbott	James City/Williamsburg
Betsy Ryan	Central Rappahannock
Barbara Kauneckas	Northern Neck
Maryanne Sparks	Fauquier
Janice Aulisio	Halifax
Sara Jane Birgbauer	Hill City
Robert (Bob) Kobach	Rockbridge

We had ten applicants. Each committee member ranked all individually and then the results were combined on a tally sheet. As a group we felt that we could award to seven of these with the funds available from the board. Next year we hope that those unsuccessful candidates as well as others will have their applications submitted by their agents or master gardener coordinators. It is a suggestion that the announcement be made jointly by Dave Close, John Freeborn, and Dr. Ed Jones with the expectation that more agents will submit in a timely fashion. We are well aware that spring is their busiest season.

Marilyn M. Riddle, Chairman



Northern Neck Farm Museum Vegetable Garden

In 2009, The Northern Neck Master Gardeners established a teaching garden at the Northern Neck Farm Museum dedicated to growing vegetables. The mission of the garden is to help youngsters and adults understand the basic principles of vegetable gardening, encourage enthusiasm for gardening, demonstrate environmentally-friendly vegetable gardening concepts, and provide wholesome fresh vegetables and fruits to those in need through local food pantries.

The garden showcases varieties of vegetables and small fruits that grow well in the Northern Neck and how to get the most out of your garden through inter-planting, crop sequencing, crop rotation and the use of compost. Integrated pest management (IPM) techniques, such as using buckwheat and a variety of herbs and flowers to attract beneficial insects, are used to decrease reliance on pesticides. Water-wise techniques, such as collection of rainwater, mulching and drip irrigation, are also employed. On-site experiments have been conducted to find the best varieties and methods for growing particular crops.

Planning for this year's garden began last fall with the initiation of a new organic approach to growing vegetables, a subject of rising public interest. The approach is outlined in the book "Teaming with Microbes: a Gardener's Guide to the Soil Food Web" by Jeff Lowenfels and Wayne Lewis. The concept of the soil food web recognizes that soil is a living medium, not dead dirt, and that a teaspoonful of healthy soil contains billions of living organisms. Bacteria, fungi, variously sized insects, worms, etc., feed on each other and provide the structure for plant life. Tilling and the use of non-organic fertilizers, herbicides, and insecticides destroy this life.

The controlled experiment taking place this summer at the NNMG's demonstration garden began with soil tests being performed for each of the ten beds at the Farm Museum garden and agricultural lime being added as recommended. Four beds were selected for the experiment with each prepared in a different way last fall and each will be treated differently during the growing season. All four experimental beds will be planted with the same crops (tomatoes, peppers, and eggplant). Detailed records of production will be kept for each of the test beds: total weight and comparative fruit size and quality, insect infestations, diseases and weed problems.

The first bed was treated as done in the past with tilling and mulching with straw. Non-organic fertilizer (10-10-10), insecticides, and fungicides will be used in this bed.

The second bed was prepared with mushroom compost only and tilled, then covered with a mulch of grass clippings. This bed will receive a foliar spray of Actively Aerated Compost Tea (AACT), as described in the referenced book above, but non-organic insecticides and fungicides will be used on the plant foliage (not the soil) if necessary to combat serious pest issues. As with bed 1, non-organic fertilizer (10-10-10) will be used.

The third bed was covered with a layer of mushroom compost, not tilled, then a layer of newspaper and finally a layer of mulch consisting of ground leaves and grass clippings, the so-called "lasagna" approach. This bed will also receive a foliar spray of AACT, but organic insecticides and fungicides may be used on the plant foliage if necessary. Only organic fertilizer will be used in this bed.

The 4th bed will be treated totally organically. The soil in this bed has not been tilled and has received a layer of mushroom compost topped with a layer of straw mulch. The soil will not be disturbed further except to make holes for planting seedlings. No non-organic chemicals of any kind will be used in this bed. Instead, fertilizing with a soil drench and foliar spray of compost tea (AACT) will be applied several times during the season. Unless it appears that a significant crop loss will occur, no insecticides or fungicides will be used. If necessary, only organic products will be used.

The remaining six beds at the Farm Museum were tilled last fall and a layer of compost topped with a layer of mulch has been applied. These beds will be treated similarly to experiment bed 1.

It is recognized that it may take several years to completely establish the soil food web in the totally organic bed, so this experiment may continue over the next few years depending the outcome of this year.

Note: A rain barrel, contributed by the NNMG organization, will be used for preparing the compost tea. An air pump has been purchased because making AACT requires the compost tea to be constantly aerated for several days in order to allow the right bacteria, protozoa, and beneficial nematodes to multiply.

Continued on Page 5



Residents of Spring Arbor enjoying garden therapy ~ Photos by Carol Jackson



See article on Garden Therapy on page 10



50 REFERENCE AND READING SUGGESTIONS FOR A MASTER GARDENER BOOKSHELF – PART 2

By George Graine, Fairfax Master Gardeners

DIAGNOSIS AND REMEDIES

Protect Your Garden: Eco-friendly Solutions for Healthy Plants, Ed Rosenthal, (Quick American, 2013)

Garden Rescue: First Aid for Plants and Flowers, Jo Whittingham, (DK Publishing, 2013)

American Horticultural Society Garden Problem Solver, Pippa Greenwood, (DK Publishing, 2002)

Great Garden Fix-Its: Organic Remedies for Everything from Aphids to Weeds, Christine Bucks Ed. , (MJF Books, 2001)

LANDSCAPE DESIGN

Anyone Can Landscape, Joel M. Lerner, (Ball Publishing, 2001)

The Well-Designed Mixed Garden: Building Beds and Borders with Trees, Shrubs, Perennials, Annuals, and Bulbs, Tracy DiSabato-Aust, (Timber Press, 2003)

The Living Landscape: Designing for Beauty and Diversity in the Home Garden, Doug Tallamy and Rick Darke, (Timber Press, 2014)

The Townhouse Gardener: Distinctive Landscape Designs for Small Gardens in the Mid-Atlantic Region, Sherry Mitchell, (EPM Publications, 1998)

Landscape Rejuvenation: Remodeling the Home Landscape, Bonnie Lee Appleton, (Garden Way Publishing, 1988)

TREES AND SHRUBS

The Tree and Shrub Finder: Choosing the Best Plants for Your Yard, Robert Kourik, (Taunton Press, 2000)

Trees for the Small Garden, Simon Toomer, (Timber Press, 2005)

Flowering Shrubs & Small Trees, Isabel Zucker, revised and expanded by Derek Fell, (Grove Weidenfeld, 1990)

Japanese Maples, 4th ed., J. D. Vertrees and Peter Gregory, (Timber Press, 2010)

Maples for Gardens: A Color Encyclopedia, C. J. van Gelderen and D. M. van Gelderen, (Timber Press, 1999)

Designing With Conifers: The Best Choices for Year-Round Interest in Your Garden, Richard L. Bitner, (Timber Press, 2011)

Conifers for Gardens: An Illustrated Encyclopedia, Richard L. Bitner, (Timber Press, 2007)

Dogwoods, Paul Cappiello and Don Shadow, (Timber Press, 2005)

FLOWERS AND OTHER PLANTS

Right Plant, Right Place: Over 1400 Plants for Every Situation in the Garden, Nicola Ferguson, (Fireside, revised ed., 2005)

The American Horticultural Society Flower Finder, Jacqueline Heriteau and Andre Viette, (Stonesong Press, 1992)

SPECIALTY PLANTS

Elegant Silvers: Striking Plants for Every Garden, Jo Ann Gardner and Karen Bussolini, (Timber Press, 2005)

Hardy Succulents: Tough Plants for Every Climate, Gwen Moore Kelaidis, (Storey Publishing, 2008)

The Gardener's Guide to Growing Hostas, Diana Grenfell, (Timber Press, 1996)

The Plantfinder's Guide to Garden Ferns, Martin Rickard, (Timber Press, 2000)

The Magical World of Moss Gardening, Annie Martin, (Timber Press, 2015)



50 Reference and Reading Suggestions Continued from Page 6

ORNAMENTAL GRASS

- The Encyclopedia of Grasses for Livable Landscapes, Rick Darke, (Timber Press, 2007)
Grasses: Versatile Partners for Uncommon Garden Design, Nancy J. Ondra, (Storey Books, 2002)
The Plantfinder's Guide to Ornamental Grasses, Roger Grounds, (Timber Press, 2002)

GENERAL GARDENING

- Kiss My Aster: A Graphic Guide to Creating a Fantastic Yard Totally Tailored to You, Amanda Thomsen, (Timber Press, 2012)
New Encyclopedia of Gardening Techniques: The Indispensable Illustrated Practical Guide, Mitchell Beazley, (American Horticultural Society, 2010)
Ecology for Gardeners, Steven B. Carroll and Steven D. Salt, (Timber Press, 2004)
How Plants Work: The Science Behind the Amazing Things Plants Do, Linda Chalker-Scott, (Timber Press, 2015)
Practical Science for Gardeners, Mary M. Pratt, (Timber Press, 2005)

CONTAINERS

- Pots in the Garden: Expert Design and Planting Techniques, Ray Rogers, (Timber Press, 2007)
The Book of Container Gardening, Malcolm Hillier, (Simon and Schuster, 1991)
Gardening in Miniature: Create Your Own Tiny Living World, Janit Calvo, (Timber Press, 2013)
Creating and Planting Garden Troughs, Joyce Fingerut and Rex Murfit, (B. B. Mackey Books, 1999)

GARDEN PROJECTS

- The Revolutionary Yardscape: Ideas for Repurposing Local Materials to Create Containers, Pathways, Lighting, and More, Mathew Levesque, (Timber Press, 2010)
Handmade Garden Projects: Step-by-Step Instructions for Creative Garden Features, Containers, Lighting and More, Lorene Edwards Forkner, (Timber Press, 2011)
Concrete Garden Projects: Easy and Inexpensive Containers, Furniture, Water Features and More, Malin Nilsson and Camilla Arvidsson, (Timber Press, 2011)

EDUCATION AND ENJOYMENT

- The \$64 Tomato, William Alexander, (Algonquin Books, 2007)
Dead Snails Leave No Trails, Loren Nancarrow and Janet Hogan Taylor, (Ten Speed Press, 1996)
How to Cheat at Gardening and Yard Work: Shameless Tricks for Growing Radically Simple Flowers, Veggies, Lawns, Landscaping, and More, Jeff Bredenberg, (Rodale, 2009)
How the Government Got in Your Backyard, Jeff Gillman and Eric Heberlig, (Timber Press, 2011)
A Brief History of Gardening, Neil Fairbairn, (Rodale, 2001)
The Roots of My Obsession: Thirty Great Gardeners Reveal Why They Garden, Thomas C. Cooper, Ed., (Timber Press, 2012)
Legends in the Garden: Who in the World is Nellie Stevens?, Linda L. Copeland and Allan M. Armitage, (Wings Publishers, 2001)
Requiem for a Lawnmower: And Other Essays on Easy Gardening with Native Plants, Sally Wasowski and Andy Wasowski, (Taylor Publishing, 1992)

WEATHER AND THE GARDEN

- The Weather-Resilient Garden: A Defensive Approach to Planning and Landscaping, Charles W. G. Smith, (Storey Publishing, 2004)
The Undaunted Garden: Planting for Weather-Resilient Beauty, Lauren Springer, (Fulcrum Publishing, 1994)
Heat-Zone Gardening: How to Choose Plants That Thrive in Your Region's Warmest Weather, H. Marc Cathey and Linda Bellamy, (Time-Life Books, 1998)



George Graine Receives Garden Writers Silver Award



George Graine, Fairfax Master Gardener since 1988, has received a Silver Award of Achievement from the 2015 Garden Writers Association (GWA) Media Awards Program for his article entitled, "Fooling Mother Nature: Forcing Flower Bulbs for Indoor Bloom." His article, published by Virginia Cooperative Extension, was among 231 entries judged by a panel of distinguished members of the gardening, communications, and academic communities.

The award will be announced at an awards banquet on Sept. 21, 2015 in Pasadena, Calif., as part of the 67th GWA Annual Symposium. This award makes George eligible to receive a higher honor: the GWA Garden Media Gold Awards for Best Talent and Best Product.

Graine, a contributor to Fairfax Gardening, began his writing career in December 1990, when the newsletter editor of the Holmes Run Acres community asked him to write gardening articles for their publication. Graine, who often writes under the moniker "Grainethumb," has authored 118 articles for the Holmes Run newsletter and continues to write for every issue. He has also written 80 articles for the Virginia Master Gardener Association newsletter, and from 2008 to 2014 he wrote the North Piedmont Region Report for Virginia Gardener magazine.

In 2012, Virginia Cooperative Extension (VCE) was looking to build on its publication base and ran a manuscript contest to encourage master gardeners to write for VCE. Graine decided to enter and write about forcing flower bulbs for indoor bloom. He chose this topic because of his interest in it and because it was not already covered by a VCE publication. The 10-page article, [Fooling Mother Nature: Forcing Flower Bulbs for Indoor Bloom](#), is available online.

This year, Graine will receive an award for 11,000 hours of service as a master gardener at the Virginia annual state conference, run in conjunction with Master Gardener College at Virginia Tech in Blacksburg.



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

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!



Cossey Botanical Park Arboretum Receives Interactive Tags

By Tracy Blevins

I am very pleased to announce that we have donated the remaining Plants Map tags to [Cossey Botanical Park Arboretum](#).

I believe every landscape is an opportunity to share information with others by telling the stories of the plants from our own experiences with them. In January 2014 when we launched Plants Map at Startup Weekend Fredericksburg, Cossey Park Botanical Arboretum was the first profile and plant collection created. During the event 15 of our interactive tags were purchased and donated by various individuals to the arboretum. A seed had been planted and a seedling emerged in just one weekend. I was already involved with Cossey Botanical Park Arboretum as a Master Gardener with the Virginia Cooperative Extension. I fell in love with this small open arboretum the first time I visited. I instantly understood the vision for the park: beautify and educate through plants. These were not your typical plantings. There were some very unusual and interesting specimens. I instantly felt a connection. It actually took me awhile to find the arboretum because it had no website, no address, and no way to find it other than local knowledge. I finally discovered it when I attended a volunteer workday. I had driven past it so many times. Now Cossey Botanical Park Arboretum has a very special place on the Plants Map community map and the story of the arboretum and its plant collections can be shared with others everywhere.

I will continue to inventory and update the plants and add more stories, details and photographs. We are using the profile to share information among the Master Gardener volunteers as well as an education outreach effort for those that visit the online plant collection or visit the park and scan the tags. I have been involved with many 'hidden gems' over the years like Cossey. These are special places that I feel need to be discovered, enjoyed and supported by more people. It is my goal that Plants Map can increase awareness of plant collections of all sizes and types and the mission of the individuals or the organizations behind them through their plant stories. The end result I hope is to educate people about plants and connect them to these places and their people, organizations and causes. That is what 'Connecting People With Plants' means to me.

I invite you to discover and explore Cossey Botanical Park Arboretum both on Plants Map and in person at the corner of Littlepage St. and Grove Avenue in Fredericksburg, VA. And scan a tag. Like a plant!





State Coordinator Endowment Challenge Exceeded!

At the April board meeting, VMGA President Christy Brennan issued a challenge for donations to the State Coordinator Endowment. The cash portion of the endowed fund is close to one-quarter of a million dollars and the challenge would push the balance over that. To encourage donations, the VMGA board voted to match all cash donations made between April 1 and August 31, up to \$6,000.

VMGA's State Coordinator Endowment is paying off now – well before it is fully funded to ensure that we always have a faculty position at Virginia Tech dedicated to the VCE-MG program. How is that? Attendees at MG College in June were treated to the debut of an online class for the basic MG training. The online classes will allow units which do not have the resources or numbers of students to conduct training in the traditional way and can be used by MG trainees who miss a class as a make-up session. To help fund this effort, some of the money available in the interest account were used. As with any endowment, cash donations made to the corpus of the Endowment cannot be touched – only the interest that the cash earns. Thus the importance placed on your cash donations!

As of the meeting date of August 8, a whopping \$7,639.43 had been donated! Rather than simply matching up to \$6,000, the board voted to match all of those funds. Because of all of your generosity, more than \$15,000 has gone into the Endowment! The board will make a similar consideration at the October board meeting, once the amounts of any additional donations made by August 31 are known.

President Christy Brennan expressed great appreciation to the units and individuals that donated during this challenge. While the Virginia Tech Foundation does not share specific amounts given by donors with VMGA, everyone attending MG College witnessed Leslie Paulson presenting Christy with a \$1,000 donation from the Master Gardeners of Virginia. Significant donations were made by others while we were at College, and others have given since then – for which VMGA is especially grateful.

Many thanks to all that donated during this challenge! We hope everyone will consider giving to the Endowment so that other online classes can be produced.

GARDEN THERAPY AT SPRING ARBOR

Garden Therapy meets quarterly at Spring Arbor Assisted Living in Fredericksburg, VA. Master Gardeners assist the residents in various projects such as herb and floral arrangement, as well as potting plants and seeds. The most recent Garden Therapy was on June 23, 2015 and we passed out chives, oregano, thyme, mint, basil, and rosemary for the residents to smell and try and guess what they were. The residents put the herbs in glass spice bottles and made herbal arrangements. They all really enjoyed this since they had fun guessing what they were and then they had a small arrangement to take back to their rooms. We also potted some Vinca since one of our Master Gardeners donated a dozen pots.

I have been the Chair of Garden Therapy for three years now. For me, getting involved with Garden Therapy was a very personal decision. My mother had just been placed in hospice and I knew she didn't have much longer. When I would go visit my mother in the assisted living facility where she lived, I would notice the Lewes, DE garden club would come in once a month to do Garden Therapy with them. I was impressed with these ladies and I would always encourage my mother to participate since I knew she loved flowers and no longer had a garden of her own. In 2013, about a year after my mother passed, I took the MG course. When Gwen explained all the projects we could get involved in, I decided to approach an assisted living facility, Spring Arbor, which had just opened in Fredericksburg, with the idea of a Garden Therapy group. They were so excited and couldn't wait for us to start!

This is a huge group effort. Sure I plan the activities, but I have a good core group of woman who come and help (list the names). I am also a member of the Quantico Officers Wives Garden Club, which has been involved in Garden Therapy since 1991, and we have been working with the residents of Greenfield assisted living in Stafford. Susan Van De Putte was the chairman before me and both she and Phyllis Phillips, both Master Gardeners, encouraged me to take the MG course (as well as Betsy Ryan). There are about six of us from my MG 2013 class that participate and a few others that have expressed interest: Cindy Davies, Debby Ostberg, Claudia Robert, Delores Chen, Patricia Johnson, Ed Luna, Elizabeth Gentili, Mary Henderson, and Marilyn Highfield. Believe me when I say we get more out of this than we give. It's always great to hear "When are you coming back?"

See photos on page 5



Growing Fruit Trees in Virginia ~ By Laura Westermeier

Edited by Karen Brace

Whether you already have fruit trees in your yard or are thinking of getting some, the information presented at the King George Extension office on Thursday, July 9, 2015, by Gwen Pote, Master Gardener and Horticultural Technician from the Stafford County Extension Office, will be very useful to you. Gwen's hobby is fruit trees; she grew up next to family orchards. In April 2015 she attended several days of training on growing fruit without using a lot of pesticides. Her presentation combined her extensive knowledge of fruit trees with the most current information she gained at the training.

First, lay the groundwork before you plant your trees to minimize future problems. If you have a slope it is best to plant higher on the slope to insure good air flow around the trees to lower the risk of diseases from fungus or bacteria. Avoid frost pockets as frost can damage blossoms and you won't get any fruit. Optimize sunlight; your tree will produce better fruit if it has more sun. Do a soil test. Most fruit trees do best in a pH of 6.0-6.8.

When buying a fruit tree she recommends purchasing dwarf bare root trees from a reliable online nursery (See list below). The advantages of dwarf trees are that it is easier to both prune top branches and to pick fruit from the top of the tree. Some disease resistant cultivars of apples are Sundance, Gold Rush, Pristine, and Liberty. Disease resistant pears include Honeysweet, Magness and Seckel (Bartlett is very susceptible to disease).

Pruning and training are very important to maximize the sunlight penetration and increase airflow to the center of the tree. Clothespins attached to the main trunk and pushing on smaller branches can be helpful in younger trees to keep branches parallel to the ground. You will need to thin your fruit (i.e., apples one per cluster). At first no one wants to do this but if fruit is close together it is easier for it to get disease. Also you will get larger fruit by having fewer fruit.

Finally, the top priority for a healthy fruit tree is sanitation. Be sure to pick up dropped fruit, prune out diseased areas, and rake and remove fallen leaves. The inoculum for next year's fungal infection can be in infected fruit (i.e. peach mummies) left on or under the tree.

Other information to help you with your fruit trees:

Tree Fruit in the Home Garden. Publication 426-841 From Virginia Cooperative Extension.

https://pubs.ext.vt.edu/426/426-841/426-841_pdf.pdf

Managing Pests in Home Fruit Plantings (2013). Very friendly resource for the homeowner.

<https://www.extension.purdue.edu/extmedia/ID/ID-146-W.pdf>

Recommended mail-order nurseries for bare-root trees:

Adams County Nursery, - Aspers, PA (for commercial and local gardeners): <http://www.acnursery.com>

Big Horse Creek Farm – Ashe NC – antique and heirloom apples: <http://www.bighorsecreekfarm.com>

Boyer's Nursery – Biglerville, PA – diverse retail and wholesale: <http://www.boyernurseries.com>



Silent Auction

Silent Auction Succeeds in Raising \$3,400

The ever-popular Silent Auction was held once again during Master Gardener College in June. Besides being a fun event, it raised \$3,400 for VMGA's State Coordinator Endowment. And a lot of MGs went home with some crazy good stuff!

One of the most sought-after items was the 'funky folk art' donated by Virginia Beach Master Gardener, Joyce Williams. Loaded with color and style, it obsessed bidders hoping to land it on their porch. There were bottles of great wine, home décor items, yard art and flags, plants like *Itea*, day lilies, ninebark, *Callicarpa*, hostas and so much more.

Early in June, President Christy Brennan issued a "local products basket" challenge, and units responded with great enthusiasm! James City County/Williamsburg certainly had the most identifiable local items branded with that unique colonial look. We learned about all kinds of local products – preserves, wines, plants, pickles, recipes and peanuts (who else but Suffolk!?!). At the end of the day, it was Loudoun County who won the distinction of the local products basket that resulted in the greatest amount of money for the Endowment! Many thanks to Edye Clark and the Loudoun County Master Gardeners!

Thanks also need to go to those who pulled off this monumental effort. Even before we got to College, Anita Johnson (Green Spring) was entering pledged items into a spreadsheet and VMGA VP Angela Cingale and Secretary Joan Richards were responding to donors. Once on campus, Pat Shea (Green Spring) jumped on the spreadsheet with a big assist from Fran Wall (Washington County). Lynn Brammer (New River Valley), Michelli Booker and Gretchen Fisher (Virginia Beach) arranged items to enhance sales. They also helped with the auction close out along with the Super Hustlers from Prince William - Susan Bruns ("Chaos-Tamer Extraordinaire"!), Amye Foelsch, Jean Meink, Harriet Carter, Brenda Hallam and Janene Cullen. Joining in the hustling was PW's Paul Gibson and Maggie Hart, and they were joined by Janice Aulisio (Halifax) at the cashiers' table, collecting money from all those winners in less than 30 minutes.

Just as we celebrate the success of the auction, we also approach the lessons learned with enthusiasm for improvements for next year. Winners are anxious for their items and to accommodate that, the check-out next year will begin 7:30 along at the same time as the Endowment reception and entertainment. That will require that the VMGA annual meeting begin at 6:30, and that the auction bidding end just before the end of the afternoon break at 2:50 pm. The auction team will have time to go to class and will be treated to pizza dinner while they prepare items for check out between 5 and 7:30pm. To help them with their work, items will be numbered sequentially on the tables.

This year's team also noticed that some items receive more bidding attention than others. Since bidding is part of the fun, the auction team will solicit items of the type and price ranges where most bidding occurred.

Solicitation should also minimize the number of items for which donation forms are not received. Prior to College this year, the team had donation forms for 41 items, but ended up with 184 items. That's more than four times the number of items expected! This slowed the team in placing bidding sheets by all items, and caused some problems for those adding information to the spreadsheet.

At the end of the day, though, the team was pleased to put on the auction, everyone had fun bidding and the Endowment balance was increased by \$3,400! A huge THANK YOU to every one of you who donated items or who bid on items!!



Michelli works up receipts.



Susan , Harriet and Janene prepare for checkout.



Paul and Gretchen record prices.



**HCMGA Project
Lynchburg Regional Juvenile Detention Center
Post-Dispositional Program**

The mission statement of the center's post-dispositional program is to provide local treatment that offers educational and individualized services which promote the rehabilitation of juvenile offenders through facility and community based programs. Not all detainees qualify for this program. Only males and females between the ages of 14 and 17 who pass a strict set of requirements are considered as participants. The Hill City Master Gardener Association began gardening at the center as one of the community based programs. The center provided a fenced-in area with a greenhouse and a great deal of labor in the form of students admitted to the program. The HCMGA provided expertise and a lot of hard work. Over the years, Master Gardeners have taught these young people many important gardening lessons: soil amendment, composting, crop rotation, warm season vs. cool season gardening, harvesting, proper use and care of tools and proper watering to name a few. In 2013 we installed an irrigation system that was engineered one of our Master Gardeners and have given interested students the responsibility of maintaining it. Our program is set up to garden once a week. At each session, the students are accompanied by a teacher and a guard and usually 3 to 4 Master Gardeners. We have had as many as 10 students but generally average 3 to 4. Our mission as Master Gardeners is not to garden but to teach the community how to garden. The administration and staff at the Center have proved to be very supportive of all we are doing .





2015 VMGA Educational Symposium

Virginia Cooperative Extension programs and employment are open to all, regardless of age, race, disability, gender, gender identity, gender expression, national origin, political affiliation, race, religion, sexual orientation, genetic information, veteran status, or any other basis protected by law. An equal opportunity/affirmative action employer, issued in furtherance of Cooperative Extension work, Virginia Polytechnic Institute and State University, Virginia State University, and the U.S. Department of Agriculture cooperating. Edwin J. Jones, Director, Virginia Cooperative Extension, Virginia Tech, Blacksburg, 24061-0319; Administrator, 2020 Extension Program, Virginia State, Petersburg.

If you are a person with a disability and desire any auxiliary devices, services or other accommodations to participate in the activity, please contact Nelsyn Puffenberger at (804)526-5113 during business hours of 9am and 5pm. We strive to accommodate 15 days prior to the event.



Native Plants: Their Use in Beautiful & Sustainable Landscapes

Timetable

- 9 AM *arrival and registration with coffee*
- 9:30–10:30 AM Karl Shank, *"If you could hire Nature to design your farm, your landscape, your village green..."*
- Short break
- 10:45–11:45 AM Jim Revell, *"Native Pollinators - Who are they and are they important?"*
- 11:45 AM lunch break
- 12:45–1:45 PM Anita Tuttle, *"Wild Natives for Civilized Gardens"*
- Short break
- 2 - 3 PM Bryce Lane, *"Home Gardening to Attract Wildlife"*
- Short break
- 3 PM *panel Q&A Session*

About

19 September 2015
Virginia State University
Petersburg, VA.

Registration is online at VMGA.net and lunch is included in your registration fee. VMGA/VCE can register for \$25, non-VMGA/VCE for \$40 by September 10, 2015. Late registration depends on availability!

For More Information,
<http://www.vmganet.org/next/indexevent.php>



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: October 10, 2015

Where: Central Rappahannock

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 October 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!™ 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.