



The VMGA Report

A Voice for Virginia Master Gardeners
vmga.net

Jan/Feb 2021

Volume 26, Number 4

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Prince William County

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Editor-
Peggy Fox, Newport News
newsletter@vmga.net
with assistance from
Lynn Hamm,
Western Tidewater

OUR MISSION

The mission of the Virginia Master Gardener Association is to foster communication, education and fellowship among Virginia Cooperative Extension Master Gardener volunteers.

From the President

Leslie Paulson, Prince William

Here we are, a New Year and hopefully one that will see us meeting in person before the end of it. Have you, like me, taken a walk about your garden to see what is happening? I looked specifically to see if my Daphne, Edgeworthia or my Hellebores/Lenten Roses are attempting to bloom. I wish I had Winterberries and it is on my list to buy. You must have a male and female to get the beautiful red berries. The Daphne and Edgeworthia have blossoms but, of course, haven't opened yet. Some years they do so by the end of January. My *Helleborus foetidus*, the all-green ones, have set buds but none have opened. Of course, while looking around I saw Japanese Honeysuckle and too many winter annual weeds which I need to get rid of. Life in the garden keeps us on track and sane, I think. My yard is purposely left messy for the wildlife. I do not cut back old canes until late March. Many good insects are living in them and around them. At any rate, I am thankful for all the wildlife I have been seeing this winter.

I'm sure many of you will start signing up for Zoom classes again. Don't forget to let Joan Richards know if any of you want to advertise on the VMGA website: <https://VMGA.net/wordpress>. Also, you can send your announcements to the State Office as well if you wish to open the class to anyone. Add it to your Facebook page as an event and the office as co-host.

Please start talking up International Master Garden Conference 2021 to your group and friends. Details will come to you in March and registration starts April 5th. It's a bargain for \$150 and many hours of education, as many as 30 to be exact.

If you have any great articles and unit reports to share with Peggy, our editor, please send them to her at newsletter@vmga.net. It's nice to hear from units and see what subjects you have researched.

As winter gets started, remember that there is quite a list of horticultural books you can read for education hours as well. Just look back in Kathleen Reed's Biweekly Updates. There may be some you have already completed.

In the news:

Has your unit or have the members of your unit been featured in your local newspaper?

Does your unit publish a newsletter? Let us know!

Unit Representatives: share a report about your unit with us.

Send links to:
newsletter@vmga.net

Got an upcoming event to publicize?

Submit your unit announcements to the State MG Coordinator for inclusion in the Bi-Weekly EMG Update
<https://www.mastergardener.ext.vt.edu/biweekly-submission/>

AND

also to our **VMGA Calendar of Events** in care of:
Calendar@vmga.net

Submissions via email should include:

- The title of your event
- The date of your event
- A sentence describing your event
- The location of your event
- A link or attachment providing additional information

Please remember that having more people on our committees is helpful. Right now, it would be nice if we could find more help for our Fund Raising and Merchandise Sales. Help by many makes the load lighter. Just let me know.

I hope all are well and staying safe. Let's make this year as good as we can and reach out to fellow MGs who might need a bright spot in their day. We are a family and it's always nice to catch up with a good friend you haven't seen in a while. Take care. Happy New Year too.

Leslie

From VCE State MG Coordinator's Office

Kathleen Reid

RECORD KEEPING: New volunteer service recording system: BETTER IMPACT

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=DRHc3QXTFMI&feature=youtu.be>

Access to VMS is still available for a limited time so that units can retrieve and save documents, photos and other records to another file storage location or system.

MAKE A DIFFERENCE: E-Giving VT Giving Day. February 24-25

STAY INFORMED: [Biweekly Update - Virginia Master Gardener Intranet \(vt.edu\)](#)

INTERNATIONAL MASTER GARDENER CONFERENCE

Do be sure to register early so you won't be scrambling in June. Registration will be limited to only 2500 Master Gardeners from across the U.S., South Korea, England, Puerto Rico, and Canada. The complete conference program will be released in March. VMGA will be awarding scholarships to eligible applicants. (see page)

September 12 - 17, 2021

- Registration opens April 5, 2021
- Full schedule released in March
- Limited to first 2,500 registrants
- A few highlights:
 - Hands-on workshops (Sept. 12)
 - Small group networking/discussion group opportunities
 - Two special evening events
 - Plenty of feature time for our great state!

INTERNATIONAL
MASTER
GARDENER
CONFERENCE



**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.

EDUCATION

Kirk Barley, Northern Shenandoah

The VMGA Education Committee is a team of twelve or more VMGA Members who are working to improve advanced continuing education opportunities for all Virginia Extension Master Gardeners (EMG). We use three approaches to support this effort: Share, Subsidize and Produce.

The most basic approach is to **share** resources and events so EMG units can create better advanced continuing education events, and individual EMG have a greater set of events from which to choose in meeting their continuing education requirement.

During November, Erica Jones and Dave Banks completed a yearlong effort by publishing our Speakers List on [Virginia Master Gardener Association \(vmga.net\)](http://Virginia Master Gardener Association (vmga.net)). Go to the new website and find the "Topics" under "Education" and "Speakers Bureau." Now EMG units have a central resource for the talent to deliver the outstanding advanced continuing education they need for their members to interact successfully with Virginia residents.

VMGA also **subsidizes** unit advanced continuing education events. On 17 November, the Education Committee met and approved applications for subsidies from the Master Gardener Association of Fauquier & Rappahannock Counties and the Prince William Master Gardeners. Other units have expressed interest in this program, so the committee anticipates more applications in 2021.

The Committee historically has focused on **producing** advanced continuing education events for VMGA. With COVID-19, we have taken a pause to see what topics Virginia's EMGs feel are the most important. Using the EMG Educational Needs Survey released by the State EMG Program Office, we have analyzed those needs. The Education Committee is drafting a plan to encourage advanced continuing education events for the technical and association skills identified by the survey.

For any VMGA Member or Unit Representative who wishes to find out more about the Education Committee's efforts or resources, please see the "Education" tab on vmga.net/wordpress. The Chairman can be reached by email at Education@VMGA.NET.

VMGA Website

Leslie Paulson,
Prince William

Please submit additions,
corrections or report
broken links to:

Leslie Paulson at:
president@vmga.net

Dave Banks
webmaster@vmga.net

VMGA

Membership has its
advantages:

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

SEARCH FOR EXCELLENCE – IMGC 2021

About Search for Excellence: This is the international version of our MG College's Brag Board competition. If your unit is considering a submission for this competition, here are some details and dates to keep in mind. Don't wait until the last minute to compile info and complete your application.

<https://imgcsfe.com/about/>

March 1, 2021: online applications due.

Remember to submit the application, the verification letter, and up to six (6) jpeg images.

June 1, 2021: Applicants will be notified about the status of their SFE application.

Instructions:

1. The Search for Excellence project application must be written by the Master Gardeners involved and ***not*** by Extension staff.
 2. A verification form from your Extension Advisor/Coordinator is required and must be submitted by that individual.
- The deadline for receipt of this verification is the same date as the application deadline: March 1, 2021. Any project submitted without this document will be disqualified.
3. Up to six (6) digital photos in JPEG format may be submitted with the application. Use the online form to submit your photos.
 4. All applications must be submitted online. No hard copy or emailed applications will be accepted. Any extra files, photos, or handouts will disqualify the application.
 5. Receipt of the Extension Coordinator's verification comments will be verified via email from the IMGC SFE Committee within two days of receiving it. IF the Extension Coordinator fails to receive verification within four (4) business days of submission, contact Info@IMGCSFE.com.

Diane Relf VMGA SCHOLARSHIPS

Tonya Harper, Scholarship Chair, Roanoke

Planning to attend International Master Gardener Conference in September? Good news! There will be twenty (20) Diane Relf VMGA Scholarships awarded this year, each in the amount of \$150. Any active, certified Extension Master Gardener who plans to attend IMGC 2021 is eligible to win. The scholarship application must

Resources

Find out more here

[Extension Master Gardener website](#)

[VMGA.NET](#)

[VCE MG YouTube](#)

[VCE—Facebook](#)

[Volunteer Management System](#)

[Online Learning Opportunities](#)

[VA EMG Bi-weekly Update](#)

[Marketing and Branding Resources](#)

[Links to Unit Websites – vmga.net](#)

originate with, and be submitted by, the unit agent or Master Gardener coordinator. However, it is appropriate for you to express your interest and provide details of your service to a nominator who makes the final decision about whose application will be forwarded to the VMGA Scholarship Committee. No more than 2 applications per unit are allowed.

For guidelines and a scholarship application, please visit our website at: www.vmga.net/wordpress, select Education → Diane Relf Scholarship.

Submissions will be accepted March 1 through June 5, 2021. All scholarship applications should be submitted, by agent or MG coordinator, via email to: Tonya Harper, sunset67@ntelos.net. Selected awardees and extension agents/MG coordinators will be notified by e-mail or telephone by the chairman of the committee by July 15, 2021.

For further information, you may contact the Scholarship Committee chairperson, Tonya Harper, at 540-966-2190, or sunset67@ntelos.net. Members of the committee are Marilyn Riddle, Ted Munns, Jim Revell, Ellen Paquette, and Erica Jones.

UNIT REPORTS

VMGA and units across the state would love to know what your unit is doing. Here is an opportunity for Unit Representatives to shine a spotlight on the exciting and successful programs their volunteers are providing citizens of the Commonwealth. Send your report to newsletter@vmga.net. Please include your name and the unit you represent.

Newport News—Peggy Fox

With a new year comes new energy and a renewed focus on outreach. Our unit will begin development and launching of a new program to encourage residents, whether they live in a house or an apartment, to increase the number of native plants living in their landscapes. This new program, currently titled Newport News Eco Network, will feature workshops, on-site visits to residences and educational programming (initially in virtual format). This new program was inspired by a recent book study on **Nature's Best Hope** by Doug Tallamy.

THE GRAINETHUMB

George Graine, Fairfax

Houseplants: How Limited Light Can Still Delight

“Houseplants are the perfect sequel to summer.” ---Khang Kijarro Nguyen



Links to places of interest 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](#)

[I Love Gardens.com](#)

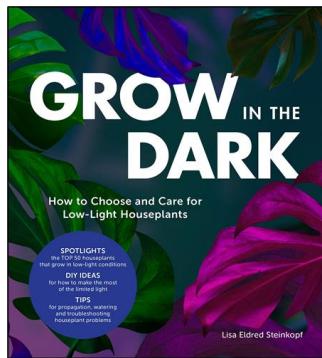
[Virginia Gardening](#)

[Greenspring Gardens](#)

[Southern Virginia Botanical Gardens, South Boston, VA](#)

[US National Arboretum](#)

[The Quarry Gardens at Schuyler](#)

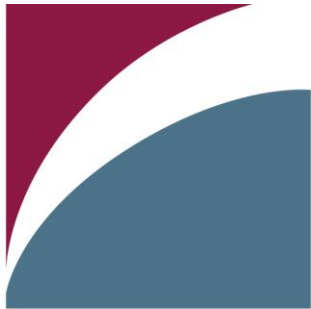


'Tis the season for houseplants. No, this is not another article about poinsettia or amaryllis. You should be able to find plant care for these merry-happy plants available on the internet. Instead, let's concentrate on houseplants that should be safely indoors after they may have summered outside. All these plants will probably need to make several adjustments due to lower humidity and, in many instances, a lower light condition. Not to fret because houseplant guru Lisa Eldred Steinkopf has written a quintessential houseplant book called **"Grow in the Dark: How to Choose and Care for Low-Light Houseplants"** (Cool Springs Press, 2019). Included are profiles on 52 houseplants that should grow and thrive even in dimly lit parts of your home.

Before the generous section on plant profiles there are several introductory chapters. These are must reads so that you will be able to take full advantage of the "ideal" plant that will fit into the "perfect" space you allocate. Perhaps in your home you want a plant that makes a statement or add to a collection of houseplants or anything in between. Reading the first 30 pages of the book will prepare you for what is to come – the plants. Both you and your plants will thank you for taking time to read about illumination (sun and electricity), hydration (watering), and vitamins (fertilizing) and maintenance (including how to buy a houseplant). To be sure, these essential pages go beyond anything you may have read on a plant tag that was attached to the plant when you purchased it.

In these chapters, the author sums up how easy it is to care for and maintain houseplants. She says you need to learn "...to pay attention to the needs of your plants and meeting those needs in a timely manner." Furthermore, "The primary factor to consider when choosing a plant is light. It will determine whether your plant will barely survive or thrive." All the plants included in the book were selected because they "...can live in a low to medium light environment." An insightful thought by the author is "If you have enough light to read a book, there is a plant that will live in your home." You should do some research before shopping for plants as well as consider those already in your home. If you decide to skip the introductory chapters, you will do so at your own peril, i.e., the plant peril. Indeed, this is a bit harsh, but you need to recognize that these early pages, with text and examples, should prove to be the key to success with growing houseplants. When considering ILLUMINATION, you need to account for the direction of the sun coming through the windows. Those houses fitted with a skylight have a "fifth" exposure. In all cases, phototropism will take place. That means plants tend to lean towards the sun. This problem is easily fixed by simply turning your plant a quarter turn each time you provide water. In this section you will also read about too much or too little light as well as how to use supplemental electric lights if your situation warrants additional light. As a further aid, the author provides 15 ways to enhance your sunlight.

The next chapter is concerned with HYDRATION AND VITAMINS (fertilizing your plant). Here you will read how water is the number one killer of plants either



Virginia Cooperative Extension

Virginia Tech
Virginia State University

www.ext.vt.edu

Virginia Cooperative Extension programs and employment are open to all, regardless of age, color, 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; M. Ray McKinnie, Administrator, 1890 Extension Program, Virginia State University, Petersburg.

through over or under watering. Regarding fertilizing, this too has led to a variety of misconceptions. Fortunately, the author “un-complicates” these important conditions. Included is a short section on climate and atmosphere. You need to recognize that plants removed from outdoors are now located in an entirely new growing location, that is, your home.

Now let’s consider plant MAINTENANCE. The very first thing you need to think about is how to buy a houseplant. Although this may seem to be a mundane matter, the fact remains that you also need to have a keen eye before you succumb to the pick-me-up-and-buy-me stage. There is a lot to consider. For example, maybe you would like to discard the original plastic nursery pot and replace/repot the plant into your favorite Aunt Maude’s planter. Just make sure it has a drainage hole and the size is not more than 2 to 3 inches larger than the nursery pot. Be careful about the potting medium because plants perform best when situated with the ideal product. For example, you do not want a product that is so dense that plant roots are unable to get enough oxygen. Maintenance also includes grooming your plants even though this should not be a problem or take a lot of time. Some problem situations may appear when you least expect them. Be on the lookout for insect pests and diseases (described in the book). Sometimes a problem associated with the environment may happen. These are also noted; however, they are not caused by insects or disease. For example, this could be normal leaf drop or wilting as a result of insufficient or too much water.

Assuming you read the introductory chapters, the remainder of the book discusses each plant in a strict editorial format. It is reasonable to assume that many of these plants are often available at garden centers that have a separate houseplant section and in a much more limited way, at the box stores. The plant section of the book is arranged alphabetically. Additionally, an index is helpful for a quick look-up that pin-points various pages in the book and, of course, the page for a specific plant. For example, chosen at random are bottom watering, environmental problems, pests and re-potting. Each plant profile includes a single page of critical information plus a beautiful full-page color photo of the plant in a pot. Furthermore, each plant profile will inform you as to what plant can be ideal for your situation. Of course, you might like plant X or Y or Z; however, it might not “work” for you. In other words, it is imperative that you pay close attention to the guidelines for each plant. You can be adventurous if you dare to defy the “rules.” This is akin to planting something in your outdoor garden knowing that it is not appropriate for your plant hardiness zone. All the plants in this book should be carefully considered before you spend a dime.

Every plant is described with other common names and a botanical Latin name. The description also includes:

Light	Size
Water	Propagation (sometimes to create more plants)
Flowers	Cultivars (similar plants when appropriate)
Pet safety	

Some plants in the book may be familiar to you such as snake plant, corn plant, spider plant and wandering Jew. If you are pleased with these plants, then you

might consider branching out to other plants that are not necessarily rare or would cost a king's ransom. For example, the now popular ZZ Plant is botanically known as *Zamioculeas zamiifolia* or perhaps the Chinese Evergreen, *Aglaonema* would suit your indoor situation. This plant has several cultivars, all with interesting color variations. There are so many houseplants to select from this book that it may become confusing. If that happens, take a trip to a garden center and look over the houseplants being offered for sale. Ask questions before deciding. This will help you sort things out in your mind and at the same time allow you to visualize where the plant will be located once you get home. This can be a fun way to spend a part of your day at any time of the year. Happy houseplant hunting!

GROW YOUR OWN FOOD

Tom Baughn, Fauquier



A series of webinars and a lab will be offered (COVID permitting) to walk participants through the principal parts of growing their own food and preserving their bounty for future enjoyment. This series is designed and available, with registration, to beginners and Extension Master Gardeners wishing to improve their confidence in advising gardeners in their community. Each of the four sessions is 90 minutes in length, with an intermission, to cover more information and encourage Q & A.

February 27 **Growing Vegetables in Virginia--Ira Wallace.** Both beginner and Master Gardener benefit from the research Ira published in a book, in 2020, on growing vegetables in Virginia.

May 16 **Diseases: Fungi, Bacteria, Nutrient deficiencies, etc.-- Dr. Timothy Durham** of Ferrum College VA. Dr. Durham will discuss the common diseases and their management. You may remember him from 2020 Master Gardener College. He has a doctorate from the University of Florida in Plant Medicine, a relatively new discipline that concentrates on plant health.

June 29 **Pests--Jon Traunfeld** of the University of Maryland. The first half of Jon's program will focus on organic control of some of the most common pests in the vegetable garden. The second part will be interactive as Jon demonstrates how to effectively photograph and submit samples to Help Desks, and then examine some samples submitted by the participants via their computers.

September 21 **Preserving the Bounty-- Becky Gartner, Ext. Agent for Rapidan Master Gardeners** Hybrid (COVID permitting) with in-person attendance and broadcast via Zoom. This final session will cover the preservation of the bounty from your garden. Becky is an expert in this field and will conduct a lab/demonstration that will also be available on Zoom. Lab will be conducted at Madison Extension Office 2 South Main St, Madison, VA 22727. She provides an overview of food

preservation methods, from drying to pressure cooking, including the pluses and minuses of each, a demonstration of the equipment used for each method, and the trusted sources for the equipment. Food safety protocols and standards are emphasized to assure enjoyment of the food.

Further details and registration link by email and Facebook soon. Sponsored and produced by the Education Committee of Virginia Master Gardeners Association. Contact: Tom Baughn tbpublius@comcast.net

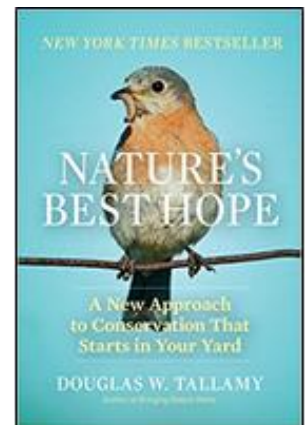
REVIEW: NATURE'S BEST HOPE

Pamela McGraw, Loudoun County

Well, if you thought Doug Tallamy's last book, **Bringing Nature Home**, or his previous venture, **The Living Landscape** with Richard Darke, presented thoughtful challenges, you will find **Nature's Best Hope** stepping it up further. However, it is a challenge we, particularly as Master Gardeners, should all take seriously as we develop our own gardens, whether for ornamentals, vegetables, or some of both.

Though not an easy read, it is definitely compelling and persuasive. For those of you who heard Tallamy speak at our Symposium several years ago, you may note a pressing urgency in his tone....and rightfully so as we give greater focus to climate control and the nurture of our Earth.

This book deals in a practical way with Tallamy's vision for a cohesive, coordinated approach by each of us to do "all we can" within our own spheres. Many suggestions—shrinking our lawns, adding native plants in our gardens, and resisting the urge to maintain perfectly manicured gardens—are not unfamiliar to us; but in a more personal approach, he shares with the reader how and what he and his wife strive for in their own landscape, fondly referred to as "Tallamyland." He shares a great deal about wildlife and their particular preferences and needs, along with how we each can cooperate with nature in supplying them and surely not make their livelihood more difficult. While conservation measures and environmental stewardship implemented by government may help, it is a lesser part of the solution.



He advocates for a change in attitude that will lead us away from an adversarial relationship with the natural world, such as that which facilitated the survival of hunter-gatherers, to one of restoration in the areas around our homes, in our municipal parks, as well as to much of our infrastructure. He calls this effort one of developing "connectivity" a sort of "we're all in this together" approach. Surely no

one can argue that point, so Tallamy proceeds to pare down each of these sectors into bite-size efforts we might all make....and he does it convincingly. His content is backed by scientific evidence, yet the text remains readable to the layman.

Tallamy shares many stories and observations from his personal travels, most of which will demand the reader to “stop and consider.” One such story follows:

Not long ago, my son called to ask me what he should do about the red fox that had built a den under his back porch and was playing with her cute little kits in the backyard. I was delighted and more than a little surprised. My son and his family live in a crowded suburb of Washington, D.C., and I didn’t think there would be enough rabbits, voles, and groundhogs in his neighborhood to support a family of foxes. I replied, “That’s great! Celebrate! The kids will never forget watching the kits grow up.” But he did not share my enthusiasm. “We can’t have these things living under the house. They will eat Jimmy” (his 2-year-old). I explained that foxes are harmless and that he was very lucky to have such great natural entertainment right in his yard. He persisted. “Dad, this is the real world.” I said, “This is a dead world unless we are willing to share it with other living things.”

Nothing more to say, except that **Nature’s Best Hope** is a MUST read and perhaps a great gift for your fellow gardener.

*Reprinted with permission. Originally posted in The Trumpetvine.

2021 VMGA BI-MONTHLY BOARD MEETINGS

Our meetings will be held via Zoom, until further notice.
Watch for upcoming emails for details.

- February 13 JCC/Williamsburg jccwmg.org
April 10 Central Rappahannock Area www.mgacra.org
June 12 Annual Meeting Host unit needed.
August 14 Loudoun www.loudouncountymastergardeners.org

Host Units Needed--We need units willing to host our bi-monthly meetings. Highlight your unit’s program activities with a 10 to 15-minute presentation at the beginning of the meeting. Contact Leslie Paulsen today!



Calendar 2021

- Jan 23 [MG Central Rappahannock Seed Swap](#)
DIY: AN INTRODUCTION TO SEED SAVING FOR THE HOME GARDENER
<https://extension.umaine.edu/publications/2750e/>
- Feb 4 Using Native Plants in your Existing Landscape
Loudoun County MGs
<https://viriniatech.zoom.us/j/86495610346?pwd=ODhPZGJiVhMM3VBK2JZV3ZZM2pHUT09>
- Feb 27 Deadline for submissions to VMGA newsletter**
- Mar 1 Scholarship applications for IMGC now being accepted
- Mar 1 Search for Excellence application deadline
<https://imgcsfe.com/about/>
- Mar 6 Gardening in the Valley, Northern Shenandoah Valley MGs
<nsvmga.org/events/symposium>
- Mar 20 Loudoun County MG Annual Symposium
On-line registration opens February 1st. Cost: \$40
<http://loudouncountymastergardeners.org/events/annual-symposium/>
- April 5 IMGC 2021 Registration begins
- April 17-24 The Path Forward: Historic Garden Week 2021
<https://www.vagardenweek.org/>
- April 22-25 Colonial Williamsburg Garden Symposium
<https://www.colonialwilliamsburg.org/learn/on-site-opportunities/>
- June 5 Scholarship applications for IMGC 2021 due
- June 5-13 Philadelphia Flower Show
<https://phsonline.org/the-flower-show>
- Sept 13-17 International Master Gardener Conference--Virtual
"Cultivate Our Legacy"
<https://www.internationalmastergardener.com/>