



The VMGA Report

THE Voice for Virginia Master Gardeners
<https://vmga.net/wordpress/>

May/June 2021

Volume 26, Number 6

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VMGA Officers

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Leslie Paulson, Prince William

Vice President-
Nelda Purcell
Franklin County

Secretary-
Betsy Brown
Bedford County

Treasurer-
Georgianna Hall
Loudoun County

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

It's been a crazy spring, hasn't it? Typical of the weather these days. I hope all of you conducting plant sales have been successful. It's so nice to see the looks on customers' faces as they pick out new plants and start planning where they will go in their flower beds.

It's been almost a year since I became President of VMGA. During this time, we have made changes to the by-laws and standing rules. We've also had good discussions about what works and how to provide advanced education for our membership. We really need to encourage more of our EMG Volunteers to join our state association to take advantage of what VMGA offers. Please consider talking this up as you host events and meetings locally. Imagine our membership roster growing to over 500 members with potential for even more. Direct your volunteers to our website <https://vmga.net/wordpress/vmga-membership-application-renewal-form/> or contact Deb Straw at membership@vmga.net. Current VMGA members, be sure you renew your \$12 annual membership which will expire on May 31 or consider renewing as a Continuing Member for a one-time payment of \$120.

I hope you have signed up for International Master Gardener Conference 2021. We have some wonderful speakers lined up as well as interesting break-out sessions. **Registration** is open and waiting for you to sign up.

Our Annual Meeting will be held on June 12th at 10 am. We will be voting on changes to our by-laws about the category "Lifetime Members," which will now be known as Continuing Members. Language can be confusing, and we hope this makes it clearer.

VMGA

Membership has its advantages:

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

FROM THE EDITOR

Deadline for
July/August issue:
June 26

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

Please send to:
Peggy Fox,
VMGA Newsletter Editor
Newport News unit
newsletter@vmga.net

Lastly, please send your favorite Virginia recipes to Wanda Gerard to share in a special cookbook being offered to attendees of IMG. This cookbook will highlight a taste of the Virginia food experience to folks, wherever they are from. Just send it to her here: pastpresident@vmga.net.

Enjoy your spring while you can because summer will be upon us soon. I hope to see you at the Annual Meeting in June.

Thank you,
Leslie

2021 VMGA BI-MONTHLY BOARD MEETINGS

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

June 12 Annual Meeting Host Unit: Central Rappahannock Area
www.mgacra.org

By Law Changes in Reference to Membership

Please join us at our Annual Meeting. Please review the proposed changes. We will vote between 10:15-10:30am but hope you will stay for the entire meeting. A quorum is necessary to conduct voting to accept the proposed changes to our by-laws. We will have discussion if needed. Thank you and I will see you then.

Leslie Paulson, VMGA President

August 14 Loudoun www.loudouncountymastergardeners.org

October 9 Host unit needed

December 11 Host unit needed

News and Notes from VCE Liaison

Kathleen Reed, EMG Program State Coordinator

State Office Webinar Series:

May 20, 10:00 am | 4TheSoil

Registration required.

For additional updates, be sure to check out the Bi-weekly Update at
<https://mastergardener.ext.vt.edu/biweekly-update/>

MEMBERSHIP: Annual Renewal

Deb Straw, VMGA Membership Chair

The State Association is your voice and the voice of your local association with the

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.

State Legislature, the Virginia Tech Cooperative Extension program and the Green Industry of Virginia in general.

Membership dues for new, renewal or lifetime, are now being accepted for the coming fiscal year, June 1- May 31. A completed form is required for all new and/or renewal memberships and must be returned with your check made payable to VMGA, Inc. or you may complete the form and pay online using PayPal at this link: [VMGA Membership Application & Renewal Form – Virginia Master Gardener Association](#)



IF you are paying by check, complete the form and mail your check to:

Deb Straw, VMGA Membership Chair
249 Snapps Mill Road
Spout Spring, VA 24593

Questions? Please contact Deb at 434-352-5024 or email her at debstraw@aol.com

EDUCATION

The Virginia Cooperative Extension and Virginia Master Gardeners Education Committee are offering a presentation on **Common Diseases in the Vegetable Garden**, live on Zoom, May 11th at 6pm.

Diseases (Fungal, Bacterial, Viral), even nutrient deficiencies, will start appearing in various plants by May. Dr. Durham, Doctorate in Plant Medicine from Univ. of Florida and currently Assoc. Professor at Ferrum College, VA, will discuss the common diseases and their biological and sustainable management. He is also a life-long agriculturist, having grown up on his family's farm.

The webinar is the second session in the four-program series "**Grow Your Own Food.**" The series walks participants through the principal parts of growing their own food and preserving their bounty for future enjoyment. Registration is limited to 300 participants. Each session is 1 hr. and 30 mins. in length (with an optional

session.

We had 300 registrants with 256 in attendance, and 48 have viewed the recording.

Handouts and examples of forms and activities are housed in a Google folder and can be accessed with this link:

https://drive.google.com/drive/folders/16poKZE4Y6hNbdYVRwhABjDc2-_k6sXG?usp=sharing

For those of you who missed the webinar or want to view it again, Kirk Barley has posted the video. Use this link: <https://youtu.be/KWajXNO226o>

We hope you found the information inspiring. One of our goals is to start a Directory of Units in Virginia who have active TH programs and can act as a resource to network with each other. Stay tuned. We are looking for volunteers who can help brainstorm on how to get this initiated.

Fern Campbell for the VMGA Education Committee

Diane Relf VMGA SCHOLARSHIPS

Tonya Harper, Scholarship Chair, Roanoke

Deadline for applications is fast approaching.

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 IMG2021 is eligible to win. The scholarship application must 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.vmganet.net/wordpress, select Education → Diane Relf Scholarship.

Submissions will be accepted 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.

VIRGINIA RECIPES WANTED

Calling for recipes for a Virginia IMGC 2021 Cookbook

Please email a copy of your favorite recipes to Wanda Gerard at:

pastpresident@vmga.net. Recipes should feature Virginia agricultural products or have some historical/cultural significance to the Commonwealth. Also, because our attendees live across the globe, please include American and metric measurements for your recipes. Conversion charts can be found online.

NOTES FROM JAMES CITY COUNTY/WILLIAMSBURG MASTER GARDENERS

Joanne Sheffield JCC/Wmsbg

Our Unit was pleased to virtually host the February meeting of the VMGA. Considering the weather, we were fortunate to be able to do so with Zoom. Our President, Marty Oakes, gave an overview of the past year while Rick Brown gave a PowerPoint presentation on the Tree Steward project which he and the other team members began in conjunction with Colonial Williamsburg. This has been an ongoing project since 2018. Their application for Level I Status (25 trees and/or woody shrubs tagged) was approved in September 2018, as a fully accredited national arboretum. Work was completed on July 22, 2019 that elevated the arboretum to Level II status (100 trees and/or woody shrubs tagged). CW is now the only Level II arboretum in the Commonwealth. The eventual, long-term goal is for the arboretum to become a fully accredited Level III (500 trees and/or woody shrubs tagged). Currently, the only Level III arboretum in the Commonwealth is Arlington National Cemetery.

Under better circumstances, we would like to have had VMGA members attending Williamsburg in person, so they could have taken advantage of the information learned in Rick's presentation. We will look forward to hosting an in-person meeting in the future.

In the meantime, here is the list of resources Rick provided at the meeting.

Resources for the Avid Tree Hugger

Colonial Williamsburg Arboretum colonialwilliamsburg.org/learn/-arboretum-and-gardens

iTree/myTree-itree.tools.org

Virginia Big Trees bigtree.cnre.vt.edu

PlantsMap plantsmap.com/organizations/colonial-williamsburg-foundation-arboretum

App-Flora of Virginia (\$19.99)

App-PlantSnap (free)

App-Seek by iNaturalist (free)

App-PictureThis (\$29.29)

THE GRAINETHUMB

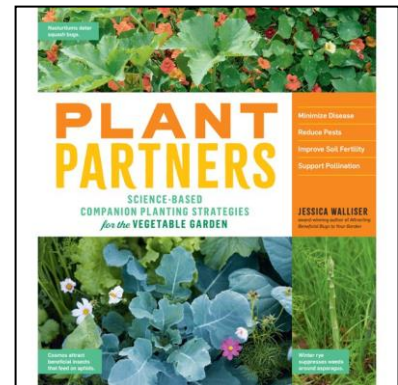
Planting Vegetables: Going Beyond Tradition

George Graine, Fairfax

“It seems to me an utter waste of words to argue whether vegetables, of one genus or an identical kind, are species or varieties.” William Herbert in *Amaryllidaceae, With a Treatise on Cross-bred Vegetables* (1837)

How often have you seen a package in the grocery store indicating “new and improved”? This saying could just as well apply to a new book – “Plant Partners: Science-Based Companion Planting Strategies for the Vegetable Garden” by Jessica Walliser (Storey Publishing, 2020). To be clear, companion planting is not a new idea; however, the importance of science-based research was often overlooked or may not have been fully understood in the past. As an example, more than 45 years ago Louise Riotte wrote a best seller (more than 800,000 copies in print) called “Carrots Love Tomatoes: Secrets of Companion Planting for Successful Gardening.”

The introduction to Walliser’s book sets the tone for what to expect in her up-to-date book for a gardener who desires to maximize and experience the best garden possible. She leads us on a journey towards “A way that approaches the garden as an ecosystem comprising many different complex layers of plants, fungi, and animals, all of which are connected to a massive web of life.” In other words, there is a lot more to companion planting than simply putting several different types of plants together with the expectation that they will enhance growth and delay the destruction of your plants due to pests and/or disease. Although this is still important, we now know, based on research, experimentation and more, that the new way for plant partnerships has been shown to be a definite improvement. Simply putting plant A adjacent to plant B and hoping for the best outcome is akin to deciding ahead of time which horse will win the Kentucky Derby. The point of “Plant Partners” will become your road map with a way to “improve plant health, yield, and productivity.” The book which includes eight chapters, although independent of one another, are written as a building block. Each will lead to your success in the garden. Of course, you can meander about the chapters, but omitting a chapter is not a good plan. Each contains valuable information, some of which may be new to you, because you may have previously received poor information or made bad decisions based on erroneous information (myths?).



These days the word ecosystem has taken on many political considerations. For gardeners we need to deal with a wild ecosystem. We need to understand and manage as many components as possible because the complexities are in constant interaction and we often are not aware of what is happening at any given moment of time. For example, you will read chapters on many different ways to manage weeds, pests and plant diseases. As you read “Plant Partners,” you will become acquainted with the concept of biological control. Simply put, that means attracting and supporting beneficial insects. Beyond the obvious, the book includes information on how to improve soil fertility or structure (no till gardening vs. the negative impact of using another means of soil cultivation such as a rototiller). In addition, plant partners will also enhance your garden’s aesthetics. Details of these benefits are clearly explained in the various chapters of the book.

“Each chapter begins with an introduction to the problem, followed by several research-based plant combos and other strategies that use companion planting as an effective tool to solve a particular problem.” The importance of an eco-system based approach to the modern landscape tends to refine older planting methods. Doing so, you will generate benefits that heretofore were probably not considered or thought possible. You will become a more successful gardener by examining the ways plants influence each other. Furthermore, the emphasis on environmentalism should not be ignored. Leaving aside the arguments for and against global warming/climate change, gardeners need to understand how working in the soil is an eco-system. You will actually be supporting bio-diversity by filtering rainwater, sequestering carbon and providing many other services noted in the book. To understand this terminology is to know there are many different ways of approaching a garden from past practices.

The old concept of a vegetable garden that looked like a mini-farm with row upon row of the same crop needs to be changed (challenged?). This old way is a mono-culture and it is no wonder that farms have a variety of problems. As gardeners we do not need to mimic the straight line rows of vegetables. Mix it up a bit and consider bio-diversity – vegetables, fruits, herbs and flowers all growing together. This is not heresy – this is diversity. Now you will be supporting pollinators, deter plant pests and help to limit soil nutrient depletions. Aside from all the goodness that can come from plant diversity, consider how attractive such a garden will become. Walliser includes seven benefits of companion planting. Perhaps a better word is planting strategies. These include reduction of pressures caused by (1) pests, (2) weeds, (3) disease; and improvement in (4) soil fertility and soil structure, (5) pollination, (6) biological control and (7) not to be forgotten – aesthetics.

Rather than comment on the more obvious individual chapters that deal with management of weeds, pests, disease and soil preparation and conditioning, let’s turn to a less understood part of gardening, that is, biological control and

pollination. These are the last two chapters in the book and they are both critical to your success as a gardener. Biological control is a way to attract and support beneficial insects, those that tend to keep the “bad” bugs in check. The point is the need to achieve a semblance of balance to your garden in a natural way. Doing so will reduce the need for pesticide control. In other words, use “...one living organism to help control the population of another.” This is really a “good” vs. “evil” contest where you hope to repel the baddies. In order to achieve biological control, you might need to consider the creation of “... a habitat that’s favorable to the insects, and by providing them with any necessary food sources, not by intentionally releasing insects into the environment.” More simply put, you should “invite” beneficial insects that will consume undesirable insects. These predators and parasitoid insects will become a force that needs to be encouraged in order to maintain natural pest control.

Recently we have heard a lot about pollination but sometimes the rhetoric does not always agree with reality. Of course, there needs to be a match between the plant and a pollinator. Although the chapter on pollination is heavy on different bee species, know that many other insects also play a part in pollination. Additionally, it is important to know and acknowledge that insects tend to be plant specific regarding pollination. This means that plant diversification is the key to your success. This will foster a thriving insect population which in turn will aid your companion planting.

Calendar 2021

- May 17 Tech Savvy Gardening, presented by VB MGs
[Detail description of Gardening Talks - VBMG](#)
- May 20 EMG Webinar: 4TheSoil Register here: [Meeting Registration - Zoom](#)
- May 21 [The Bee Short Course for Community Scientists | Building wild bee conservation skills together \(osu.edu\)](#)
- June 5 IMGCC 2021 Scholarship applications 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/>
- Sept 23-26 American Community Garden Association conference, Hampton
[Events | ACGA \(communitygarden.org\)](#)