



# The VMGA Report

## The Voice for Virginia Master Gardeners

<https://vmga.net/wordpress/>

November/December 2022

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**From the President**  
**Georgi Hall, Loudoun County**

### President's Letter

On October 8, we had our first FY23 in-person Bimonthly meeting hosted by James City County/Williamsburg Master Gardeners Association. It was great seeing so many people in person. Marty Oakes, JCC/Williamsburg Association's Past President welcomed us and introduced their Extension Agent, Forrest Hobbs, the Mayor of Williamsburg, Doug Pons, and the Chairman of the Board of Supervisors for James City County, John McGlennon. Thank you, James City County/Williamsburg Master Gardeners, for your warm welcome and hospitality.

Our next Bi-monthly meeting will be via Zoom on December 10th. More information will be available as we get closer to the date. If you do not receive information, contact your Unit Representative.

It isn't too early to start thinking about attending International Master Gardeners Conference. International Master Gardeners Conference is held every other year in locations across the United States and Canada. In 2023, it will be held in Overland, Kansas June 18-22, 2023. Choose from 48 breakout sessions, 12 hands on engaging workshops, and experience tours of public and private gardens as well as an array of gardening attractions. Registration opens November 2022 with a discounted EARLY BIRD REGISTRATION rate. Early registration is available through March 1, 2023. Registration includes six catered meals (one dinner, three breakfasts, two lunches), trade show, classroom sessions and exclusive keynote presenters. Tours, workshops, and evening activities are additional fees. Tours and workshops will fill up fast. First come, first serve for all activities. [imgc2023.com](http://imgc2023.com)

Thank you,  
Georgi Hall

VMGA President – [president@vmga.net](mailto:president@vmga.net)

## 2022 VMGA BI-MONTHLY BOARD MEETINGS

December 10th

### VMGA Officers

President

Georgianna Hall  
Loudoun County

Vice President

Nelda Purcell  
Franklin County

Secretary

Deb Straw  
Hill City County

Treasurer

Stacey Morgen-Smith  
Suffolk County

Past President

Leslie Paulson  
Prince William County

### CALENDAR

**June 18—22, 2023**—International Master Gardener Conference 2023— [IMG2023](#)

### NEWS AND NOTES FROM VCE LIAISON

Kathleen Reed, EMG Program State Coordinator

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

### Ground Broken on New Horticultural Learning Center

Hanover County Press Releases—Posted on: October 18, 2022

[Hanover County Press Releases](#)

Ground broken on new Horticultural Learning Center

Horticultural Learning Center groundbreaking

Ground was broken on a Horticultural Learning Center in Hanover County on October 14. The center, a multi-year project undertaken by Hanover Master Gardeners, will sit on 1.10 acres next to the Taylor Complex building at 13015 Taylor Complex Lane, Ashland VA 23005.

County Administrator John A. Budesky said the center will serve the community for many years to come. He noted that agriculture is still the #1 business in Hanover County and thanked the Master Gardeners for their work, including providing much volunteer support to the County's COVID-19 community vaccination efforts.

The Horticultural Learning Center will be a space for public education, demonstrating research-based gardening practices which can be incorporated into the home setting. Hanover Master Gardeners will manage the garden. It will consist of multiple raised beds constructed through different methods and materials and feature perennial, annual, and native plants, herbs and vegetables.

Some of the raised beds will demonstrate vertical gardening techniques. A significant feature of the garden will be a rainwater harvesting system and other water-wise practices. The garden will be a public space developed over the next several years and incorporate space for outdoor classes.

Budesky noted that 100 people volunteer to serve as Hanover Master Gardeners. "This is second to none," he said. "This center will continue the tremendous commitment you have made to work with the community."

Angelette Pryor, Extension Volunteer Manager for the Hanover Extension Office, said this



VMGA Membership has its advantages:

- ◆ Unit Support
- ◆ Scholarships
- ◆ Newsletter
- ◆ Advanced Training
- ◆ Discount Event Fees
- ◆ Membership Directory
- ◆ Statewide Networking

### From the Editor

Deadline for January/

February issue:

**December 27**

We would 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, or other topic of interest. This will encourage involvement around the state, getting more involved.

Please send to:

VMGA Newsletter Editor

[newsletter@vmga.net](mailto:newsletter@vmga.net)

project has been the result of “many years of sweat equity” from numerous Master Gardener volunteers. She noted that the Hanover Master Gardeners have contributed 6,000 hours of volunteer service this year alone.

“Nature is their office and this garden will become their living room”, Pryor said.

Buzz Sawyer, Master Gardener and past president of the Hanover Master Gardener Association, said the horticultural center will become a “practical hands-on laboratory that is accessible to everyone.”

Pryor said the first order of business will be capturing rainwater off the Extension Service building. Raised bed construction for spring planting will begin in January 2023. Master Gardeners will need to raise funds or obtain grant monies for all part sof the Learning Center.

To make donations or for more information about how you can help, contact Angelette Pryor at (804) 752-4309.

## State Fair

Ruth Huber

James City County/Williamsburg Master Gardeners

### Popcorn! Peanuts! Pizza! Fried dough! Ice Cream! Get it right here!



The food and smells of the Virginia State Fair were in the air in September. The excitement of the children was obvious as they crowded around the VCE Master Gardener displays. Where are the worms? What is in the box? How do worms make dirt? The Master Gardeners were enthusiastic in responding to all questions and providing written information for reference at home.

Our theme was Decomposers and we had displays for leaf composting and worm composting. There were jars with various stages of compost for comparison. Many folks requested brochures for “How to Compost” and “Worm Composting”. The miniature model bins, barrels and wood stacks were all interesting to the adults and students. Since our booth was an “Education Stop” numerous curious children had questions.



Children told of learning about flowers and growing vegetables in their school gardens. One young man said he learned from his grandmother how to plant and take care of tomatoes. What can be better than passing knowledge from generation to generation and learning at the State Fair?

Many of the Master Gardeners volunteer every year. When asked, they gladly state that it is because they have fun and enjoy meeting the attendees. I also enjoy eating at the Virginia Tech “Block & Bridle Club” tent. The students and some adults cook and serve a delicious dinner of pork, beef or lamb for a nominal price.

Our booth was staffed from 10AM to 8PM for the duration of the Fair. Over 83 Master Gardeners from 10 units volunteered and we had 3,627 contacts during the time the Fair was open.



## NEWSWORTHY NOTES FROM NOTABLE NEWSLETTERS

The VMGA Report is always looking for submissions from EMGs, Unit Representatives, VMGA Committee Chairs, VCE Agents, and VCE Program Associates. The next deadline for the VMGA Newsletter is December 27th. What can you submit? All the news that's fit to print! Here are a few suggestions to get you started:

- Training recaps. Tell us your takeaways!
- Highlights of your successes in programming, lessons learned, photos of volunteers in action
- Upcoming events offered by your unit
- Book reviews
- Plant or garden spotlights.
- Photos of your plants
- Recipes using produce from your garden or a farmer's market
- Garden-related poems and other creative writing

Be sure to include your name and unit name. Submit your content by email to [newsletter@vmga.net](mailto:newsletter@vmga.net).

### **The Pawpaw**

Erika Jones

Loudoun County Master Gardener

I started on my pawpaw obsession some 20 years ago and planted three trees in the backyard. I had two out of three of my yard trees produce this year starting on October 2nd which is about average for production (trees and date) for my house. My elevation is 2300' and am a cold zone six; a friend of mine with native trees along the North Fork of the Roanoke River (basically zone seven) had hers show up some three weeks later. I know the pawpaw breeders have been trying hard to expand the 'season' that pawpaw ripen. I guess I have an 'early' variety.

Pawpaw are being bred for Kentucky State U – see <https://www.kysu.edu/academics/college-ac/school-of-ace/pawpaw/licensed-propagators-for-kentucky-state-university-trademarked-pawpaw-cultivars.php>. I recommend purchasing a variety vs seedling grown. Growers are also trying to breed out that flavor that can cause mild nausea – like what happens when some people eat bananas. Their growth habit is that they send up multiple shoots from the roots; so digging up 'seedlings' can be challenging to find a plant that is not attached to underground runners. As for most trees I recommend transplanting early spring. The county building inspector came to my house in September and dug up about six seedlings; he said he had one survive. And speaking of one; you probably need two separate plants. Ask at your local nursery; you might start a trend by requesting them. I found one for sale in Richmond once for a friend! (But she only had one tree).

If you look for trees in the woods there are two caveats. One – they mostly grow in communities and Two – they often can be found along water bodies; usually small to medium creeks. Although I just heard about a whole pasture full of them; maybe spread by the residents (aka cattle). Bears and deer totally adore them too; if you let them sit on the ground they can get cleaned up overnight.

Planting location - They can be a bit fickle to get growing. I have read about people who stretch shade cloth over the transplants for a year or two to get them past transplant shock and 'used' to more sun. They will take a little bit of shade but will grow in full sun once you get them going. Too much shade means basically no fruit. Light weight (white) row cover would work too which is what I did.

Harvesting. I usually wait until they start to fall off by themselves although hand picking reduces bruises. When they are ripe they will come off the tree very easily. If you have not been keeping tabs on your tree, a give-away for them getting ripe is when the deer/bears leave some of the seeds behind on the ground.

Storage. They keep about a week in the refrigerator. They freeze exceedingly well (I peel and de-seed and mash but suspect you could freeze whole). The white settlers in this country converted them to brandy (which you can



still buy, apparently) for a storable product.

WVU, which is in Morgantown WV, has a pawpaw festival every year - <https://arboretum.wvu.edu/wv-pawpaw-festival>. If you go to Morgantown I can recommend the arboretum at WVU (the Core Arboretum) which is where the festival is (<https://arboretum.wvu.edu/about>) and the (WV) state botanic garden (maybe 7 miles away) - see [www.wvbg.org](http://www.wvbg.org). I think our (Virginia) state arboretum is more fun, but I am biased.

The Core Arboretum at WVU is 91 acres with some old growth forest wedged in between the Monongahela river and Monongahela Boulevard; the latter runs alongside of the campus. Their website says 'somewhat steep'. Well, being along side of as big of a river as the Monongahela that is an understatement. Once you are (safely) down the hill you can bike/hike along the (Mon River) Rail to Trail that runs along the river and surrounding waterways for some 70 miles. And yes you can find labeled Pawpaw in the Arboretum.

This Pawpaw was stored in the refrigerator for about a week. It is showing it's age with the bruising. When fresh the skin is a solid green.



Photo: Tennessee River Gorge Trust



## INSIGHTS: ABSCISSION, WHY LEAVES FALL

by Abbie & Vincent Panettiere  
Prince William County Master Gardener Volunteers



*Vaccinium* sect. *Cyanococcus*; photo by Jason Alexander

Now that fall is showing signs that it is here, we are starting to see the early evidence that plants are beginning to shut down for the cold months of winter to prepare for the next year's growing season.

One item in the fall schedule that always fascinated me was watching the leaves fall from the trees. They did it in such a gentle way, floating down to the ground. It was hard to imagine how they managed to fall, particularly at the end of the autumn color season when so many fell in gentle unison to lie in wait for raking up, or just patiently resting in place and gradually becoming part of the soil to nourish future life.

What I was doing, I discovered, was watching “abscission,” a term taken from the Latin *ab* – “away” and *scindere* – “to cut.” *Abscission*, though, refers to more than just the shedding of dead or dying leaves. It is a term that refers – as far as plants are concerned - to the normal shedding of any structure that isn't needed anymore by the plant.

The general term has wider use. It refers also to the shedding of any body part that no longer is needed. In zoology, it might refer to the shedding of a claw, a husk, or part of a tail to avoid capture by a predator - but we needn't go into that here.

In regard, then, to plants: if there is a dearth of one or more nutrients the plant needs, such as nitrogen, or if water is scarce, that can trigger a die-off in parts of the plant such as leaves, and lead to abscission. If a plant is carrying too many fruits to bring all to ripen well, the plant will abscise some of the fruits to help the others come to maturity in better shape.

But in fall, we see abscission most notably when leaves begin to fall from deciduous trees. Due to shortening days and cooling temperatures, the plant cannot make as much chlorophyll as was possible in summer months. The tree responds to this by gradually stopping production of chlorophyll. As the waning supply is resorbed and sent down to nourish the roots of the tree for the winter, carotenoids, the yellow and orange dyes in the leaves that were there all along, are slower to degrade than chlorophyll. So autumn leaves appear yellow and orange.

Some trees' leaves turn red by producing a new pigment, anthocyanin, in fall. There seems to be several theories as to why this might happen. One thought is that it keeps leaves from being sunburned as the green pigment disappears. Red pigment is said to help the tree or bush take in nutrients when the weather gets cooler, before the leaves drop.

This is the decay of leaves at the end of the season, called senescence, or the condition of growing old, a process with which I am familiar. For plants it refers to decaying by time which prepares the leaves of perennials for abscission. Over time, the yellow and other pigments are finally broken down and the final color, brown, appears.

The cycle begins with the leaf being held to the tree by a small branch called a petiole. At the base of the petiole, where it attaches the leaf to the tree, an abscission zone forms in the spring. The purpose of the abscission zone is to allow nutrients and water to move from the roots of the plant to the leaves, and to transfer food from the leaves to the roots for storage. In fall, the tree forms a layer of corky cells in the abscission zone. The top layer of the zone has weak walls. The bottom layer, which expands in the fall, helps the dying leaf drop off. When the time is right, enzymes may digest the middle layer of the abscission zone, causing the leaf to drop off, or in some cases, if there is much rain, the abscission zone cells will take on a large amount of water which causes the corky layer to burst apart, allowing the leaf to fall.

If there is a sudden frost, early in fall, while the trees are changing from green to yellow and orange, leaves on the trees may freeze and die without going through the process of abscission. This happens mainly in young trees and is called marcescence, the withering and persistence of plant organs that normally are shed. Oak, beech, and hornbeam trees are



## Insights: Abscission

### Sources & For More Information

<https://byjus.com/neet/abscission/>

Aakash

Define Abscission –  
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| This Is Why Fall  
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Marcescence From  
Wikipedia, the free  
encyclopedia

likely to have marcescent leaves. One often sees oak trees with leaves frozen on them. The leaves may persist through the winter and not break off until something such as a high wind, breaks the petiole and allows the leaf to drop. There are various theories here, too, as to why frozen leaves stay on the tree. One theory is that the frozen leaves protect next spring's buds from drying out in the winter winds, or possibly that the dead leaves provide a late source of mulch when they fall and decay in spring.

When I decided to try to find out why trees so magically color the landscape in the fall, I wondered if it would spoil the emotional beauty of beholding it, as when a card or magic trick is explained, but it isn't the case. I know, in a rudimentary way, how paintings are put together by artists with brushes and paint, and music from orchestras is played on instruments made of purely material objects of metal, wood and such, but unlike the explained card trick, the magic is truly there, and I know that in the fall the symphony of colors will gloriously amaze me once more.

## Shaking Tree

Jim Baucom

2001

Bending low beneath the strain  
Her red fruit ready to release.  
She seems as though she were  
in pain  
And wishing that her work might cease,  
She bids me to befriend her.

Her craftsmanship begun in May,  
White blossoms knit upon her branches,  
Transformed to fruit through summer days,  
In timeworn nature dances  
Of sun and rain and air.

This fruit her pride, her claim to fame,  
The rounded orbs that give her name,  
So beautifully adorn her frame.  
Without them she'll not be the same,  
But pride now weighs her down.

As colder breeze of autumn blows,  
Her fruit she now must give away.  
Something deep inside  
her knows  
That fruit was never meant to stay  
Upon the growing branches.

And so she beckons me to climb  
Up her old trunk into her arms,  
And shake with all my might  
each limb  
To cause her to release her charms.  
She drops her fruit to feed me.

My life is like the apple tree's,  
For I, too, hold my fruit with pride,  
And fail to see things as  
God sees,  
Until my soul He gently chides.  
I bid Him come and shake me!

