



The VMGA Report

The Voice for Virginia Master Gardeners

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

January/February 2023

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From the President Georgi Hall, Loudoun County

President’s Letter

I hope all of you had a wonderful Holiday Season and will have a great 2023. Welcome to Winter Respite, holiday rush is over and we have a break from the demands of our gardens. No weeding, watering or planting. The pressure is off. It is a great time to plan for this coming year in your garden, our local and State Master Gardener programming and our personal lives. What worked exceptionally well last year and what should not be included again? Did they meet your expectations or do they need tweaking?

If this newsletter has reached you and you are not a VMGA member – please consider joining our state association. If you are a member, why not ask someone who isn’t yet a member to join, or give them a one-year membership as a gift? Regardless of where you are in the commonwealth, share your unit’s events with others by sending the info to calendar@vmga.net for the calendar on the VMGA website. While you are at it, why not ask or solicit volunteers to author articles about these events for our future newsletters? A picture of the event held last year could be included. In addition to news about events, if you have any great articles and unit reports to share with our readers, please send them to newsletter@vmga.net. It’s nice to hear from units and see what subjects you have researched.

As we approach our next Master Gardener College, we need to find an administrative assistant for the Scholarship Committee Chair. Jill Lewis has volunteered to be the chair but needs assistance with the paperwork. This job lasts only a few months prior to VA Master Gardener College. If you are willing to help us out, please let me know at President@VMGA.net. Our Treasurer, Stacey Morgan Smith was last year’s Scholarship Committee Chair and is willing to explain the administrative steps involved and provide guidance.

MG College is in Blacksburg this year. All the details are not worked out, but we will have great speakers, tours and workshops and you will be able to see all your friends from across the state. This year the Steward program will be Tree Steward. Save the dates June 7-11. Let me know if there are any questions or help you need. Once the Master Gardener College registration information is published, encourage members of your unit to attend this year’s MG College.

Following close behind Master Gardener College is International Master Gardener Conference in Overland Park, Kansas June 18-22. Early Registration is available through March 1st using imgc2023.com.

During these cold winter days, I hope you will enjoy favorite pastimes like jigsaw puzzles, try something new such as gourmet cooking, research something that has been on your bucket list for a while or just recharge those inner batteries for the year ahead. Remember to stay safe in all that you do!

Thank you,

Georgi Hall
VMGA President – president@vmga.net

2023 VMGA BI-MONTHLY BOARD MEETINGS

VMGA Officers

President
Georgianna Hall
Loudoun County

Vice President
Nelda Purcell
Franklin County

Secretary
Deb Straw
Hill City County

Treasurer
Stacey Morgan-Smith
City of Suffolk

Past President
Leslie Paulson
Prince William County

February 11th
June 10th
October 9th

April 8th
August 12th
December 9th

CALENDAR

January 12—Loudoun Master Gardeners Virtual Lecture Series—Spotted Lanternfly—loudouncountymastergardeners.org

February 12—Loudoun Master Gardeners Virtual Lecture Series—Cultivars or Straight Species—loudouncountymastergardeners.org

March 3—Loudoun Master Gardeners Virtual Lecture Series—Gardening for Wellness—loudouncountymastergardeners.org

June 18—22, 2023—International Master Gardener Conference 2023— [IMG2023](http://imgc2023.org)



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/>

Another Opportunity to Remember George Graine

The Fairfax County Master Gardeners Association set up a webpage where funds can be donated online or send a check and put in the notes-'Donation George Graine MG College Scholarship.

Here is a link to the George Graine MG College Scholarship donation page:

<https://fairfaxgardening.org/george-graine/>

Or below is mailing instructions for making a donation:

Check Donation by Mail: In the note please indicate George Graine MG College Scholarship

Fairfax County Master Gardeners Association, Inc.
P.O. Box 2033
Merrifield, VA 22116-2033

Funds collected in memory of George Graine will be used towards Virginia Extension Master Gardener College Scholarships. George faithfully attended each year and was very encouraging and supportive of others to attend as well. George would love to see his colleagues from around the State in Blacksburg to network and share ideas.

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:

February 26th.

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

Extension Master Gardener College is held on the Virginia Tech Campus. It is an opportunity for Extension Master Gardeners to broaden their education by learning from Virginia Tech (and other) experts, and it's an opportunity to network with other EMGs from across the commonwealth.

George had been active in our Fairfax County Master Gardeners Association (FCMGA) Master Gardener group for 35 years. He was very active as the VMGA rep and represented you (FCMGA) in VMGA for more than 20 years. He was on the Master Gardener College Advisory Team for 15 years. In Fall of 2020, George received his 14,000 hour volunteer award.

George had a great sense of humor, a walking 'botanical encyclopedia' and was very active in our FCMGA training committee. George would have a list of recommended speakers two pages long. George knew a lot of people in the horticulture industry: Authors, Plant Breeders and Specialists, Arborists etc, and he would help recruit speakers to come to Fairfax and teach classes for us. He was known as 'The Graine Thumb' as his 'pen name' he would often write about new landscape topics, books he read, was a regular contributor to the FCMGA, VMGA and his neighborhood Holmes Run Acres HOA newsletter.

Thanks so much!

Adria

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Adria C. Bordas
Unit Coordinator
Senior Extension Agent-Horticulture
Virginia Cooperative Extension



Thanks for a great 2022!

Dear Extension Master Gardeners,

As another year comes to an end, we at the State EMG Office would like to take a moment to send our sincere thanks for all the dedication you have given to this program throughout the year. Whether you trained this year, are finishing your internship, or have been with the program for years, we are grateful that you continue to be willing to give of your time to strengthen your communities and the EMG Program.

We hope that you have a happy end of 2022 and a wonderful start to the new year. We look forward to seeing what is in store for this program in 2023, many exciting things are in the works! Thank you for all you do to make Virginia a wonderful place to live.

Best,

Kathleen and Devon
The EMG State Office Team

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 **February 26th**. What can you submit? All the news that's fit to print! Here are a few suggestions to get you started:

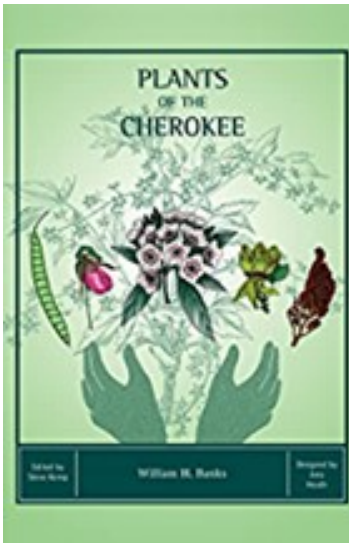
- Training recaps. Tell us your takeaways!
- Highlights of your successes in programming, lessons learned, photos of volunteers in action
- Upcoming events offered by your unit
- Book reviews
- Plant or garden spotlights.
- Photos of your plants
- Recipes using produce from your garden or a farmer's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

Book Review “Plants of the Cherokee”

by Erica Jones

NRVMGA Master Gardener



Book Review – “Plants of the Cherokee” by William H Banks , edited by Steve Kemp. Subtitle is “Medicinal, Edible and Useful Plants of the Eastern Cherokee

I am a big fan of our National Park System and try to visit as many as I can. While there, I totally recommend visiting the visitor center's selection of books for sale. That is where I found this one – it came from in the Great Smokeys National Park.

This book is a unique book; which is typical of the books you can find sold by the park service. It is a recently printed (copyright 2004) of a 1950 era thesis by one William Banks. He interviewed elder Cherokees in the Great Smoky Mountain area to record their knowledge. Since a lot of the scientific names have changed since the 1950's so the 'modern' names are included in the book. The book is copyrighted by the Great Smoky Mountains Association. In a fit of curiosity, I looked at my favorite online book seller for this book. For a mere \$52 it is all yours (used). Huh !

Chapter 1 is an introduction and discussion of the people he interviewed to write his manuscript. Chapter 2 is concerning the Cherokee theory and practice of medicine. Chapter 3 is some 97 pages of plants used by the eastern Cherokee. Most of the plants (more than 300) include extremely well-done sketches of the leaves and reproductive parts of the plants, along with how to pronounce the name of the plant in Cherokee. If you know any native plants at all I can guarantee you will find some in here you know and can read about how they were used in previous generations. Be sure to read the caution at the beginning of the book concerning consumption of these plants. Yes, a lot of them are widely known to be poisonous. (My newfound 'friend' – shows up on page 25. I just discovered I have contact dermatitis to jack-in-the-pulpit. Whoa thought?)

In the remaining five chapters you can learn more about the Cherokees. You can find topics on Cherokee discussions of complaints or illnesses (complaint is a nice way to say that, isn't it?); sacred formulas, the green corn ceremony, the ballgame, and basketry. Plants and herbs play a significant part in all five of these topics.

Extension Master Gardener College Tips for Staying on Campus

- *Stacey Morgan Smith is the VMGA Treasurer and a transfer from the Northern Shenandoah Valley to the City of Suffolk*

Extension Master Gardener College (EMGC) is planned in early June at Virginia Tech this year. This wonderful educational conference is a chance to get together with volunteers from units across the state and learn with – and from – them during a wide variety of talks, workshops, tours, and other learning opportunities. The downtime of meals and evenings also gives you the opportunity to network and get to know volunteers outside of the classroom.

If you're attending for your first time on campus, you may have questions, including what you'll need to bring with you, where (and what) to eat, or what to see or do outside of class. Over the next few issues of this newsletter, I'll share tips compiled by volunteers in the Northern Shenandoah Valley and other units. We'll start with general advice from former attendees.

General Tips:

- Before you head to campus, share your phone number with other attendees from your unit. It helps with meeting up, especially in the age of group chats.

- One evening during the conference includes the VCE-MG Milestone Awards Ceremony. Plan to attend, even if you aren't adding a pin this year. You can cheer the recipients in your unit and join in to recognize volunteers in other units. Celebrating one another is one small way to say, "thank you!" Pictured are me and EMGs Elaine Specht and Nancy Mancuso, along with VCE Agent Mark Sutphin, at the 2019 awards ceremony at the EMGC held in Norfolk. The awards are normally in the largest auditorium during the conference.



- Campus housing includes a meal plan. Eat with your unit or take the opportunity to sit with someone new. (Learn more about dining options in spring). Great conversations are had as we all share how we do things!

- Residence halls are secure, and the floors are accessible only with keycards. You can lodge with a friend or by yourself. Rooms have private bathrooms with showers, and, as of 2022, a small fridge/microwave unit. (Details about some things you may want to bring with you in the next issue.)

- If you have any questions about your residence hall lodging, an info booth is set up on the ground floor during registration. After hours, you can find friendly students at the help desk if you have any issues or have misplaced your keycard.

- Have questions about classes or where to find your session? Conference info booths are present during most breaks, or look for a volunteer wearing a very, very bright neon-yellow shirt.

- All attendees are welcome to join the VMGA meeting, whether members or not. Learn the advantages of membership and opportunities to contribute to the EMG program across the state. You'll also earn a volunteer hour or two (check with your unit coordinator).

- VMGA offers scholarships for attendees who haven't received one before. Keep an eye out for the announcements in 2023 and let your VCE Agent or EMG Coordinator know you'd like to be nominated.

• The Association also sells EMG gear – shirts, jackets, bags, etc. – during the conference. If your unit is small or doesn't get the chance to order often, or if you just want a different color or style of apparel, stop by! Your purchase helps support the VMGA EMG Coordinator Endowment. It may also host a silent auction of gardening-related items donated by units. Bring a little extra money with you to bid on donations from other units. (Stay tuned this spring for more info.)

Still to come:

- What to Bring for the Residence Hall (March/April Newsletter)
- Getting Around Campus & What to See in the Area (May/June Newsletter)

Please send me your tips! If you've stayed on campus and have tips and advice to share, including the things you MUST bring with you, please email me at Treasurer@vmga.net, and I can add your advice to one of the future articles. If you have any questions about attending EMGC, send me an email, and I can get the answers for you and add them to future articles.

Winter Pruning

by Jan Lane

Loudoun County Extension Master Gardener

Winter is a great time to walk around your property and assess where trees and shrubs may need some pruning. With leaves off the trees, it is easier to see where branches may be diseased, broken or rubbing against one another. As winter winds kick up, getting dead branches down becomes a safety measure around the house. Are there shrubs that have overgrown their location and might be limiting the view from inside the house or bumping up against the deck?

Pruning when a tree or shrub is dormant (not actively growing), will take advantage of its natural ability to heal more quickly and cause it less stress. When pruned, a tree responds by closing the wound around the cut and stimulating new growth. By pruning in winter no new growth will occur until spring, and the tree will draw upon stored energy to close the wound. Another benefit is that many disease agents (bacteria, parasites, insects, and fungi) are also dead or dormant and won't infect the wounded area.



With most of the leaves gone it is easier to see where to make thinning cuts on this Japanese maple. Photo by Jan Lane

Pruning Deciduous Trees

Before taking that saw or clipper in hand, it is important to understand the anatomy of a tree and what to prune. The Virginia Cooperative Extension (VCE) website has excellent resources regarding how, when and what to prune. 'A Guide to Successful Pruning: Pruning Deciduous Trees' (www.pubs.ext.vt.edu/430/430-456/430-456.html) provides a detailed overview.

In brief, branches that require pruning include those that are damaged or rubbing against each other, thereby creating an area where disease and infection can enter. Water sprouts (small shoots popping up on branches) or suckers (sprouts at the base of a tree) should be removed as well as they can reduce flowering and fruiting and change the structure of the tree.

Cuts to remove such branches are called "thinning cuts" and involve removal of the branch to the point where they start, either on a larger branch or on the trunk of the tree. Using the diagram on the following page, note where the branch collar occurs in relation to the branch being pruned. If the branch being removed is greater than 1" in diameter use the method outlined in the diagram of making three cuts. Taking time to use this method will avoid tearing



Water sprouts that should be removed from a Yoshino Cherry tree Photo by Jan Lane

the bark, which could allow disease agents to infect the tree. (For greater detail on how to use the “three cut” method refer to ‘A Guide to Successful Pruning’ sited above.)

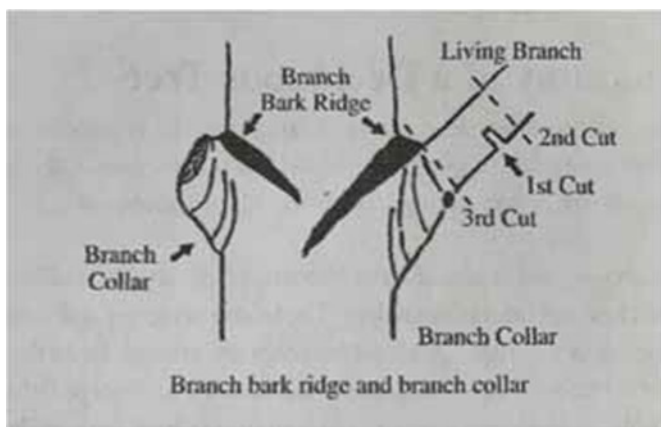


Diagram of the three cut method

Illustration taken from “A Guide to Successful Pruning Deciduous Trees”

Even though there is a reduced chance of infection occurring during winter pruning, it is still vitally important to disinfect tools before and during the pruning process. Disinfecting agents such as rubbing alcohol, or brand name products like “Listerine” or “Lysol” can be used to disinfect pruning tools. However, using household bleach is not recommended as it can be corrosive to metal blades.

For more information on when to prune specific trees check out ‘A Guide to Successful Pruning: Deciduous Tree Pruning Calendar’ (www.pubs.ext.vt.edu/430/430-460/430-460.html).

Pruning Shrubs

While putting up holiday lights this year it became apparent how overgrown the azaleas are at the front of my house. I was tempted to pull out the pruners and start cutting them back, but that would have eliminated their beautiful blooms next spring! Late winter is a time to prune summer flowering shrubs (not those spring flowering shrubs such as azaleas!) to reduce their width and height, and in some cases to rejuvenate the shrub.

The timing on pruning depends on whether the shrub blooms on ‘new wood’ or ‘old wood.’ Spring flowering shrubs bloom on one year old stems. This means that they have already set their buds for next year on the new growth that occurred this year. Spring flowering shrubs are best pruned immediately after they are done blooming. Summer flowering shrubs and trees bloom on “new wood”, the woody stems that grow in the spring. Summer blooming hydrangeas, crape myrtles, and beautyberries for example, can be pruned in late winter. ‘A Guide to Successful Pruning: Shrub Pruning Calendar’ www.pubs.ext.vt.edu/content/dam/pubs_ext_vt_edu/430/430-462/SPES-323.pdf provides information on specific shrubs and when best to prune.

By selecting the right shrub for the right space, and thinking ahead about its mature size, pruning may be eliminated altogether. ‘Selecting Plants for Virginia Landscapes: Showy Flowering Shrubs’ (HORT-84-PDF.pdf (vt.edu) identifies a number of shrubs perfect for this area, with advice on care, pruning when necessary, and placement. A special note for anyone thinking about pruning a crape myrtle – please read this first SPES-387P.pdf (vt.edu) before accidentally committing “crape murder”! We’ve all seen butchered crape myrtles – sticks extending skyward that are bereft of leaves—ruining the shape of the shrub.

Additional VCE Resources

The Virginia Cooperative Extension website (Virginia Cooperative Extension | Virginia Cooperative Extension | Virginia Tech (vt.edu)) is an excellent resource when questions arise about the care of trees and shrubs in your yard. In addition, the VCE Loudoun County Master Gardeners operate an in-person and virtual Help Desk to answer questions regarding best practices in your home garden. Click here to learn how to contact us for assistance researching and finding solutions to problems: <https://loudouncountymastergardeners.org//gardening-advice/help-desk/>. We tend to think that gardening is limited to warmer months. This winter make sure to get out and assess the how your trees and shrubs are faring.

Goals ~~New Year's Resolutions~~

1. Read more gardening books.
2. Grow & eat more fruits & veggies.
3. More gardening exercises.
4. Travel to more gardening events.
5. Enjoy the Gardening Life

