



The VMGA Report

The Voice for Virginia Master Gardeners

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

September/October 2023

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In This Issue

- Message from the President
- 2023 VMGA Bi-Monthly Board Meetings Dates
- Calendar
- News and Notes from VCE Liaison
- Newsworthy Notes from Notable Newsletters
- A Book Review: "Weeds"
- 2024 Master Gardener College will be a Zoom Event
- Hanover Youth Ballfields Decide to go Native
- A Real County Fair
- October 14th VMGA Board Meeting
- Monthly Recipe: Spicy Eggplant

From the President Georgi Hall, Loudoun County

President's Letter

On August 12, we had our first FY24 Bi-monthly meeting. Loudoun County Master Gardeners Association hosted the meeting and their Community Engagement Coordinator and Master Gardener Coordinator, Barb Bailey presented some highlights of LCMG's projects and awards.

Our VMGA members were surprised and saddened by Kathleen Reed's announcement that she had resigned as the State Coordinator and taken a new position outside of VCE. We enjoyed working with Kathleen. She provided great support to VMGA and EMGs throughout Virginia.

Due to the vacancies of both the EMG Program Director position and the State Coordinator position, our members are concerned about the support to Virginia Extension Master Gardeners and VMGA over the next few months. Therefore, Dr. Mike Gutter Director, VCE & Associate Dean, College of Agriculture and Life Sciences, Dr. Mike Evans Director, School of Plant and Environmental Sciences, Dave Close, Specialist, Volunteer Engagement, VCE and Devon Johnson, Communications Project Coordinator, Extension Master Gardener Program joined our meeting via zoom to address our concerns and answer our questions.

Our next Bi-monthly meeting will be in-person on October 14 hosted by Southside Master Gardeners Association. Our October meeting will be a great opportunity for you to stock up on Master Gardener merchandise. All proceeds benefit the State Master Gardener Coordinator Endowment Fund.

Due to unpredictable weather in December and February, we will hold our December 9, 2023 and February 10, 2024 meetings via zoom. We are still looking for a host unit for an in-person meeting April 13, 2024. Contact our Vice President, Nelda Purcell Vice-President@VMGA.net if you are interested in hosting the April meeting or have questions about hosting a VMGA meeting.

The Virginia State Fair is from September 22 to October 1. The primary education topic of VMGA's booth is Good Bugs and Bad Bugs, educational tour and handouts. Contact Christy Brennan, State Fair Chair ctb47@comcast.net. if your unit is interested in volunteering.

Thank You,

Georgi Hall
VMGA President – president@vmga.net

VMGA Officers

President

Georgianna Hall
Loudoun County

Vice President

Nelda Purcell
Franklin County

Secretary

Deb Straw
Hill City MGA

Treasurer

Stacey Morgan-Smith
City of Suffolk

Past President

Leslie Paulson
Prince William County

VMGA Membership has its advantages:

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

From the Editor

Deadline for Nov/Dec issue:

October 23

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

2023 VMGA BI-MONTHLY BOARD MEETINGS

October 14th—Hosted by Southside Master Gardeners Association—Details in newsletter, page 7

December 9th— Zoom meeting 10am—more details will follow

Bring VMGA members to your area for the bi-monthly meeting. Contact Vice President Nelda Purcell at vicepresident@vmga.net for more information.

CALENDAR

November 11—The 2023 Fall VMGA Education event will be held on Saturday, November 11, 2023, 9:30 am – 2:30 pm.

We will start the morning lectures at the Nelson County Extension Office meeting room with three speakers that will focus on landscape plant troubleshooting, covering updates on Boxwood Blight, disease diagnostic process, and woody plant propagation. We will then head to the Saunders Brothers Farm Market for lunch and shopping, followed with narrated tours on two school buses around the Saunders growing fields and greenhouses. Space for the tours is limited.

This VMGA event is being co-hosted with the Nelson County Extension Master Gardener unit. Registration costs \$10 for VMGA members and \$15 for non-members. A flier with additional information will be sent to VMGA members and available in September 2023 on VMGA.net/WordPress/ website.



NEWS AND NOTES FROM VCE LIAISON

Devon Johnson State EMG Office

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

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 **October 23**. 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.

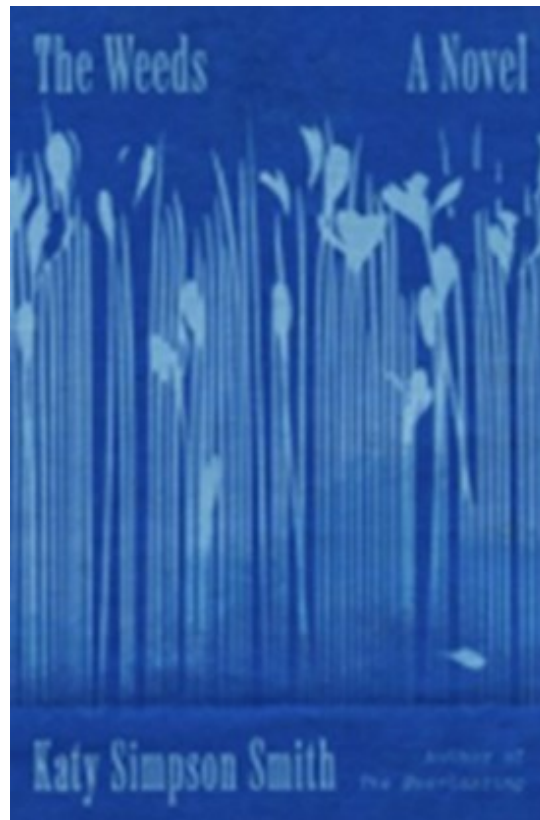
A Book Review
By **Susan Hepler**, *Extension Master Gardener*
“Weeds”
Katy Simpson Smith
Illustrations by Kathy Schermer-Gramm
Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 2023
304 pages

This riveting novel, an intertwined tale of two women of different time periods, who are inventorying the floor of the Roman Colosseum, is moved forward by weeds. Each short section, often less than a page, toggles between each woman’s story, and is introduced by a weed (e.g., *Hypericum perforate*, St. John’s wort; *Mercurialis perennis*, Dog’s mercury) which is mused upon. One unnamed woman, an amateur botanist in 1854, has been punished by her father for an infraction and must assist a real botanist Richard Deakin, presented here as very much self-serving in the survey and she spends her days in voluminous skirts sitting in the dust taking notes, referring to keys, and resenting her forthcoming arranged marriage. The other, a present-day Mississippi grad student searching for a thesis topic, works for a fictional self-serving imperious professor. As you read, you learn or revisit facts about weeds: appearance, supposed herbal properties, symbolism in literature, ubiquity (there are 13 varieties of *Trifolium* on the Colosseum floor in one survey) and their fascinating sensory appeal. The story, illustrated with a dozen line drawings and enlivened with an occasional unnamed angry ghost which floats through the book, rewards us on many levels, historical, botanical, emotional, and literary.

The Colosseum plants were first catalogued in 1643; then by Napoleon’s order in 1815; later by Deakin in 1855, and twice later. It’s interesting to note that plants from Africa now appear there and at least half of the “original” plants are no longer able to be found. A thoughtful, clever, challenging, and ultimately rewarding novel for gardeners.

Master Gardener Joyce Hylton captured many of these same genera in our Northern Virginia region in a captivating YouTube presentation.

The book is available from the Arlington County Library <https://libcat.arlingtonva.us/Record/276323?searchId=17051161&recordIndex=1&page=1>



Master Gardener College 2024 will be a Zoom Event!

The State EMG Program Office and Master Gardener College Advisory Team have started planning for 2024's conference. While we look forward to future in-person EMGC (pictured is 2023 in Blacksburg), the upcoming virtual format will allow more volunteers across the state to participate in this educational event. If this is what you've asked for, now is the time to seize the opportunity to join us! With continued access to recorded sessions even after the conference ends, you can listen again to great speakers or enjoy other breakouts you couldn't attend live.

While the date isn't set, 2024 will be here before we know it, and we need your help! What speakers would you love to hear? What topics interest you most? Have you heard a great speaker that others would enjoy? With Zoom, speakers can join us from any part of the country. Share your ideas with us at this survey link provided by the State EMG Program Office: <https://forms.gle/H1cK3UJdgDkbbBNS9>



Thank you for responding. With your help, we can create a schedule that has something for everyone. In addition to speakers and topics that interest you, we're planning networking and social sessions, including some possible regional events and tours (pictured is 2019's Norfolk Botanical Garden tour), to give you a chance to meet new volunteers and old friends online and to even meet up in person if you choose. We hope you'll join us! More information coming this fall.

[Be advised, if the link doesn't work, please send your suggestions to Devon Johnson by clicking here.](#)

Hanover Youth Ballfields Decide to go Native Presented in the Sempervirens, Spring/Summer 2023

Last winter, when Atlee Little League in Hanover County discussed beautifying its wooded 55-acre campus for 2023, the board of directors decided to test using native plants because of their long-term benefits. The concept was to use natives both to enhance landscaping and to provide an educational demonstration project for the thousands of Little League participants and visitors who pass through the nine-baseball field complex. The first step was to request an assessment visit from the Hanover Master Gardeners. On a cold December afternoon, the Master Gardeners visited and later prepared a helpful report with many ideas to best utilize the available space for planting natives. Step two was publicizing the upcoming project that resulted in the donation of seven Buttonbushes, the 2022 Virginia Native Plant Society Wildflower of the Year. Step three was an application for a Roddey Jones Memorial grant offered by the Hanover Master Gardener Association. When the grant was approved, the grateful Little League went to work. The Buttonbushes were planted, and signage created. Four planter boxes were built and installed by volunteer labor. A wide selection of native plants, including Yarrow, Hollow Joe-Pye-Weed (2023 VNPS Wildflower of the Year), Mountain Mint, and Spiderwort was purchased at local plant sales and transplanted to the planter boxes for viewing. The four boxes were named after major programs hosted by Atlee Little League to give "ownership" to participants. After three months in the ground, the Native Plant Project is going well. Plants are blooming and spreading despite dry conditions. After a slow start, most of the Buttonbushes are thriving and there are plans to add another area for them this fall. Atlee Little League thanks the Hanover Master Gardeners for helping to realize the League's vision and looks forward to planning educational events with them in the future.

-Will Vehrs supplied both the article and the photo for the feature. Sharp-eyed readers will notice that Will's surname is the same as that VNPS President Nancy Vehrs. That is not just a coincidence. Will is Nancy's brother.



A row of Buttonbushes, VNPS 2022 Wildflower of the Year, stretches along the ballfield fence.

A Real County Fair

by Erica Jones

As Master Gardeners hopefully some of you have gotten to judge classes at fairs and such. This is a real exercise in group work, stating your mind, and making quick decisions. Being willing to compromise definitely helps.

I was invited to judge at the Highland County Fair this summer. Highland County is the least populated county in Virginia according to the 2021 census figures; but you sure would not know that by the participation in their fair. I live in the third smallest by population county in Virginia, and we do not even HAVE a county fair. The fair was held at the combined elementary-high school building (only public school in the county). The grounds were very nicely planted in blooming perennials. Highland county is in the north-west corner of the state.

The other judge I was paired with had done more judging and knew her stuff better than I did. We got through the enormous 'pile' of baked goods by being willing to compromise when we did not agree on first place. Basically we would take turns at placing those classes where we did not agree; but luckily those classes were amazingly few. Picking 'best in show' was fun. We had marked a few entries we wanted to see again. When we looked at the six or so baked goods entries, it took both of us about eight seconds to come to the same choice. Deal !!!

Highland county's fair had the most entries of vegetables, cut flowers and baked goods I have seen at any county fair in years. Their flower arrangements were a bit fewer than some; maybe because one of their residents had professional capabilities in arranging and was suppressing competition. Or maybe all the available cut flowers were being displayed in the individual classes ! As with probably every county fair in the state, they were still trying to recover from Covid putting a damper on enthusiasm for entering, but the organizers said total entries (in everything including arts and crafts) were up from last year.

The 2024 fair will be held in Monterey Virginia again the weekend closest to Labor Day. Monterey is 2 ½ hours from Richmond, three hours from Dulles airport. MG'ers who live in Suffolk get to drive diagonally right across the state for four plus hours.



—The above photos are two from the 'most unusual vegetable' class. The one on the left is so unusual I do not know what it is. The one on the right are (tiny) cucumbers.

—This arrangement was third place; although the judges might have had reasons that were not obvious to the casual observer.



October 14, 2023 VMGA board meeting to be held in South Boston, VA

Address: First Baptist Church, 815 N Main St. South Boston

Box lunches to be served at the VMGA meeting around 12:15pm at the VMGA Meeting-

- 1. Ham Swiss on croissant
- 2. Chicken salad on croissant
- 3. Turkey Wrap with cranberry orange, Swiss , mayo and lettuce.
- 4. Vegan Yum Yum Cauliflower tacos (2)
- 5. Vegetable Sandwich with onion, jam and feta.
 - a. Cookie
 - b. Choice of **1 side** included with sandwich:

_____ Chips

_____ Fruit

_____ Potato salad

- 6. Water, Tea, and Lemonade will be furnished by the SSMGA.

****Price \$12.00 per box lunch. Checks should be payable to SSMGA.**

Lunch orders and payments should be mailed no later than **Sept 22, 2023.**

Send Payment to: ATTN:

SSMGA c/o Virginia Cooperative Extension
 P.O. Box 757
 Halifax VA 24558-0757

***Please note that only meals paid for in advance will be ordered.*

There are races at the Virginia International Raceway as well as a race Saturday night at South Boston Speedway, so most of the hotels/motels have high rates that weekend.

Name(s): _____

Unit: _____

Accommodations:

Quality Inn South Boston
 2001 Seymour Drive , South Boston, VA 24592
 434-572-4311

The SSMGA has arranged to have 5 rooms reserved and on hold at \$88.33 plus tax per night. This is the closest hotel to the church, approx. one mile. If you call and order a room, ask for the Dorothy Day reservation to get this rate.

Oak Grove Bed and Breakfast
1245 Cluster Springs Road, South Boston, Va. Approx 7 miles from Church.
 434-575-7137
6 Rooms available: \$128 , 2-bedroom units with one bath \$172.52 or \$200.

Due to the local activities, the motels/hotels are expected to be full for Friday and Saturday night. We suggest if you need a room order it early. Here is a quick link to TripAdvisor THE 10 BEST South Boston Hotel Deals (Aug 2023) - [TripAdvisor](#)

Meeting will be hybrid. Link will be sent prior to meeting.

Spicy Eggplant:

180 calories | 14g fat (2g sat fat) | 250mg sodium | 13g carbs | 6g fiber | 2g protein per serving
Serves 4 for \$4.00

Ingredients:

- 1 medium eggplant (1 lb.)
- 5 cloves garlic
- 1 can no-salt-added tomatoes (15 oz.)
- 1/4 cup olive oil
- 1/2 teaspoon red pepper flakes
- 1/2 teaspoon salt

Directions:

Prepare your ingredients. Chop the eggplant into 1-inch pieces, finely chop the garlic, drain and chop the tomatoes, reserving the juices.

In a large pot or skillet with a lid, heat the oil over medium heat until hot.

Sauté the eggplant until lightly browned, about 10 minutes.

Stir in the garlic and red pepper flakes and cook for 30 seconds. Be careful not to burn the garlic.

Stir in the tomatoes with the tomato juices and cook until the eggplant is very tender, about 15 minutes.

Season with salt and mix well.

Recipe Tip: Add another ½ teaspoon of red pepper flakes for a spicier dish.

Source: [Recipe of the Month: Spicy Eggplant - Capital Area Food Bank](#)

