



The VMGA Report

The Voice for Virginia Master Gardeners

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

November/December 2023

Volume 29, Number 3

From the President

Georgi Hall, Loudoun County. President@VMGA.net

President's Letter

On October 14, the Southside Master Gardener Association (SSMGA) hosted our October Bi-monthly meeting. Twenty-three units were represented either in person or via Zoom. SSMGA President Lee Baldwin and Extension Master Gardener Coordinator for Halifax, Bill McCaleb, presented some highlights of SSMGA's projects. Agnes Gregory shared and added comments to a video showing highlights of the Southern VA Botanical Gardens. Link to the YouTube video of the Southern VA Botanical Gardens https://youtu.be/hrx-tEfnU3g?si=_GAqLQmqN-d0UQX6




Due to unpredictable weather in December and February, we will hold our December 9, 2023, and February 10, 2024 meetings via Zoom. More information will be available as we get closer to the meeting dates. If you do not receive information, contact your Unit Representative. We are still seeking a host unit for an in-person meeting on 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.

I want to thank the State Fair Committee, the VCE Master Gardener Coordinators Office, and all the Master Gardeners who volunteered at VMGA's Booth at the state fair from September 22 through October 1.

Elections for positions on our board are coming up soon. We will be looking for a slate of officers in February. If you know of someone we should ask or if you would like to run for one of the offices, let Frank Reilly – Frank@TheReillyGroup.net, Joe Kelly sjdkelly@comcast.net, Ben Dukes bendukes73@gmail.com, or Leslie Paulson ljp6651@comcast.net on our Nominations committee know. It would be nice to get a mix of people across the state to serve so we get a good representation of units throughout the state. Give it some thought. It would be nice to see a crowd vying to run. We need your ideas for ways to carry out VMGA's mission of fostering communication, education, and fellowship among those involved in the Virginia Extension Master Gardener Program.

If you haven't registered for the November 11th VMGA Education event to be held at the Nelson Center, 8445 Thomas Nelson Highway, Lovingson, VA, from 9:00 a.m. to 12:30 p.m., please register so we'll have an accurate count of attendees.

The three speakers in the morning are:

-  Grace Monger on Plant Problem Diagnosis that will be of particular interest to Help Desk and Plant Clinic EMGs
-  Pat Reilly on Boxwood Diagnosing Problems and the development of resistant varieties.
-  Jim Revell on Plant Phenology concerning Growing Degree Days Impact on Insect Populations for targeted and effective pest control.















Registration is open to all EMGs. The cost is \$5 for VMGA members and \$20 for non-members. The registration form includes a link to join VMGA for \$12.

Detailed information at <https://vmga.net/wordpress/vmga-education-events/>.

As we watch November and December fly by, let me say thank you for all you do for your units and for educating your communities. I wish you and your families a wonderful holiday season.

Thank You

In This Issue

-  Message from the President
-  2023 & 2024 VMGA Bi-Monthly Board Meetings Dates
-  Calendar
-  News and Notes from VCE Liaison
-  Save the Date—Master Gardener College 2024
-  Q&A with the Virginia Tech's Volunteer Engagement Specialist Dave Close
-  Bill McCaleb—VMGA Honor Role
-  Natives for Your Garden—Nancy Arrington
-  A Recap of the Tree Steward Internship: Gravel Beds—Rita Holt
-  The 2023 State Fair of Virginia—Christy Brennan
-  GPMGA's HOPE from the Garden—Patricia Lust
-  Asparagus Bean—Erica Jones
-  Monthly Recipe: Butternut Squash and Apple Casserole
-  Word Search

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VMGA Membership has its advantages:

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

From the Editor

Deadline for Jan/Feb 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

2023 VMGA BI-MONTHLY BOARD MEETINGS

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

2024 VMGA BI-MONTHLY BOARD MEETINGS

February 10—Zoom

April 13

June 15—Annual Meeting—Brent & Becky's Bulbs, Gloucester

August 10

October 12—Hill City (Lynchburg)

December 14

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, 9:00 am – 12:30 pm with optional lunch and tour to 3:00 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 a school bus 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 \$5 for VMGA members and \$20 for non-members. A flier with additional information will be sent to VMGA members and available in September 2023 on VMGA.net/WordPress/ website.

June 5-9, 2024—Master Gardener College

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 27**. 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.

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/>

Save the Date!

June 5 - 9, 2024

MASTER GARDENER COLLEGE

5 days of regional tours,
get togethers, and
Zoom education sessions,
all at a lower cost.

More info coming soon.

EMGC'24



What is your role as a Volunteer Engagement Specialist? I serve as a resource to extension faculty and staff who have responsibilities with adult and youth volunteer programs. I provide access to the latest research and best practices relative to volunteer engagement and volunteer management, offer professional development opportunities for our faculty and staff, and conduct a quarterly virtual forum that serves as dedicated office hours for faculty and staff to engage in open dialogue and troubleshoot potential issues they are facing.

What is the connection between Virginia Cooperative Extension and Virginia Tech? The Morrill Acts of 1862 and 1890 set the stage for every state to provide access to higher education to their residents through land grant institutions. Here in Virginia, the two land grant institutions are: Virginia Polytechnic Institute State University (VT) (1862), and Virginia State University (VSU) (1890). Fast forward to 1914 with the passage of the Smith-Lever Act, and this was the beginning of a Cooperative Extension Service which was, and still is, in partnership with each state's respective land grant institution, in our case, two institutions.

Virginia Cooperative Extension (VCE) exists as an agency of VT and VSU. The Master Gardener program is one of many community-based, adult volunteer programs offered by VCE, and has existed in VA since 1979. Without VCE, the Extension Master Gardener (EMG) program would not exist or function.

Some local EMG units, of which the Northern Shenandoah Valley (NSV) is one made up of five counties, choose to have a local MG association. The association may be a separate entity in some regards, but it is solely comprised of EMG volunteers who choose to join the local association.

At every level of this structure, both institutions **cooperate** with each other and VCE. In turn, VCE cooperates with each of its local offices in 107 Virginia locations. The local agent and staff cooperates with EMG volunteers. The converse of those cooperative relationships is also true where the volunteer cooperates with the local agent and office, who cooperates with VCE at the state level where VCE cooperates with both land grant institutions.

What is the difference between the local unit or program and the local association? The NSV EMG unit/ program is made up of VCE EMGs carrying out community education related to consumer horticulture and environmental best management practices at the direction of the local VCE unit office/ staff/agent. Volunteer management and project management falls to the unit leadership county coordinators and volunteer coordinator), and ultimately the VCE office/staff/agent. This is essential for VT liability coverage of projects and volunteers.

What are the appropriate roles and oversight/leadership for each? NSVMGA is a local non-profit, independent organization led by an elected board. VCE's role is only advisory. This is the local supporting organization for the NSV EMG unit, supporting the VCE volunteers who choose to be

NSVMGA members, and VCE projects. An individual must be working as a VCE volunteer for a VCE activity/event/project to be covered by VT. Ultimately, the local extension agent and the local extension office are responsible for the local EMG volunteers, and the local EMG programs and projects. The association is viewed as a supporting partner in the relationship.

Does VT support EMG programs? At the state level, VT does support the EMG program by providing a Program Director and a State Coordinator. For many years, the College of Agriculture and Life Sciences and VCE have both financially supported the EMG program, and recognized its local value. The EMG program receives federal, state, and locality support (funding through VT) to pay for salaries and wages for Agents and VCE staff in the local units. VCE also receives some funding for office supplies and travel expenses. Program funding must be self generated through grants, industry support, program fees, donors, volunteer support, etc.

Do NSVMGA and VCE act independently of VT? Yes and no. In the eyes of the Commonwealth of VA, an incorporated, 501(c)3 organization such as NSVMGA is independent of VT and VCE, but as the association is made up of VCE volunteers, it is not always clear cut, and is in fact very nuanced. EMG volunteers are an integral part of VCE, both locally, and at the state level. They would not exist outside of their connection to VCE or our land grant institutions. Go back to the idea of ‘cooperative’ that is tantamount to our organization.

Do Agents report to VT? The short and oversimplified answer is yes, but it happens through a very deliberate and well-organized structure. VCE is the outreach agency that resides within VT, but VCE has its own organizational structure. From the highest level, working down to the local level, there is the state administration of VCE, the five districts of VCE, Planning Districts within each of the districts, and county or city unit offices within each planning district. This is a simplified version of the connection between VT and VSU.

What are the basic principles and guidelines of VT's Master Gardener Program? The EMG program's mission is sharing knowledge and empowering communities. It has a vision “To be the VCE volunteer organization extending horticultural and environmental outreach across the Commonwealth.” The core values of the program include respect, accountability, and collaboration. We expect our volunteers to follow our acceptable standards of behavior and embrace VT's Principles of Community. The detailed guidelines are provided in the Coordinator's Manual, which is supplied to local agents and staff through the State Coordinator's office in Blacksburg.



Bill McCaleb was named an inaugural member of the VMGA Honor Role

At the August 12th regularly scheduled VMGA Bimonthly Board meeting, a motion was passed to establish a VMGA Honor Role, recognizing past or present VMGA members who have contributed significantly to VMGA.

During the October 14th VMGA Bimonthly Board meeting, our friend and fellow Master Gardener Bill McCaleb was nominated as the inaugural member of the VMGA Honor Role.

Below is the address delivered by Georgi Hall:

In early 19987, Bill McCaleb took the Master Gardener Classes; shortly after that, he became a volunteer Master Gardener Coordinator, and since September 1998, he has been the Extension Master Gardener Coordinator for Halifax. For more than 25 years, he has been an avid EMG and Extension Program Assistant in Agriculture and Natural Resources. He is also an EMG Tree Steward AFTER a 32-year career with the US Federal Government.



He has been a member of VMGA and served on many committees (in fact, any time he was asked, he volunteered for many more) and officer positions. Most notably, he was the President of VMGA, which saw the signing of the State Master Gardener Coordinator Endowment agreement between VMGA and VA Tech in 2005. This Endowment had risen in value due to the efforts of many EMGs and others but came into being when Bill was our President. Even after serving as president, he volunteered to help revise By-Laws, help with nominations, and much more.

He has been an active supporter of the State Coordinators Office. He participated with state-wide agents and local coordinators to formulate EMG program policies in the late 1990's. He served on a team that assisted then-State Coordinator Sheri Dorn with creating materials for the program. That team helped plan and conduct Master Gardener College and eventually became the College Advisory Team. Bill served on that team for several rotations. Many looked forward to seeing Bill at MG College; he was there almost yearly!



His work as an EMG and Coordinator has been active. He works with the public and is the author of many articles dealing with such subjects as Boxwood Blight, Spotted Lantern Fly for several EMG Unit newsletters, In-Season, etc. Bill was also a founding member of the group that formed the Healthy Harvest Community Garden and was instrumental in its design and planning. He contributed his years of agricultural experience toward the vision of planting a sustainable, primarily organic garden that would benefit the community with healthy vegetables. Bill was a trusted advisor to those implementing the tobacco funding. He was instrumental in seeing that EMGs got to participate in that funding, helping to establish a demonstration garden and evaluating plant introductions suitable for Virginia gardeners. That nexus

resulted in a partnership between the County, VA Tech, and, most importantly, the EMGs to establish the Southern Virginia Botanical Gardens ([Link to video of Southern Virginia Botanical Gardens](#)) and Environmental Education Center.

In November 2020, Bill was named Employee of the Month by the VA Tech College of Agriculture and Life Sciences. Today, we call him the inaugural member of the VMGA Honor Role.

Natives for Your Garden

Nancy Arrington—Centennial Garden Club
September 14, 2023

Phlox 'Jeana'

Phlox paniculata 'Jeana'

Common Name: Summer Phlox (also Garden Phlox and Tall Garden Phlox)

Zones: 4-8

Size: Height 2-4 ft.; spread 1.5-3 ft.

Bloom period & color: Mid-July into Sept.; soft magenta pink

Growing conditions: Sun to part shade; humus-rich, consistently moist, well-drained soil

Summer phlox is one of my very favorite native perennials and has been a mainstay in my pollinator gardens for many years. Despite my best efforts to make it happy – good air circulation, thinning large clumps, rich soil, and adequate moisture – the leaves of most plants get powdery mildew, which, in addition to being unsightly, may eventually kill the plants. Over the years, I've tried a few "disease-resistant" cultivars, but they've been mostly disappointing.

And then along came 'Jeana'! I got my first plant in 2019 and have since added several more. In addition to being a beautiful, fragrant butterfly magnet, 'Jeana' has excellent resistance to powdery mildew. It was discovered growing in a patch of otherwise mildewed phlox along a river near Nashville, Tennessee, and was named for its discoverer, Jeana Prewitt. It was the best-performing plant in Mt. Cuba's 2015-2017 trial of hundreds of phlox species and cultivars. Although individual flowers are quite small, they attracted more butterflies than any other phlox in the trial. 'Jeana' is the Perennial Plant Association's 2024 Perennial Plant of the Year.



Photo courtesy of Missouri Botanical Garden

Garden companions: 'Jeana' blooms over a long period and combines beautifully with many native pollinator plants that share the same growing conditions. Late July and early August companions include flat-topped aster (*A. umbellatus*) with clusters of small white flowers and pink and white coneflowers (*Echinacea* spp.). Later flowering natives include blue lobelia (*L. siphilitica*), Joe pye weed (*Eupatorium* spp.), black-eyed Susans (*Rudbeckia* spp.), goldenrods (*Solidago* spp.) and early blooming fall asters such as *A. cordifolius*. The dark foliage of white snakeroot 'Chocolate' (*Ageratina altissima*) provides an attractive contrast. Non-native pink flowering ornamental onions (*Allium* spp.) are also pretty companions.

Other cultivars: Additional good performers from Mt. Cuba's trials are 'Glamour Girl', 'Delta Snow', 'Lavelle', 'Robert Poore', 'David', 'Coral Crème Drop' and 'Shortwood'.

Maintenance, pests: Like other summer phlox cultivars, stems of Jeana can be cut back in early June (Chelsea chop) so plants will be bushier and will bloom later. Deadheading (removing spent blossoms) will encourage reblooming. A yearly application of compost will keep plants growing well, and a mulch of chopped leaves will help retain soil moisture. Deer love summer phlox, and 'Jeana' is no exception, so be prepared to spray.

Propagation: Clumps can be divided in early spring. I haven't noticed any 'Jeana' seedlings in my garden, but several internet sources say it will come back true from seed, and a couple say it won't.

Native habitat: The native species, *Phlox paniculata*, grows in moist, rich open woods and thickets from New York west to Iowa and Kansas, south to Arkansas, into northern Mississippi, and east to Georgia. It's found in all areas of Virginia except for a few scattered counties.

A Recap of the Tree Steward Internship: Gravel Beds

By Rita Holt, TS Intern

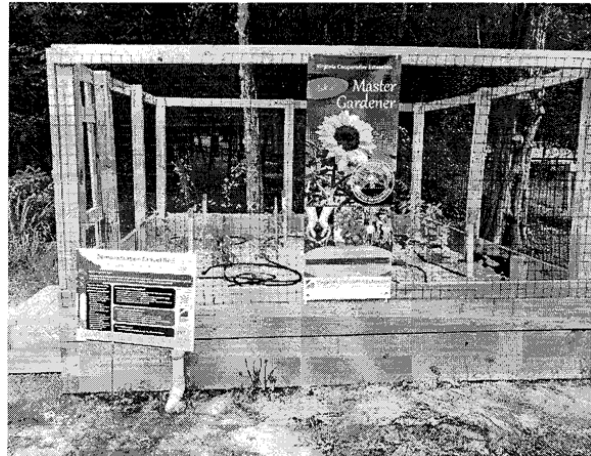
In June of 2023, twelve Loudoun County Master Gardeners completed their Master Gardener College training in tree management practices to become Tree Stewards (TS). These TS Interns embarked on a project to build a set of gravel beds in Loudoun County, and show how they strengthen the rooting system of younger trees. This in turn improves the health, survival and growth prospects of these trees when they are planted into the broader landscape. Many trees purchased at local nurseries are found to be pot or burlap bag bound with a few larger roots girdling the plant. In contrast, trees drawn from only 4 to 6 months of open gravel bed production have a dense and more broadly distributed set of primary roots and rootlets. These are likely to grow stronger and faster than neighboring trees drawn from pots.



In short, the benefits of a gravel bed are as follows:

- ☛ Bare root tree stock is much less expensive
- ☛ Smaller trees without the soil
- ☛ Lighter to handle
- ☛ No heavy equipment needed (hand dug holes)
- ☛ Easier to plant trees at proper depth
- ☛ Bedding materials are reusable Low maintenance
- ☛ Growth of abundant fibrous roots
- ☛ Reduced transplant shock

Ensured proper planting depth and root orientation



Initially, the goal was to construct two gravel beds within Loudoun County's parks. The first 10 x 10 foot gravel bed was completed and planted in late July in the Claude Moore Park. The second location of a 10 x 20 foot gravel bed is confirmed to be at Franklin Park. Supplies have been ordered and construction will begin in October. The second bed will sit idle for now and be planted in April 2024 with the first bed for 6 months of ultimate root growth.

Each of the team members took on a task: organizing the process, construction including an irrigation system, acquiring trees and shrubs, education and signage, excavation of trees, monitoring progress of trees, bringing it all together cohesively. Initially, there was apprehension as none have had this experience before. Where to get supplies and if trees would be available mid-summer were stumbling blocks negotiated by all.

Finally, after many weeks of preparation in July, the project (first bed) was actually getting under way! Over the course of 11 days, the build would commence with construction of the gravel bed and be up and running after the placement of trees and shrubs in pea gravel (the settling of the plants in this medium is called "heeling-in").

The first of two gravel beds came together in a perfect square using many talented hands. Those who had experience in building stepped up and taught the rest of us what and how to make this project happen. With the help of several "extras" (unsuspecting spouses) who brought the heavy equipment and ingenious template, each portion of the build was completed on the day scheduled. For example, even as day one dragged on into the afternoon, there was no lacking in spirit until the box was done!

Claude Moore Park employees willingly cleared space for the 10x10 area needed as well as dug the post holes per our design. We hope that this bed will be around for a while, and so there were at least 2 posts between each corner for extra support. As it is located behind the Visitor Center in the park next to a hiking path and near the Discovery Forest, it will draw a lot of attention. And it has!

Normally these trees would be planted in the gravel bed as bare root plants in late spring, and harvested in the fall

ready to be planted onward into the local landscape. For this portion of the project, potted plants were acquired from Earth Sangha. Two of each of the 11 varieties of plants were washed of their soil prior to being heeled-in the pea gravel. The Interns are concentrating on planting trees native to northern Virginia in these initial gravel beds. Native trees are more likely to grow better in our climate, and support a range of wild- life (insects, birds and mammals) important for maintaining the balance of this ecology. This year's list of trees and shrubs are: river birch, ironwood, common hackberry, dwarf hack- berry, persimmon, black gum, black cherry, ninebark, blackhaw viburnum, American bladdernut, slippery elm; and from Katie Ammann's backyard: red osier dogwood.

Throughout the months of August and September, the plants have been irrigated via a drip line up to 4 times a day for a total of about 100 minutes. This is sustaining them with the water needed to survive, especially during the heat of summer. The pea gravel supports the plants and allows for space and air for roots and rootlets to fill out. Each plant's root system was measured in length and breadth and width prior to being heeled in. When extracted from the bed after the growing season, they will once again be measured to document the actual progress each made this season.

No soil is required at this time. The plants have within themselves **all** that is required for them to sustain their life for this brief time: sun, water, air and space to grow. Any stress that is experienced, actually encourages a greater root system! Crazy, huh?

Normally, gravel beds utilize bare root trees and shrubs. Being that this project was started during the summer, well after the time when bare roots would be available, plan B was set in motion. Potted plants were acquired instead. On the day of heeling in, each potted plant had to have all the soil rinse Coff as organic matter in a watery gravel bed could encourage disease, root rot, or the like. This also made it possible to simulate the aim of heeling-in bare root trees. These plants will be extracted for planting by some time in October of this year.

So far, so good. The only casualty was a dwarf hackberry that came to the bed already weary. The gravel bed had a tree standing by giving respite from the harsh summer sun. As it was removed by the park maintenance, planning a solution for any needed shade next year will be done in the spring. The bed also seems to be getting rain only when there's a massive downpour, a common occurrence at Claude Moore Park by all accounts.

Now that this first bed is running smoothly, plans have been put in motion to install another, larger bed for Loudoun County. Organizing this next build is already in the works. It will be 10x20 with all the provisions added to thP. first, namely deer fencing 6+feet high!! Trees to fill both beds will be heeled-in next spring when bare root trees once again become available.

The materials used in the construction of these gravel beds have been generously funded with a small grant from Amazon Web Services In Communities Sustainability Grants. The micro-grant program is designed to provide individuals, community groups, schools, non- profits and other organizations with resources to make changes in their neighborhoods.

Going forward, the gravel bed project will be funded by VCE Loudoun to give back to the community.

(*) Team members: Katie Ammann, Kim Arriaga, Rita Holt, Susan Koogle, Merrill Lishan, Stephanie Meeks, Terese Minchew, Kate Morganti, Patty Neiss, Mo Page, David Rohrbach, Daina Schoof.

The 2023 State Fair of Virginia

By Christy Brennan

The State Fair of Virginia was held from September 22nd through October 1st, and tropical storm Ophelia thought she was invited to provide some tropical moisture.



The Hanover Master Gardeners formed a committee that worked hard to complete everything on time. The committee decided the focus of the Master Gardener Booth would be insect education, presenting Good Bugs/Bad Bugs. Thank you to every committee member who worked so well together and completed each task through the organization, set up, and take down.

The demonstrations included Good Bug/Bad Bug stands and flip charts for visitors to guess if the insects were good or bad and then flip to the answer. The booth was very interactive for both the Master Gardeners and visitors to the fair and taught why the insects were good or bad and how to handle them appropriately.



The VCE Master Gardener Office helped with the theme by working with the committee and putting together several posters to match the demonstrations. Thank you, Devon Johnson, for your time and support for this project.

My task this year was ticket wrangling. We received three fair tickets and three parking passes per day from the State Fair, and we received an extra ticket for helping staff the horticulture tent. Most of the VMGA budget went to the purchase of additional tickets.

Thank you to the 80 Master Gardeners from 12 units who participated in manning the Master Gardener booth this year. Hanover, Henrico, Prince George, Louisa, Norfolk, James City/Williamsburg, Northern Neck, Portsmouth, Green Spring, Chesterfield, Loudoun, and the Master Gardeners of Central Rappahannock Area.

We had 3,637 contacts reported. This number was lower than expected due to several days of rain from tropical storm Ophelia.

It takes many hands to have this state-wide event go well, and thank you to everyone who participated in volunteering your valuable time.

See you at the 2024 State Fair of Virginia!



GPMGA's HOPE from the Garden

By Patricia Lust

We'd like to report on our progress toward meeting two of the eight goals of our HOPE initiative:

- ◆ Reduce lawn areas
- ◆ Provide a healthy habitat for wildlife

The HOPE initiative is turning out to be incredibly rich learning and teaching opportunities for the GPMGA volunteers who have joined the various teams, and the above two goals taken together have spawned two teams at this point.

The first team started in the fall of 2022 by claiming a large section of the Goochland Extension Office front lawn and treating it to a lasagna garden cover. See Chapter 18 in the [new training manual, p. 439](#) for the planning details. Then, a year later in early October, 2023, team volunteers came back to plant a variety of trees, bushes and perennials as the starting point for a habitat garden. Except for the wiregrass, they found a reasonably receptive area for planting. This lawn-replacement, habitat garden is large enough to include a few paths and perhaps a place to sit along with the wide variety of native plants. The plant selections made by the team will provide continuous bloom and a variety of textures throughout the season. One day it will be a marvelous place to hang out and enjoy a sampling of the rich variety of Virginia's native flora. The HOPE Garden at the Goochland Extension Office is now a full-fledged GPMGA project and will continue to be one of our demonstration gardens.



Audrey Hirsch's Meadow in September.

The second team is still developing our footing at this point. So far, we have created a tickler brochure and started an experiment. Our "What Is a Habitat Garden" brochure is simply an invitation for gardeners to start thinking about what a habitat garden might be, and hopefully it will inspire readers to become more engaged with the idea. Each of the team members has a particular interest, e.g. birds, native plants, soil, etc., and the brochure gave each of us an opportunity to offer a general statement about the importance of that aspect in cultivating active habitat. This team is currently in learning mode and this brochure is our starting point for crafting our community outreach program.

At the same time that second team is advancing our own learning by engaging in an experiment in the back yard of one of our volunteers who wants to turn a part of her lawn into a meadow. Recently the team covered a 10 x 10' segment of her lawn with a lasagna garden and another section about 30' away with a piece of black plastic. We are hoping to find some useful information about life in the soil when we get ready to plant a year later. The easy parts of this experiment are the regular soil test through VA Tech and the ["Soil Your Undies" test](#). In addition, we have made requests and are hoping that one of the universities will help us learn more about the microorganisms by comparing the activity in the two test plots and an unaltered area at the end of the experiment. Stay tuned for the results.

[GPMGA's HOPE in the Garden's habitat Webpage](#)

Asparagus Bean

by Erica Jones

I stumbled on a new-to-me vegetable this year - asparagus beans - *Vigna unguiculata* subsp. *sesquipedalis* (probably). They grow like pole beans although they are a tad slower to fruit than some pole beans. Seems that *V. unguiculata* is from the family of ‘cowpeas’; these are a subspecies of the ‘cow.’ My seed package merely said “Asparagus bean” so this is the usual problem with common names; what is it REALLY?

These beans are much thinner and much longer than green beans. They seem to hold up well on the vine; that is, they do not get tough and stringy quite as fast as most pole bean varieties. They cook about the same length as regular beans but hold their shape much better. And they keep their dark green color quite nicely. The Wikipedia article uses the adjective “crisp,” which covers it nicely. Wikipedia also mentions that they hold up better than regular green beans in the summer heat. My summers here are not blazing hot so I could not field test that very well. I did water these plants a little when we had a week of no rain.

The pods hang in groups of two or more and are pretty easy to find. They are attached to the vine more firmly than pole beans, requiring good fingers. Pick beans carefully as blossoms are produced on the same stem, so if you tear off the ripe beans, you are tearing off all the future blossoms below that spot on the vine. I picked mine regularly so rarely saw bulges in the pods which come from seed formation in the older bean. The blossoms are more significant than those on [Phaseolus vulgaris](#) (“regular” green beans).

The Burpee Seeds website says they are prone to typical bean diseases (mildews et al.) and our old friend, the bean beetle. For reasons that are not clear, my bean beetles mostly left them alone, but I did not have many beetles at all. My seeds went in a bit later as my first planting of pole beans did not germinate well, and the first planting did get beetles. Who knows?



The Burpee website also says, “Plant multiple plantings”. My batch of beans kept producing all summer (once they got going), and that advice would have been superfluous. (Standard seed company advice?) Another source claims they are a good ‘southern’ vegetable. I’ll buy it!

Extension articles on *Vigna unguiculata* subsp. *sesquipedalis* are few and far between.

Butternut Squash and Apples Casserole

Printed from COOKS.com— <https://cooks.com/b54u202o>

180 calories | 14g fat (2g sat fat) | 250mg sodium | 13g carbs | 6g fiber | 2g protein per serving

Serves 4 for \$4.00

Ingredients:

2/3 c. brown sugar

1 1/2 tbsp. flour

1 tsp. salt

Directions:

Grease 9 by 13-inch baking dish, peel and slice a 3 pound squash into the dish. Cover with 2 sliced apples (DON'T peel).

Sprinkle over apples:

2/3 c. brown sugar

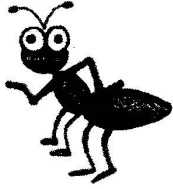
1 1/2 tbsp. flour

1 tsp. salt

Cover with foil and bake 1 hour at 350 degrees.

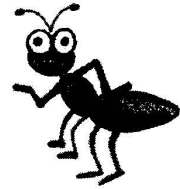


Photo from: westfieldareacsa.com



Insect Pollinator

Word Search



ANT

BAT

BEETLE

BUMBLEBEE

BUTTERFLY

FLY

HONEYBEE

HUMMINGBIRD

MOTH

THRIPS

WASP

Two of these animals are actually not insects.

Do you know which ones?

Answer: Bat and Hummingbird