

The Colonial Master Gardener



December 2006

President's Corner Charlie Clapper

"There have been certain colours this autumn that will remain in my memory – chartreuse leaves edged with burgundy – one day I'll create a new border based on this combination. Yellow maple leaves with bright red stalks."

Mary Woodin, The Painted Garden

Our fall has been particularly beautiful this year – a mosaic of reds and yellows. Our seasonal change is well along and Thanksgiving approaches. Whether you think that Thanksgiving began in Massachusetts or Virginia (!) we still should pause and give thanks. The Master Gardener's Association is gathering our harvest —successful volunteers and projects. As Master Gardeners we have much to give thanks for:

- MGs contributed 10,339 volunteer hours (through mid-November). Thank you.
- MG interns contributed 2,648 hours (through mid-November). Thank you.
- MGs helped make this year's training class a success. Thank you.
- Project and Program Chairs did an outstanding of ensuring success. Thank you.
- Some MGS volunteered to take on leadership roles (but we need more volunteers here). Thank you.
- Board members. Thank you for your leadership.
- Youth education is important to the future of our nation and our Association. Thank you to those working on these projects.
- Pollution in our rivers and streams is a serious problem. Thank you for helping the public understand and address this issue.
- Growth issues face our community. Thank you for being prepared and willing to help our community address these important conservation and preservation issues.
- Requests for MG assistance are increasing. The public understands the role we play in making our community a better place. Thank you for doing great work.

THANK YOU!

Next Monthly Meeting

December 7, Williamsburg Regional Library

Lisa Heuvel, a member of the Educational Outreach Staff of Colonial Williamsburg Foundation, will discuss the Powhatan Indian culture through some of the known native plants and their uses.



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FROM THE EXTENSION OFFICE LEANNE DUBOIS, EXTENSION AGENT, HORTICULTURE



Lauri Bland and Darrell Addington at a recent Farmer's Market.

I want to send my sincere appreciation to all hard working interns who braved every imaginable question while manning the Helpdesk! This was a wild year with things I've never seen before, from fungus to the strange and large insects, you all han-

dled it beautifully. Luckily I was in the office when Lauri Bland hit the jackpot of plant diseases 15 minutes before her quitting time. A homeowner brought in a garbage bag of samples, all the greatest hits; sooty mold, anthracnose, powdery mildew,

gall, etc. We were able to answer them all, (left a few for the next day) and she went home on time. Many of you stayed well past your time to finish up and myself and the citizens of this County are grateful. Great job and thank you all!

RECENT PUBLICATIONS TO NOTE

The fifth and last publication series for the America's Anniversary Garden is now available. The publication discusses plant materials for Fall and Winter color and will introduce gardeners to an even wider array of plant materials for year round interest and color. Plant materials listed for winter rely on interesting berry, bark or form. It has been reported that both wholesalers and retailers have noticed a large

increase in sales for plant material such as the Fringe Tree and many native species that have been included on our publications. Many of the materials suggested had been underutilized in our landscapes and will add a greater diversity to choices.

America's Anniversary Garden Fall and Winter Gardens:

<http://www.ext.vt.edu/pubs/envirohort/426-228/426-228.html>

Another publication that re-

cently became available concerns Lawn Moss. I happen to like moss and even know people in the area that grow a moss lawn on purpose. Many times moss is an indicator plant of other problems like compaction or poor soil nutrition. This publication discusses how to enjoy the beauty of moss by establishing a moss garden.

Lawn Moss Friend or Foe:

<http://www.ext.vt.edu/pubs/turf/430-536/430-536.html>

Internal Education News Jean Winters

Words from "Have You Heard the Cricket Song?" by Winston O. Abbott seem appropriate at this time and I'd like to share them with you:

We have not wisdom until we know
the sparrow and the thrush are one
and the dandelion becomes a rose...
Peace would come to many troubled
spirits
and healing to many troubled hearts
and there would be music every-
where,
if each of us could have a brook...
where the clean water ripples over shin-
ing pebbles
and goes on to eddy into little darkened
pools where fish find shelter...
where lacy ferns nod to the rhythm of
the ever moving water
and the songs of the thrush are heard in
the cool green shadows...
For the music of water is the music of life

and each heart needs the sound of sing-
ing waters
as each spirit needs a place of solitude...
where one may hearken to the sounds
that were born when life was born...
sounds that are elemental and eternal
sounds once unknown to man...
For in that far distant world where life
began
man was not there to listen...
If but once you have touched the hand
of the Creator
there is music in the croaking of the
frog...

These words remind me of the Indians who lived here before we came and were custodians of this very land which we now call our home. We shall learn more about them when we hear Lisa Heuvel tell us about the Powhatan Indian landscape four centuries ago. What sustained them is different

from our present experience, but we are now the custodians of our home here and must work to preserve it for the generations to come. In the new year we will learn more about our watersheds (there are several here) and how they are managed, how nutrient management plays an important role in the care of our lawns and gardens, and how we can work with our youth in preserving that which will be their legacy and responsibility in the future. We will also learn more about our connection to the Virginia Cooperative Extension, our January program. Much to learn and share in our role as Master Gardeners.

I wish you a happy holiday season...may the gift of Mother Nature be bountiful...and may the new year be bright!

DON'T BAG THOSE LEAVES! HELEN HAMILTON

Mulch or compost them! Over the growing season, tree leaves are converting sunlight, carbon dioxide and water into carbohydrates and proteins and storing minerals uptaken from soil water. All the nutrients needed by your plants are in fallen leaves. Allowed to accumulate, the layers of decayed leaves and leaf mold will eventually decompose to rich, organic soil with the help of earthworms, insects and soil microorganisms. Duplicate nature by creating mulch or compost from fallen leaves.

If you have a lawn, a heavy blanket of leaves will smother the grass. Collect the last grass clippings and leaves in the mower bag, and use for mulch or compost. A light layer of leaves can be ground by your mower, and remain on the lawn for fertilizer.

Many perennials can also smother under a heavy layer of leaves, but ground leaves make excellent winter mulch to retain soil moisture and protect roots from heavy freeze. Vacuum leaves from your lawn or sidewalks or decking, run a lawn mower over them,

and spread them around the perennial rosettes. Create a mulch pile for summer use. Weed seeds need light -- soil that is covered with leaf mulch will not sprout weeds, and watering is reduced.

In previous years, leaves were burned or hauled to the dump to be burned or buried. Burning of leaves is not permitted in most of James City County. Fur-



ther, they are much too valuable to burn. Add leaves to your compost pile, along with vegetable matter and yard waste. Composting can be simple: place leaves, grass clippings, kitchen vegetable scraps and plant trimmings in an out-of-the way area on your property. Add some soil periodically and

turn the pile. Eventually, without commercial additives, the natural organisms will convert all these organics into rich soil.

If you have a large area of mostly clay soil covered sparsely with weeds, you might consider adding layers of leaves each fall. After several years, the leaves and natural decomposition processes should permit desirable plantings in the area. For a large quantity of leaves, contact the Recycling Coordinator in your area.

In James City County, bagged leaves will be collected in 3 cycles in November, December, and January. Check the website for information about the schedule: <http://www.james-city.va.us/recycling/leaf-collection.html>. Bagged leaves are available for commercial or residential composting; call the Recycling Coordinator 565-4000. After the holidays, the landfills will grind Christmas trees and the mulch is free to James City County residents. Ground-up evergreens make wonderful garden pathways!

GARDEN WITH A SMILE SUBMITTED BY GENROSE LASHINGER

Dr. Allan Armitage, noted University of Georgia professor, wrote:

"Gardeners are an outrageous bunch. Regardless of the heat, cold, rain or drought, we are always looking for the next great plant for our gardens. Visit any gardener and for sure you will hear complaints about the garden looking better last week or next week.

I meet gardeners all the time and there are a number of gardeners I have found best to avoid. And you should too. Here are a few:

Heaven help you when you meet someone who wants to correct your plant pronunciation. Get a life! Tell them that learning plant pronunciation is a good thing, but not all that important.

Run for the hills when plant snobs show up. I have no use for people who won't grow annual, or live only for roses, or those who believe that only native plants should be in gardens.

I have little patience with people who advise me that my garden is not well designed. My design philosophy finds me with a plant in one hand and a trowel in the other looking for a place to plant the sucker!

And that is the key. There is no such thing as the perfect garden, or a finished garden. It will always be a work in progress and there will be some beautiful gems and some blemished rocks. But it is your garden, and if you enjoy it, that's all that counts.

So what should you do to become a better gardener? First, relax and enjoy yourself and your garden. You will never get rid of every weed, so do the best you can and live with it. You will never get rid of every disease or bug, and if there are some plants that are always infected with or eaten by something, throw them away. Don't work so hard in the garden that you never have time to enjoy it. And lastly, remember that enjoyment is self-sustaining.

Get out, have fun, garden with a smile."

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PROGRAM UPDATES (AND OTHER MG INFO)

Our thoughts and prayers are with fellow MGs:

Suzanne Brown, on the loss of her mother and

Robert Warren, on his recent illness



EDITORS NOTE: The deadline for submission of material for the January Newsletter is December 15. Please send to Lise Kline at legskline@cox.net or call 757-259-9477. Thank you.

IN CASE YOU'RE INTERESTED

Staples has small plastic envelopes with write-on label surfaces, suitable for seed-saving.

ENVIROSCOPE

Ann (Lillian) Davis has agreed to chair Enviroscope. She's looking for groups interested in learning about Enviroscope, and volunteers to assist her with presentations.

Contact her at 741-2030 or Annd11@cox.net

JUNIOR MASTER GARDENERS AS SEASONS CHANGE KARI ABOTT, JMG PROJECT CHAIRPERSON

This fall has been wondrous in the JMG Program. November has been spent learning about deciduous and evergreen trees. With the changing season, students at DJ Montague have had a fun time reading the book "The Leaf Man" by Lois Elhert, and collecting leaves to make interesting animals, people, and shapes. They are looking at the different colors, and why leaves change color. It has been an exciting and fun class to participate with the children. A special thank to Dr. Max Walten, a new master gardener who moved here from Newport News, he has jumped in and helped out in JMG at DJ this fall.

The end of November the first graders are going to Millfarm Christmas Tree Farm. They will see how much hard work goes in to producing trees for the holiday season. They will also look at the shades of green and work on identifying three evergreens found on the tree farm. December will bring animals preparing for winter and how plants are used to help most creatures survive the cold months. Frogs will descend into a muddy colored play dough, leaves, acorns and other seeds have been collected so the children can fashion nests. It will be fun as well as educational.

On the third grade front, at both DJ and

Matthew Whaley, JMG is cycling its way through the classrooms. An exciting new curriculum is being developed to illuminate the third grade Standards of Learning and strengthen the children's knowledge of the environment. This month is looking at food webs and how the plants and trees and a vital part of the transfer of energy.

Lastly JMG made a splash at the South-eastern Association of Fish and Wildlife Association meeting in Norfolk. After the presentation about the James City County JMG program, several people from Georgia, South Carolina, and at the state level here in VA, asked about the JMG program. Spreading the word about environmental education is always a good thing.

As you start cleaning out for the holidays, or new year please remember JMG would appreciate any old nature, wildlife, animal, fish, even aquarium fish calendars, magazines, Highlights, or Ranger Rick, the pictures are always a great to share in classes and help spark and idea here and there. Bring them to the Master Gardener meetings, or contact me by email below.

And as always, any of you are welcome to join in the fun! Please email me at bears-baskets@cox.net. My best wishes that you all have a safe and wonderful holiday season, as the melee descends upon us. Cheers!

America's Anniversary Garden Contests

Virginia Cooperative Extension has developed the America's Anniversary Garden (AAG) to help individuals, communities, and groups mark America's 400th Anniversary with a signature garden planting. The signature gardens will have red, white, and blue color schemes. All across Virginia, city and town entrance corridors, public gardens, sidewalk containers, hanging baskets, residential lawns, and other forms of gardens and landscapes will display the colorful theme in 2006 and 2007. Every Virginian can have an anniversary garden. Some will be large and some as small as potted plants on a balcony.

Two AAG contests are planned. The 2007 statewide AAG contest is underway with 7 categories to compete in which include residential and neighborhood gardens and landscapes. The deadline is September 1, 2007.

For further information visit www.ext.vt.edu/americasgarden.

The Junior Master Gardener (JMG) program has also partnered with AAG to create a national school garden competition which will be promoted through the [Weekly Reader program](#). JMG, AAG, and Weekly Reader are working collaboratively to promote and implement this contest. Please visit www.jmgkids.us/gardencontest and <http://www.americasanniversary.com> for more resources to help your class create an award-winning America's Anniversary Garden. Contest entries are due by February 1, 2007 with winners announced on March 1, 2007.



We're on the web
at
www.jccwmg.org

BOTANICAL GARDEN PROJECT PUT TO BED SALLY SISSEL, CO-CHAIR WITH REBECCA SUTTON

Master Gardeners met at Freedom Park on October 23 to finalize the MG Botanical Garden Project by putting the garden to bed for the winter. As you all may recall, this project was designed to show our good faith to the Williamsburg Botanical Garden by designing and planting 2 perennial beds and was approved to go through October of 2006. Rebecca Sutton, I and Charlie are planning to meet with the new officers of the Botanical Garden to discuss what the future may hold for continued collaboration/support between

the Master Gardeners and Botanical Gardens. You all will be updated on the outcome of that meeting.

In the meantime I would like to thank the MGs who helped Rebecca and me with the project: Beverly Baker, Milton Berube, Suzanne Brown, Pat Crowe, Gale Hyatt, Mary Ann Kimminau, Alice Kopinitz, Becky Morgan, Ruth Murphy and Susan Quick. Thanks so much for a job well done!!



Upcoming Dates to Remember

- January 4, MG monthly meeting, Williamsburg Regional Library, Dave Close, State Master Gardener Coordinator, VCE, will talk about how local VCE Master Gardener projects fits into a larger framework of the statewide program and how the contributions of local VCE MGs are an integral part of what we accomplish for our communities.
- May 2-5, 2007 International Master Gardener Conference, Little Rock, Arkansas. For more information: <http://mg2007.uaex.edu> or call 501-671-2000.