

The Colonial Master Gardener



PUBLICATION OF JCC/WBG MASTER GARDENER ASSOCIATION & VIRGINIA COOPERATIVE EXTENSION

December 2007

MG BANQUET AND MG DUES

It's time to pay your 2008 dues which are \$15.00. Please bring your checks made out to Master Gardeners Association to the December meeting or send them to Sarah Dougherty at 144 Tolers Road, Williamsburg, VA 23185.

The MG Graduation Dinner and Annual Awards Banquet will be held on January 10, 2008, at 6 p.m. at the Williamsburg Unitarian Universalists Church, 3051 Ironbound Road. Tickets are \$12.00 each. The Class of 2007 Interns do not have to pay but their guests and spouses need to purchase a ticket. Again, please bring your checks to the December meeting or mail them to Sarah Dougherty at the above-cited address.

MG APPRECIATION AWARDS LINDA LUCAS

Just a note to encourage you to send in your nominations for the MG awards that will be presented at our annual dinner on January 10th. None of us who are dedicated to Master Gardeners does what we do for recognition. We volunteer because we are genuinely concerned about the state of the environment in our local community, or because we know that our youth need the knowledge to maintain and improve that environment, or because we want to enhance the natural beauty that surrounds us in private residences and public gardens, or

because we want to enrich the lives of folks who live in confined quarters, or a host of other reasons...*not* for any kind of award. But, as one who was recognized last year, let me assure you that the recognition, the knowledge that fellow MGs took the time to write some kind words, is deeply appreciated. So take a few minutes, think about MGs that you see "in action" in our organization and community and let the nominating committee know your thoughts. All the information you need is on the website. But do it soon! Deadline for nominations is the **December MG meeting**.

Next Monthly Meeting

December 6, 9:00 am,
Williamsburg Regional
Library, Anne Condon,
William & Mary graduate
student, **Bluebirds
and Other Local Birds**



2007 JCCW MG AWARDS

It is time again to nominate worthy MGs and MG Projects in 5 categories:

- MG of the Year
- MG Project of the Year
- Steady as a Rock
- Sustained Excellence at least 3 years
- Sustained Excellence more than 3 years

Nomination forms may be obtained at the MG monthly meetings or at www.jccwmg.org. All nominations must be received by the December MG meeting.

Awards will be presented at the MG Annual Graduation Dinner in January 2008.

Inside this issue:

INTERNAL ED NEWS	2
EXT OFFICE NEWS	2
MG INFO AND ARTICLES	3
DATES TO REMEMBER	5
DON'T CUR IT DOWN	6

Internal Education News Jean Winters

EDITORS NOTE: The deadline for submission of material for the January Newsletter is December 16. Please send to Lise Kline, newsletter editor, at legskline@cox.net or call 757-259-9477. Comments and questions about the newsletter are also welcome. Thank you.

"Perhaps if we could penetrate Nature's secrets we should find that what we call weeds are more essential to the well-being of the world than the most precious fruit or grain."

Nathaniel Hawthorne, 1863

Mother Nature is often "close at hand", or paw...our cocker spaniel "Bailey" recently tossed a mole from our herb garden onto the driveway. It did not survive the experience, probably just as well, but we were surprised to see how small and roly-poly it was, as well as having a beautiful brown coat! That compared to the black bear cub we had seen on the Skyline Drive a week earlier was quite interesting. How wonderful Mother Nature truly is!

Now we look to the future: our program/education committee met recently and enjoyed a lively discussion about future possibilities.

We are keeping our eyes and ears open for ways of continuing to provide programs and other opportunities for your interest, enrichment and credit.

December is not only for the beautiful holidays here, but also for Anne Condon, a graduate student (to receive her Masters in January 2008) at The College of William and Mary, to come to share her knowledge of our local bluebirds and other "locals". She will also present some information from her thesis, "Mercury Levels in Fledgling Songbirds", an environmental concern we should know about. Please mark your calendar about this presentation.

Bill Garlette, a favorite of many, has agreed to visit in January. "The Good, the Bad and the Buggy" is his topic this time. Bill will be followed by Charlie Staton in February, more about his talk in January.

In the spirit of the holidays in mind, I extend our good wishes for all that this time of year brings to mind. A small Christmas surprise will go home with a lucky winner at our next meeting. You may be the lucky one! See you on the sixth of December!

JCC/W MG Mission Statement

The purpose of the James City County/ Williamsburg Master Gardener is to learn, educate, and communicate environmentally sound horticultural practices to the community. Trained by the Virginia Cooperative Extension, Master Gardener volunteers are committed to offering information to the public through sustainable landscape management educational programs.

FROM THE EXTENSION OFFICE LEANNE DUBOIS, EXTENSION AGENT, HORTICULTURE

INVASIVE PESTS

Homeowners from Settlers Mill have been invaded by a strange insect that has become a nuisance entering homes by the hundreds last month. The insect was sent to the Entomology lab at Virginia Tech and even they could not identify it. The insect was forwarded to the Smithsonian who identified it as:

ISCHNODEMUS FALICUS

Order: Hemiptera

Family: Lygaeidae

Scientific Name: Ischnodemus falicus

The insect feeds on Cordgrass in Marshy Areas. Settlers Mill is located near Lake Powell and with the dry weather plus reduced water table, the host plants were not as plentiful and insects were forced to seek other food sources making them a nuisance.

Another interesting call involved wasp

swarms "hill topping" on top of the roller coasters at Busch Gardens. The pests shut down operation of the Coasters for a short period during Hallowstream. (Sounds like a free fright show provided by nature).

CONGRATULATION TO LIBBEY HEDSTROM AND LESLIE MEYER

They "pitched" an idea about a Green Garden show to the local Cable Channel, Channel 48, and have filmed their first episode which is being edited for future airing. The show represents a typical Landscape Love visit with follow up to implementation of the landscape ideas suggested. If the first episode is successful, the show may become a series featuring sustainable landscape management and Master Gardener projects.

TURF LOVE VISITS NEW KENT AND MEADOW SPRING SOD FARM

The Turf Rangers visited the New

Kent Extension office this fall to view the Turf Demonstration Panels. The Turf Panels were donated by a Meadow Spring Sod Farm and are being used as an education display to show the public how various types of turf look like in side by side comparison. The demonstration includes Bermuda, Zoysia and Fescue varieties. The Turf Rangers also toured Meadow Spring Turf Farm in Charles City and had a brown bag lunch at the New Kent Extension office to discuss future programming direction.



MG Contact Update

Correction from the MG Directory:

Charlie Clapper email:
huyckclapper@earthlink.net

MG Training Opportunity

Home Gardener Day
Thursday, January 31,
2008

Founders Inn & Spa,
5641 Indian River Road,
Virginia Beach, Virginia
** FREE PARKING and
hot buffet lunch included
**

The Mid Atlantic Horticulture Short Course will be hosting a workshop Jan. 31, 2008 in Virginia Beach, VA. The workshop is entitled "Exotic Specimens" and discusses the use of native versus imported plant materials; how we may be dealing with zone shift as a result of climate change; dealing with exotic varmints in your garden; using native species that look exotic and finally getting exotic on purpose when creating habitats for zoo animals.

We have a great slate of speakers: Felder Rushing retired horticulturist from Mississippi Extension, Todd Forrest of the New York Botanical Garden, Bryce Lane from NCSU extension, Sherry Kern published author, Jim Williams retired extension agent and Marie Butler of the Virginia Zoological Park

Questions? Call (757) 523-4734
Register online now or visit
www.mahsc.org and select Home Gardener Program.



VMGA December Meeting

The Virginia Master Gardener Association meeting is December 8, 2007, from 10am to 2pm at First Colony clubhouse. The meeting is open to all MGs. Lunch will be \$9. Following lunch, the program features Brian Noyes of Colonial Soil. Brian will review the new pilot program, **Community Conservation Partnership**,

followed by a brief tour of work done outside the clubhouse.

Directions to the First Colony clubhouse: from Route 199 take John Tyler Highway (Route 5). Go approximately 5.1 miles and turn left into First Colony subdivision onto John Rolfe Lane (Route 1101). Go 1/2 mile and make left onto Pasbehegh Drive. Clubhouse is .3 miles on the left.

Mobile Master Gardener Project Approved Denny Mehigan

The newest Master Gardener Project was approved by the membership at the November meeting. The latest project to join our current programs is called the "Mobile Master Gardener Project" or Mobile MG for short. The Mobile MG is designed to expand our outreach efforts further into the community by participating in events where citizens work, play, and live. It provides a capability to participate in any community venue to educate and communicate environmentally sound horticultural practices through the use of a static display and approved literature. The display is designed to increase awareness and prompt interest to learn more about the subject matter presented.

The idea for this new outreach effort is actually an extension of our efforts at the Farmer's Market. It takes the Master Gardener presence into smaller venues in the workplace or neighborhoods and larger events like a county fair. During the development phase of the project, the static display was used at a Memorial Day picnic, a conservation fair at a local employer, the county fair, a gardening day event, a school health initiative expo, and an organization day for a local community. These were events where the community gathered for a purpose and, in addition, had the opportunity to become aware of environmentally sound horticultural practices and the resources available through the Virginia Cooperative Extension

and Master Gardener programs.

The Mobile MG is another tool for each Master Gardener to use within their community and their circles of professional and social organizations. Using this tool as part of our outreach efforts depends upon the full participation of Master Gardeners to identify venue opportunities, refine information needs, and support the display during development and actual presentation. The key aspect to the success of this project is to encourage all MGs to make a commitment to raise awareness within their respective communities.

The commitment includes a willingness to sponsor and use the display board at their respective events. Contact Denny Mehigan at dmehigan@cox.net or call at 220-8846 to learn more and see if the Mobile MG is right for your community or organization.



No Gardens of 1607 in Our Future

Due to a lack of response by the membership to the article in the November MG newsletter, the Jamestown Garden Project will not be undertaken by the Master Gardeners at this time.

PART I: EXTENDING THE GROWING SEASON of INCREDIBLE EDIBLES

Dale Firestone

For various reasons, my garden didn't get planned or planted until every one else was harvesting and cleaning up. In early July, Shirley came home from the Farmers' Market with a glowing report of a Sun Gold tomato she'd tasted. That did it! I couldn't resist the urge to grow it.....this year!

As you might expect, I already had the seeds. So, on July 16, the seeds were put to soak in water. When sprouted (5 days later), they were planted in peat pellets that were expanded by soaking. For the next three weeks, the pellets resided where the most light was: south window, west window, or under grow lights.

When 1 or 2 true leaves appeared, the pellets plus seedlings were planted in 4" pots. When 8-10" tall, they were transplanted to the garden that, in Spring, had been circled with daffodil bulbs to discourage the voles. The planting holes were prepared with Voleguard (permatill).

That brought us to September, with six weeks to go before a possible first frost. Birds and deer were hungry. Plants and green fruit were beautiful,

but there weren't enough of them to share with the critters. Since the tomatoes had been planted under an existing pole-bean trellis, it made sense to throw some deer netting over trellis and all, 7 feet in length. The ragged edges of the net were secured in duct tape to form a highly visible overlapping enclosure on the front side, this provided an entry point to harvest the fruit.

Needing to protect the fruit until harvest, I had to create a temporary enclosure of some kind. My idea was to throw a tarp over the trellis and plants, but the trellis proved to be too weak to support the tarp. I treated four 2x12 discarded boards with stain and sealer, then put them on edge to form an 111/2" border around the tomato patch. This would be the foundation for my enclosure. To strengthen the trellis, I tried bending rebar to form a frame, but the top had to be flat, not pointed, which resulted when I bent the rebar. My Lowe's helper suggested pvc pipe. Good idea! He helped me form an easy-to-assemble frame. Daughter Barbara came up with a way to temporarily affix pipe to the wooden border: She nailed rubber protectors (that cover the ends of metal chair and stool

legs) to the wood frame. The pvc pipe fit securely, yet were detachable! The tarp cover is two 9x12 tarps put together end to end, and secured with duct tape. Then we rolled the whole thing on a pole. The back edge of the tarp was secured to the ground with bricks and the pole was rolled up and over the frame and down the front.

At this writing on October 21, we've had nothing but 80 degree days, the bees are making their way through the deer netting and the tarp languishes at the base of the bed awaiting the first frost. Also waiting, are 7 one-gallon milk jugs, painted black, which will be filled with very hot water, and placed inside the tarp on very cold nights. We've harvested a dozen tomatoes, every bit as good as Farmers' Market's. More to follow of this personal saga.



MC Class 2008 Schedule

The schedule for the 2008 MG training class is listed below. These classes may be audited by current MGs. There will be a limit of 5 MGs per class, and attendance is on a sign-up basis only, through Rich Bunker at shadyldy@bellatlantic.net.

Jan 10 Botany, Dr. Linda Johnson, CNU	Feb 21 Pruning, Wesley Greene, CW
Jan 14 Soils, Paul Davis, Ext. Agent, NK County	Feb 28 Landscape, Karen Kelly, Landscape Architect
Jan 17 Entomology, Dr. Barbara Abraham, Hampton U.	Mar 6 Pest Management, Ken Thompson, Green Guard Assoc
Jan 24 Pathology, Mike Likins, Ext. Agent, Chesterfield Co.	Mar 10 or 13 Lawns & Weeds, Bob Winters (depending on the weather, as he's trading with the field trip to the CW gardens)
Feb 7 Perennials, Larry Griffith, CW	Mar 17 Water Quality, Larry Foster, JCC Service Authority, Clifton Bell, Malcolm Pirnie
Jan 28 Organic Gardening, Bill Garlette, NN MG	Mar 20 Chesapeake Bay, speaker from DCR TBA
Jan 31 Annuals, Bulbs, Herbs, Laura Viancour, CW	
Feb 11 Fruits, Veggies, Charles Maloney, CSA farmer	
Feb 14 Trees & Shrubs, Joen Koci, Arborist	

2007-2008 MG Board

President:
Dave Banks '03
258-8632

VP Projects:
Judy Hansen '04
345-0958

VP Internal Ed:
Jean Winters '01
564-1662

VP Youth:
Lynn Flood '02
220-3864

Secretary:
Pat Crowe '05
645-4538

Treasurer:
Sarah Dougherty '06
565-7954

VMGA Rep:
Anne Odle '03
259-9025

Past President:
Charlie Clapper '02
564-6191

At-Large:
Barbara Gustafson '99
564-1888

Extension Agent:
Leanne DuBois '96
564-2170

Stonehouse wins Historic Triangle Beautification Award Diana Nolan

The Historic Triangle Jamestown 2007 Task Force has honored Stonehouse with a Beautification Award for the Neighborhood Entrance garden completed in the Fall of 2006. The award was presented on October 21st in Legacy Hall by members of the Task Force and State Senator Tommy Norment.

The committee received 96 entrants and selected 28 winners countywide. The Neighborhood Entrance category comprised six winners including Stonehouse. Master Gardeners and Stonehouse residents Diana Nolan and Ann Davis initiated and planned the garden with assistance from Pat Rathke. The plantings

included red, white and blue pansies, the white pansies making up the large "S." To create a transition from the large magnolias flanking the stone wall, red twig dogwoods were planted on each side.

The framed photo award of the entrance can be viewed in the foyer of the Resident's Center at Stonehouse.



MG Plant Sale Workshops Rebecca Sutton, Plant Sale Chair, Lois Enlow, Workshop Chair

On October 20, Jim and Nelda Pressly presented an outstanding workshop on Propagation to benefit the 2008 Plant Sale. Twenty-one MGs attended. Thank you, Nelda and Jim! Nelda gave the history of our plant sales, beginning at a farmers' market on the site of the Backfin Restaurant. Jim explained different ways to propagate plants and the proper way to prepare plants and pots for the sale. More on that subject later.

Coming on February 9, the second Plant Sale Workshop on Starting Plants From Seeds will be held. Jerry Babski and Debbie Secrist will discuss the art of starting plants from seed for both annuals and perennials, and vegetables including heirlooms. All the requirements for success will be covered including materials, seeding schedules, needs and success rates for various seeds, transplanting,

growing on, hardening off and plant presentation for the Plant Sale. Plants that are better propagated by other methods will be noted. Linda Lucas will discuss which herbs respond best to the different ways of propagation. For some herbs, seeding is the answer and timing is important. For other herbs, dividing or taking cuttings from existing plants is preferred.

On March 8, at the third Plant Sale Workshop, Jim and Nelda will help us make Hypertufa Containers. We will only make a few spots for the plant sale so space will be limited, but we plan on making space for viewing the process.

Another workshop for working with dried materials and maybe decorating vine wreaths is in the works. No date has been set.

You can sign up for these workshops at the January meeting or email rebecca.sutton@cox.net.

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

Upcoming Dates to Remember

- Dec 8 VMGA meeting, see page 3 of this newsletter
- Jan 3 monthly MG meeting, Bill Garlette, *The Good, the Bad and the Bugly*
- Jan 10 MG Annual Banquet, see page 1 of this newsletter
- Feb 7 monthly MG meeting, Charlie Staton, TBA
- Feb 9 Plant Sale Workshop, Starting Plants from Seeds, see box above
- Mar 6 monthly MG meeting, TBA
- Mar 8 Plant Sale Workshop, Hypertufa Containers

DON'T CUT IT DOWN! HELEN HAMILTON

-- All those standing stems and leaves and seedheads from the summer/fall flowering season --wildlife need them for habitat, food, shelter, nesting materials. "Cleaning" the flower beds removes important food and cover sources for migrating birds and over-wintering wildlife.

Herbaceous Plants. Stands of dead plant material retain moisture and stabilize ground temperature; the roots have aerated the soil and the stems, leaves and spent flower heads break the force of rain, and protect the ground surface from packing. Small birds can be seen scratching in the soft, open soil, feeding on worms, grubs, and insect egg cases.

Plantings of ornamental grasses provide cover and seeds for a variety of wildlife species. Or, an unmowed area of lawn allows the meadow wildflowers and grasses to emerge, increasing the diversity of plants. Many of the plants we consider weeds produce flowers and seeds that are used by wildlife. Native wildflowers and grasses are particularly desirable for native birds and small mammals, as well as winter cover crops of clover, rye or timothy.

Frost and snow on standing plants is beautiful -- one of the most important things to cultivate in your garden is your eye. Hydrangea and sedum remain upright over the winter and offer visual dimension to the garden landscape.

Nature has no off-season! Early blooming witch hazel and highbush blueberry will raise dull winter spirits.

Woody Plants. Fruit and nut-bearing trees like oaks, walnuts, sourwood and beech provide important winter food for resident birds. Their natural cavities are used for nesting and shelter by many wildlife species. Fruits that persist on the tree over the winter such as winterberry, hollies, and cedar are especially desirable. Shrubs like beauty berry, bayberry, and hearts-a-bustin' remain attractive to wintering wildlife all season. It's important to place the food close to the cover to minimize the exposure of feeding wildlife to weather conditions and to predation; these two factors account for more than 90% of winter mortality.

Tree fruit becomes sweeter during freeze and thaw. The fruit is available to provide resident wildlife species food in lean times during the winter and into early spring, and for returning migratory birds. If space is a limitation in your yard, consider winter food plants first. They are the most important because natural foods are scarce during this season.

Evergreens should occupy a significant portion of a wildlife habitat garden; dense shrub and evergreen (native red cedar) plantings provide valuable escape and roosting areas and shelter in rain, heat and harsh winter weather. In addition to providing critically needed winter cover, these woody areas provide important nesting and feeding areas

for a wide variety of woodland songbirds. During all seasons, they are cover for escaping predators. They block wind for feeding areas and in summer, they are used as nesting sites. The sap, needles, twigs, buds and seeds, and insects that make their homes in evergreens, are food for wildlife. Cavities in the trees are often used for nesting, roosting and shelter.

Vines like poison ivy and greenbrier may be unfriendly to humans, but birds and small mammals love the berries -- they are not allergic to the oils or bothered by the thorns! Virginia creeper is a native fruit bearing vine often naturalized by wild birds. It is an important food source to over 35 species of birds. Unfortunately it is a poison ivy look-a-like and is often destroyed for that reason.

Birds play an important part in planting a natural habitat. Natural scarification of seeds the birds have eaten occurs during digestion. The seeds are passed in excrement, landing where it will grow to produce fruit and nectar for the next generation.

It is your choice to keep the new plants or treat them as weeds. You may transplant them once they have started growing if you don't like where the birds planted them. American holly trees with evergreen leaves are particularly attractive to winter birds who will plant a varied garden beneath its branches.

Dead trees, brush piles. A "snag" is a dead or dying tree. Snags are like gold in the wildlife world, used as nesting sites, perching sites, as food sources and to establish territory. Brush piles provide nesting and den sites, and escape cover for many species of wildlife, including small mammals, birds, amphibians and reptiles. Piling the prunings from your yard in a secluded corner will create a brush pile that grows over the years.

And where are the butterflies and moths during the winter? Most have formed their cocoons high in native trees -- the oaks, willows, hackberry, maples. When pruning these woody species in February, the branches should go in a brush pile to permit development of the adult forms; burning or hauling dead woody plant material is a loss to native wildlife. Pollinators are weathering over in brush piles -- don't burn! It's likely that praying mantis egg cases are overwintering there.

Diversity. A garden landscape with a wide variety of plant species, at varying heights, will meet the needs of wildlife that feed, nest or find shelter at different levels. And a mix of trees, shrubs, herbaceous plants and standing ground cover will reduce severe insect or disease problems.

Landscaping for wildlife is gardening at its very best!

"Nature has no off season . . . One of the most important things to cultivate in your garden is your eye."