

The Colonial Master Gardener

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

July 2006



President's Corner Charlie Clapper

"Knowing is not enough; we must apply
Willing is not enough; we must do" – Goethe

Thank you for again electing me your president. And thank you so much to Dave Banks, Lynn Flood, Barbara Gustafson, Mary Ann Kimminau, Anne Odle, Rich Strenkowski and Jean Winters agreeing to serve another year. Thank you to Ann DeForest for her service as VMGA representative. I look forward to this next year and continuing to work together to build an even stronger organization and better planet. I will continue to focus on people, projects and partnerships.

People are the most important ingredients of our organization. Thanks to Jean Winters and her committee, we have begun to identify our training needs. The membership survey will help us understand the training you want and need. We will use the survey information to prepare programs that will help us maintain and "grow" our gardening skills.

Thanks to Lynn Flood and her committee, we now have a more formalized way of identifying members who deserve recognition. Members who contribute their time and talent need to be appropriately recognized.

Rich Strenkowski, working with the project chairs, has put in place a system to identify project goals and volunteer needs and ways of reporting successes. The Risk Management training in March heightened our awareness of working safely and best responses if accidents and injuries occur. As potential new projects appear we are now better able to ensure they meet the objectives of Virginia Cooperative Extension.

We are working with Extension Agent Leanne DuBois to prepare for the 2007 commemoration. Jamestown Virginia is the center of "America's 400th Anniversary". We will make sure that the Association makes an appropriate contribution to an event that happens once in 400 years.

Through the continuing efforts of our Publicity Chair, Alice Kopinitz, the Association has an increased visibility in our community. This has led to more interest in the Helpline and more requests for Master Gardener assistance on gardening projects. We need to continue our partnerships with our community. Increasing our numbers through training of new volunteers will help meet that need. Thanks to our new interns who have been volunteering so many hours. Look for our monthly column of the Backyard section of the Gazette -- thank you Rich Strenkowski, Lise Kline and Judy Mays.

I will continue to emphasize the importance of the Association doing our share to save our precious planet. Awareness of what each of us as individuals and as a community contribute both negatively and positively on a daily basis is important. What have you done today?

Again thank you. Let us together make it a great year.

Next Monthly Meeting will be held at Quarter Path Recreation Center

July 6, 2006
Creating Backyard Habitat Using Native Plants, by Louis Verner, PHD, a Watchable Wildlife Biologist with the Wildlife Diversity Division of the VA Department of Game and Inland Fisheries



Inside this issue:

INTERNAL ED NEWS	2
LEAF SCORTCH	2
PROJECT UPDATES	3
JULY GARDEN TIPS	4
SHEET MULCHING	5
DATES TO REMEMBER	5
AUGUST MG MEETING	5
WATCHABLE TV	6
SUMMER PICNIC PHOTOS	6

The Colonial Master Gardener

Internal Education News Jean Winters

Greetings for July! I hope to have another Program steering committee meeting this month, at our home, on Wednesday, July 12. This will be to discuss the results of the questionnaire sent out to the membership concerning program and focus group ideas. I will be in touch with you as the date comes closer. In the meantime I'd like to share the words I read at the June meeting...summer time will find us busy with many activities, but let's take time to enjoy the beauty of Mother Nature...

All things bright and beautiful, all creatures great and small,

All things wise and wonderful, the Lord God made them all.

Each little flower that opens, each little bird that sings,

He made their glowing colors, he made their tiny wings.

The purple-headed mountains, the river running by,

The sunset, and the morning that brightens up the sky.

The cold wind in the win-

ter, the pleasant summer sun,

The ripe fruits in the garden, he made them every one.

He gave us eyes to see them, and lips that we might tell.

How great is God Almighty, who has made all things well.

“PEOPLE WHO DON'T KNOW HOW TO WEED SHOULDN'T DO IT. PEOPLE WHO KNOW HOW TO WEED ARE GARDENERS.” AUTHOR UNKNOWN

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

In the Landscape: Diagnosing Tree Problems Leanne DuBois

Trees are a valuable part of our landscapes and often the most noticeable when things go wrong. Diagnosing tree problems is difficult because there are many variables to consider. A correct diagnosis of the problem is an important first step in trying to save an unhealthy tree.

We've had numerous samples this past month with marginal leaf burn. This is a condition called leaf scorch (see photo at right) and maples seem to be predisposed to this condition. The recent dry weather has brought on these symptoms which are environmental in nature and not disease related. The condition is caused by failure of the root system to supply enough water to the leaves at a critical growth time. The

tree is losing water faster than it is taking it up. Trees with defective root systems or those whose roots are partially covered with asphalt are particularly vulnerable. Leaf scorch can not be corrected once it appears but injury can be kept to a minimum with the addition of rainfall or additional watering 1 – 2 inches every two weeks at the drip line of the tree. Apply mulch to improve the water holding capacity, 2 – 3" of mulch which should also extend to the drip line.

Fertilize trees in the fall to improve the overall health of the tree. Optimizing the health of the landscape is key.



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PROJECT UPDATES

Melissa's Meadow

will meet on July 20 and do the regular upkeep if the temperature doesn't soar above 85! Bring water and be prepared to make a short day of it.

JMG Summer News Kari Abbott

This will be a summer article to span July and August. A lot is happening!

JMG had a great end to a fantastic growing year. Susan Powell finished off our school year instruction, taking a group of middle school children to the James River for a watershed experience, talking about soils, plants, and water.

Summer Camps are set and the first camp is FULL. June 26-30 will be a fun filled week, with adventures walking through York River State Park, and then learning more about the wetlands, soils, plants, and creatures. There are still opportunities to volunteer and have some fun.

After Summer Camp, JMG will take time to gear up for the fall, collect books, tweak lesson plans that worked, or did not work this past year, and the like. It will be a quiet time in comparison to the school year. For those of you interested in helping plan next years Field Trip to York River State Park please hang on to your thoughts, plans for a school year to coordinate with the field trip are underway.

Look for JMG news to come back in September.

Have a great summer, may wonderful things grow your way!!



MG intern Jim Jenkins working in the Shields garden.

Incredible Edibles (and other garden observations) Ailene Bartlett

The first tomato and cucumber were harvested on June 16! YUM! Claire Gross beat me to it by about a week, but then she put a fur coat on her tomato when she put it out in March. All in all, the tomatoes in Earth Boxes and other containers seem to be doing better than ones in the ground. I suspect it's because they get a little more TLC, but I'm not sure... The summer squash got off to a rocky start, but is recovering nicely, and my gardening partner, Bill Hopkins, should be able to harvest one while I'm at MG College. The winter squash has set one very nice fruit. I just hope the neighborhood rabbit doesn't find them.

The flowers are doing well, and a plethora of bees and butterflies are

enjoying them. The bees especially like the lavender, and I'm loathe to cut it, they are having such a good time! Several surprises in the yard - last year I had one Jack-in-the-pulpit, this year I have four! Last year a friend gave me a pink Lady's-slipper, and now I have three! One of the more interesting plants is *Silphium perfoliatum*, or Cup plant, a native. It has a stocky square stem and opposite leaves that almost join, forming a cup; later on it will have yellow flowers similar to *Coreopsis*. And dumping remains of the bird feeder in the compost heap has resulted in several Sun-flowers.

One interesting thing: the Black-eyed Susans are blooming much

earlier than usual, and already the finches are interested. I wonder if there's going to be a second crop this year?

Not strictly gardening, but too interesting to not share: several weeks ago a Pileated woodpecker attacked one of my porch posts! I managed to get several pictures, which I haven't reclaimed from the camera yet, before he quit and went home. He left a hole about 4" long, 2" wide, and over 1" deep! And Autumn, the resident watchdog-doorbell-factotum, was asleep on the porch and didn't wiggle an eyelash...

Good gardening! Share your experiences!

The Colonial Master Gardener

July Gardening Tips Helen Hamilton

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

Remember the speaker from VIMS who admonished us, we cannot have a native garden without insects? Well, the bees as well as the fritillary butterfly love my coneflowers! If your garden is not crawling with pollinating insects now, you are missing a real treat of summer. The bees are so busy collecting nectar, they don't notice me at all, walking around, trying to get a good picture.



Sharpen your garden tools at least once a season. Use a simple file and remove dings and gouges on shovel, spade and trowel edges. You do not need a sharp knife edge. You'll be surprised how much easier your tools will work for you.

Divide spring and early summer flowering perennials after the blooms fade. Instead of severing the clump in half, try jiggling the roots apart with two sharp, spading forks. This takes more time, but damages fewer roots than cutting the

clump apart

Propagating Plants: Take stem cuttings of woodies and perennials now (Roses, Boxwoods, Spirea, Azaleas, Camellias, Forsythias, trees, etc). You can place cutting in a moist potting soil mixture, however, not all cuttings will grow this way. For optimum chances of propagating your plants make a small wooden box, fill with sand, thoroughly water, and allow it to drain. Use coat hangers to make an arch over the box. Take your cuttings, dip them in a rooting mixture or hormone, and place them in the very moist sand. Cover the box with plastic (such as a dry cleaner clear plastic bag). Tie the ends to make a terrarium. Place box on the north side of your house and away from any direct sunlight. When you see new growth (about 6 weeks) remove plants and transplant them to individual pots with potting soil. Transplant again in fall to the location you want your new plants.

Do you want to rid your plants of aphids, spider mites, and other pesky bugs without applying chemicals or other sprays? Keep your bird feeders well stocked to ensure a good supply of birds visiting your yard. If you see pests, stop feeding the birds for 3 days. Many birds are creatures of habit and will continue to look for food in their feeders but when they find it empty they will look around your garden for other suitable foods ... i.e. aphids, spider mites etc.

Comfrey improves soil as it grows! Dwarf English comfrey is

especially good. The plants have thick, deep roots that are able to penetrate 6 to 10 feet down, breaking up the worst soils. For a very adaptable ground cover that is vigorous in spreading, try Aaron's Beard (*Hypericum calycinum*). It has striking yellow flowers, will live in dry soil, and needs little or no care. Be careful – there are two forms of this plant, one is deciduous and upright, and the other is evergreen and prostrate. The plant does well in filtered shade or part sun.

When you go on a short vacation, one thorough deep watering just before leaving will usually be sufficient. The same is true for houseplants. Many times, a thoughtful neighbor can literally kill your plants with kindness by overwatering them.

According to studies conducted by NASA, plants can function as biological, air-purification systems. Spider plants (*Chlorophytum spp.*) are highly efficient in absorbing toxic substances. In tests, these plants absorbed toxins, such as formaldehyde, carbon monoxide and nitrogen dioxide, known to be present in homes and offices. To purify the air in an average-size, well-insulated home, 8 to 15 mature spider plants would be required. Other plants that also lowered pollutant levels, but to a lesser degree, were Chinese evergreen (*Aglaonema spp.*), golden pothos (*Epipremnum aureum*) and peace lily (*Spathiphyllum spp.*).



WaterWise Garden work crew planting a red, white, and blue garden.

Sheet Mulching Anne Haltiner

We just returned from a trip to Oregon. Wow, Mother Nature did a great job out there! I visited the Lewis and Clark Historic Site in Oregon City. The Master Gardeners in that area created an impressive "historic garden." It is filled with plants the settlers, who followed Lewis and Clark, would have cultivated in their gardens in that century. The MGs used a technique to prep the soil that I found very interesting and I thought I'd pass it on to you. It's called **Sheet Mulching**. To download the entire 15 page handbook go to: www.nsrp.bc.ca/resources Towards the bottom of the listing is the Guidebook to Sheet Mulching and an Introduction to Permaculture by Harold Waldock, edited by the North Shore Recycling Program.

Classis Sheet Mulch Sequence:

Plan the Plot, Collect the Materials, Lay out shape of area to mulch.

Water the soil until it can hold no more.

Trample the vegetation.

Lay down a carbonous layer.

Add the soil conditioner layer.

The nitrogen layer.

The inoculation layer.

The sheet mulch layer.

The carbon layer.

The aesthetic layer.

The Plant layer. Yes, you plant directly into this; no tilling.

Don't be intimidated by all the layers. It's marketed for the "casual" or "lazy" gardener! (ha.) The Website is worth a Look-See. Have Fun!

AUGUST MG MEETING AT YORK RIVER STATE PARK

All plantings at the York River State Park are natives. Three areas of interest we will be touring are the butterfly garden, the riparian planting area that includes highland, lowland, and wildlife-friendly plants, and the new native version of the America's Anniversary Garden.

Many plants are rescued from development and transplanted at the park. Carolyn Wills, one of the wonderful volunteers who does this, will lead half of the MGs on a tour and Charlene Talcott, JCC/W MG, will lead the other half. It will be educational for anyone interested in native, wildlife, or drought-resistant plantings. The Master Gardener Meeting will begin at 9:00 am in the amphitheater. Please feel free to contact Charlene Talcott at charmac1@earthlink.net.

DIRECTIONS:

To get to York River State Park from I-64, take the Croaker Exit (231-B). Travel north on Rt. 607 (Croaker Road) for 1 mile, then right on Rt. 606 (Riverview Road) for about 1.5 miles, and turn left onto York River Road. Travel approximately 2 miles to Day Use area and parking lots. Because you will be here for a program, you will not have to pay the parking fee.

Upcoming Dates to Remember

- June 25 Taking Root Farm Tour, New Kent County
- July 6 Monthly MG meeting, Creating Backyard Habitats using Native Plants, Louis Verner, VA Dept. of Game and Inland Fisheries, Quarterpath Recreation Center
- August 3 Monthly MG meeting, York River State Park, see info and directions above
- August 19 Super Turf Saturday, JCC/W Community Center
- Sept 7 Monthly MG meeting, America's Anniversary Garden, Leanne DuBois, Extension Agent, Williamsburg Regional Library

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MASTER GARDENERS ENJOYING THE SUMMER PICNIC AT CATHY RIPLEY'S HOME



SOMETHING TO WATCH ON TV!

Please Note change of address for:

Nancy Greene
223 Wingate Drive
Williamsburg VA 23185
Phone 757-345-0415

Sue Liddell
sliddellmq@verizon.net

Have you ever watched "Virginia Home Grown" on WCVE-TV (Channel 6) out of Richmond? It's shown once a month, roughly the last week, is an hour program, and is usually on 8-9 p.m. Richard Nunnally, the long-time host, was an Extension Agent, now does the garden column for the Richmond Times-Dispatch and hosts this program. They visit gardens, both public and private, and feature "adjuncts" to gardening. The episode on May 23 was devoted to one segment with a beekeeper on-site with his hives, and a segment on wildlife habitat in your yard and how to establish and maintain it. At the end of each segment they accept phone calls from viewers on any sort of gardening question. They also list phone numbers and Web sites that might be of interest to viewers. Try it, you might like it!