

# The Colonial Master Gardener

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

November 2007



## FROM THE EXTENSION OFFICE LEANNE DUBOIS, EXTENSION AGENT, HORTICULTURE

### JCSA Water Restrictions End for 2007

The James City Service Authority has ended their outdoor water regulations effective October 1, 2007. Regulations on outdoor water use will go back in effect for the year 2008 on May 1 and go through September 30.

### About Water Testing

I recently participated in a Private Well Owners Training sponsored by Penn State which was perfect timing since we have been receiving an increase in calls this past year from citizens requesting information about the safety of their drinking water. Unlike public water systems, private systems are often unregulated; consequently, the well location, construction, testing, and treatment are the voluntary responsibility of the homeowner. As a result, many individual water wells have never been tested, and their owners are generally uninformed about water quality issues.

Virginia Tech does not test household water so homeowners are referred to a list of independent labs in the Newport News / Richmond area. Concerns about personal and family healthy are the primary reason for an

## Congratulations

To Leanne DuBois who was recently appointed to the James City Economic Development Authority. The Economic Development Authority (EDA) is a seven member voluntary Board whose members are appointed by the County Board of Supervisors and serve staggered four-year terms. The Authority's purpose is to assist the County and its Office of

increase in calls often due to obvious signs such as staining of plumbing or objectionable taste. Most often they are prompted to get non bias information from the Extension office because they have been contacted by a water system sales representative.

If you rely on public water through JCSA, the testing is done on a regular basis and a report is available to the public so an independent test is not necessary. You can find this information on the JCSA website under; **JCC Annual Water Quality Report.** [http://www.jamescity.va.us/pdf/jcsa/Waterline2007/Waterline\\_07\\_Vol%2011%20No%204\\_web.pdf](http://www.jamescity.va.us/pdf/jcsa/Waterline2007/Waterline_07_Vol%2011%20No%204_web.pdf)

For those who are on a private well, it is recommended that a water test be done on an annual basis. The Extension office maintains a list of local water testing companies that will test well water for a fee. You must contact the lab prior to testing and arrange for a sterile testing container with instructions on how to accurately test. The water should be tested within 24 hours and a report will indicate if it passed or not with recommendations on how to sanitize your well water. If you are interested in learning more about this subject, give me a call or come by the office to review the Well Owners Manual.

Economic Development in expanding James City County's business tax base. The EDA also acts as a conduit for issuing Industrial Revenue Bonds for manufacturing projects and also qualifying medical, assisted living, non-profit, or public facilities.

## Next Monthly Meeting

November 1, 9:00 am,  
Williamsburg Regional Library, Nicole Schermerhorn, A Thyme to Plant Herb Farm, ***Herbs for the Holidays***



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## Internal Education News Jean Winters

"Sing a song of seasons;  
Something bright in all;  
Flowers in the Summer;  
Fires in the Fall."

Robert Louis Stevenson

"How miraculous that growing on my own little plot of land are plants that can turn the dead soil into a hundred flavours as different as horseradish and thyme, smells ranging from stinkhorn to lavender."

John Seymour

Yes, plants are miracles and herbs are especially wonderful with their tastes and scents. We shall learn more about some special ones for the holidays when Nicole Schermerhorn comes to speak at our November meeting. She is also bringing some of those particular herbs for sale after the meeting. It should be fun to purchase some herbs and get ready for holiday meals and other uses. Please join me in welcoming her at that time!

## Role Reversal:Lending a Hand to the Scouts Judy Hansen

When Jeremy Johnson, Associate Extension Agent, emailed Leanne DuBois, requesting Master Gardeners to speak about Native Plants to some Boy Scouts, I thought that would be a fun event. Then I noticed that the email said they had over 800 people enrolled! The emails to Master Gardeners following the initial one from Jeremy were filled with comments like....*Good heavens! what would I do with 800 boy scouts?.....*then Leanne emailed that it was no longer 800, it was 900 scouts.

Helen Hamilton was the brave soul who stepped forward and said she would take on the event. She put out an email to Master Gardeners and Virginia Native Plant Society (VNPS) volunteers, and waited for responses. I called her on Thursday, two days before the Saturday event, and she had no helpers. So I said I'd do it with her. That night as I went to sleep, I whispered to myself.....*"It will be fun.....It will be fun."* Imagine Natalie Wood in the old movie *Miracle on 34th Street* saying as she drifted off to sleep .....*"I believe.....I believe"*.

Well, on Saturday, at the Chickahominy Riverfront Park, Helen and I set up two tables. We displayed native plants and invasive plants, and approached them as the "Good Guys" and the

We hope to have Anne Condon, a graduate student at The College of William and Mary, join us at our December meeting to share her knowledge of "Bluebirds of Williamsburg" in an ongoing theme of the beautiful environment that surrounds us here in our own town. Bluebirds are resident birds and sometimes can raise three broods a season...we will learn more about their activities in December!

The new year holds promise of a diversity of topics. I plan to share more with you as we continue to plan our list of speakers. Another member of the avian kind, the turkey, will probably be a topic of conversation soon...*aah, ohh!*

Happy Thanksgiving from our home to yours!

"Bad Guys". We also passed out MG and VNPS literature to many, many scouts and their leaders. The boys were so interested in our display, and asked good questions. It really was fun! Sara Nugent from the VNPS helped us in the afternoon, and we talked to 136 scout leaders, and 176 boy scouts.



Judy Hansen is showing scouts the little "Christmas Stocking" hook on a Christmas Fern pinnule.

## 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.

EDITORS NOTE: The deadline for submission of material for the December Newsletter is November 19. Please send to Lise Kline, newsletter editor, at [legskline@cox.net](mailto:legskline@cox.net) or call 757-259-9477. Comments and questions about the newsletter are also welcome. Thank you.

## WANT A DEER- PROOF GARDEN? HELEN HAMIL- TON



It is probably impossible to attain, but if you enjoy the native ornamental grasses, you are likely not to see deer chewing on them. There just isn't enough taste in the leaf, flower or seed structure to capture their interest. Blooming heavily now are some easy to find species, many of which most folks call "weeds" growing along the roadside.

Chief among these is little blue-stem; the species in our area is *Andropogon ternarius*, named split beardstem, because the florets are in bundles of two along the stem. As they emerge late in October, the entire stem glows with the fuzzy, silvery seedheads, particularly striking when backlit.

Also flourishing now are varieties (cultivars) of native switchgrass *Panicum virgatum*. 'Shenandoah' is the shortest, growing no more than 3-4 feet tall, with red leaves and stems. There are 3 or 4 other red-leaved and/or red-stemmed offerings in the nursery trade.

'Heavy Metal' switchgrass grows stiff and tall, over 8 feet, with steel-blue stems and leaves. Other tall cultivars are 'Northwind', 'Prairie Sky' and 'Dallis Blue' which produces powdery blue seedheads.

Big bluestem *Andropogon gerardii* has an unusual seedhead which provides another common name "Turkeyfoot". This is a prairie grass with golden stems and seeds, very tall.

Several species carry the same common name of "Indian grass". Visible now in wet

spots is *Erianthus giganteus*, another 8-foot grass, this one with a foot-long feathery seedhead. Another "Indian grass" is *Sorghastrum nutans*, with a slender golden seedhead, growing in full sun.

Virginia rye grass *Elymus virginicus* is light tan now, with a 3-6 inch spiky seedhead.

Lovegrass *Eragrostis spectabilis* grows low to the ground, no more than six inches tall, and covers itself with fine purple seedheads in September, which are now tan, and breaking off to scatter across the landscape like tumbleweeds. Purple muhly *Muhlenbergia capillaris* is native to the counties on Virginia on the North Carolina line; its favorite habitat is open sandy dunes. But in the right place here in Williamsburg it will reward you with vast, waving plumes of unbelievably fine purple seedheads.

River oats *Chasmanthium latifolium* likes a little shade and moisture. Its seedhead resembles very closely the sea oats growing along the seacoast. Be careful where you plant river oats – it self-seeds vigorously, and you will have zillions of baby plants in surrounding areas.

A soft rush *Juncus effusus* is a sedge, not a grass, and grows wild in bottomlands and marshes. Its slender, dark green spiky stems are a striking addition to the home landscape, punctuating the perennials and evergreen shrubs.

All of the above grasses are natives to coastal Virginia, and many extend across the state of Virginia and into the Midwestern prairies. Their roots grow deep and wide, and serve to anchor and aerate soil. Don't water them and

don't fertilize! Most grow well in dry, sunny areas, with a few exceptions (see above). And you can place them around your home as "cut flowers" for winter bouquets.

Be careful with some alien invasive grasses widely sold in nurseries, principally the *Miscanthus* species. These can be very aggressive and outcompete native plants.

One of the worst non-native alien grasses is common reed *Phragmites australis*. Scientists have found recently that this "killer reed" produces a toxin which targets a structural protein in the roots of competing plants, who have no defense – the root breaks down and the plant dies. This compound is also known as Gallic acid, used for leather tanning. *Phragmites* kills the competition and moves into their territory, transforming the mid-Atlantic salt marsh landscape. Not known is how the toxin affects fish and other marsh aquatic life and whether it breaks down in ultraviolet light.

The American Indians used a native variety of *Phragmites* for everything from arrow shafts to musical instruments. This native variety isn't an invasive plant and does not release the same high level of root toxin, but has all but disappeared under the onslaught of its killer cousin. The non-native was likely introduced to North America in the late 18th and 19th century when it was brought over with ballast on sailing ships.

So beware of any plant that is not acclimated to tidewater climate and has not been part of our ecological landscape since before the colonists arrived. No one knows the potential long-range actions of newly introduced horticultural varieties. Play safe and buy Virginia natives!

We're on the web  
at  
[www.jccwmg.org](http://www.jccwmg.org)

### 2007-2008 MG Board

**President:**  
Dave Banks '03  
258-8632

**VP Projects:**  
Judy Hansen '04  
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**VP Internal Ed:**  
Jean Winters '01  
564-1662

**VP Youth:**  
Lynn Flood '02  
220-3864

**Secretary:**  
Pat Crowe '05  
645-4538

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565-7954

**VMGA Rep:**  
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259-9025

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Charlie Clapper '02  
564-6191

**At-Large:**  
Barbara Gustafson '99  
564-1888

**Extension Agent:**  
Leanne DuBois '96  
564-2170

## MG Program Updates (and other info)

### MG Contact Update

Ann Davis e-mail address is:  
[Annd44@verizon.net](mailto:Annd44@verizon.net)



The VMGA is meeting in Williamsburg on December 8 from 9 a.m. - 2 p.m. at First Colony Clubhouse. Following refreshments, the program highlights a pilot program in First Colony - Community Conservation Partnership. Brian Noyes, Director of the Colonial Water and Soil Conservation District, will speak about this program and give a brief tour outside of the work in First Colony.

If you are available to help with set up (8 a.m.), tear down (2 p.m.), work a greeter table (10 a.m.), prepare a breakfast dish, or stocking the refreshment table, please contact Anne at [anneedle@cox.net](mailto:anneedle@cox.net) or 259-0925.

VMGA meetings are open to all MGs so please join the meeting. Lunch is available for purchase at the start of the meeting. No R.S.V.P. required.

### Melissa's Meadow Grace Raymond

We will meet on November 15 to finish collecting seedheads and cutting down spent plants. For those of you unable to come in October, you missed an opportunity to see how good the meadow looked compared to our own gardens. Nothing like native plants that are established! Hope to see some of you in November.

### E2 News Kari Abbott

As November approaches school is in full swing. DJ Montague third grade teachers received the environmental education kits (funded by last year's Virginia Naturally Grant) and were thrilled with the contents. They now can do the water cycle game with the great big water cycle dice Pat H. and Debbie McC. made last year, they have loads of new books on food webs, and all the supplies to teach experiential learning activities that follow the Standards of Learning throughout the year. The teachers from last year also are trained in Project Learning Tree, which will hopefully help them bring more experiential learning into the classroom.

The first grade classes were buggy this month, as insects were on tap, lots of beetles and butterflies. Thanks again to John Giffin, Ruth Schultz and

Nancy Harding, they are great help as this year is going along.

November will be exciting! Your award winning E2 program will be a choice in Session F on November 9, 2007 at the Virginia Association of Science Teachers Conference, held here in Williamsburg. A lot of work is being put into getting ready for the conference. The session should be a nice show case of the collaboration between Virginia Cooperative Extension and DJM. Also the first grade art work from DJ Montague will be on display at the North American Association of Environmental Educators Conference. This is a big conference with speakers, presenters, and attendees from all over the country. It is a neat honor to have E2 represented there.

Dates to remember for folks interested in helping:

- November 13 from 9-11 (though it may not take that long) Training will be held for anyone who would like to help with the Christmas Tree Farm Tour. We will meet at the extension office and carpool to the tree farm, as there is not a lot of parking there.
- the last week in November, between the 26-29th, when the field trips are scheduled. The lessons that are taught at the farm will be demonstrated, with active participation, so hopefully everyone will feel comfortable when the actual trips occur.

As always everyone is welcome, if you have any questions or comments, please email me at [bearsbaskets@cox.net](mailto:bearsbaskets@cox.net)

### Another Successful Season at the Market Sally Sissel

Thanks to all who helped make our 6th season at the Farmers' Market an unqualified success. Thirteen Saturday mornings could be quite a daunting challenge, but all the volunteers, interns and MGs alike, theme leaders, the all important "clickers", tent "putter-uppers" (and "downers"), and, of course, our Turf expert, Bob Winters, helped make everything flow quite smoothly. A special thanks to Caryl LeFever, Lau-

rie Bland, and Donna Xander who filled in for me while I was gone and to John Giffin and Dan Tevlin who were stand-ins for Art. Certainly our presence at the market is a valuable service to the community. Many people come specifically to the market to bring questions, samples, etc. to our booth. And, I think it's safe to say, we have a good time! The weather was extra cooperative this year-- although I really wouldn't have complained if it had rained during the last few markets. We only had one day of incredible heat. Ailene deserves a special medal for

sitting all morning at the Incredible Edibles' table in over 100 degrees. We were all wetly drenched-but hung in there as the trooper she is. If any of you would like to help next season, in a more supervisory position -not "take over" just yet but ease the load a bit- both Art and I would welcome hearing from you. The Market really IS fun and with so much cooperation, not a hard job-just can be a long one for just two people.

## Bluebird Houses

Please think of bluebird houses for your Christmas giving. We have only 12 left and they are all in the Master Gardener Helpline room at the EOC building. Please check in with Leanne or one of her associates if you need any. Send a check for \$25.00 made out to JCC/WG master gardeners to our treasurer, Sarah Dougherty.

## An Herb Society Invitation Sally Sissel

The Colonial Triangle Unit of the Herb Society of America will hold its next meeting on Tuesday, November 13 at 1:30 at the Our Saviour's Lutheran Church, 7479 Richmond Rd. This meeting will feature two of the society's members, Julie Stanton and

Virginia Curl, doing a follow-up on the society's trip to Buffalo Springs Herb Farm, which many of you attended. Using some tips from Don Haynie's Advent book featuring herbs, Julie and Virginia will present a "Christmas Topyary--An Old Standard Made From Untraditional Items". Refreshments will be served. The program and refreshments will be followed by the business meeting for which you are all welcome to stay if you're interested. While you're marking your calendars, also reserve Thursday January 8, 2008 for the next open meeting of the Herb Society which will feature "Eighteenth Century English Dyeing Techniques" presented by Eileen Hammond, Colonial Williamsburg Fiber Artist.

## The Future Gardens of 1607

Does Historic Gardening interest you? Would you like to try your hand at raising vegetable crops as our earliest colonists did? The Jamestown Settlement has asked the JCCW Master Gardeners to plant and maintain several vegetable gardens

in and outside the Settlement Fort.

The gardens pose many challenges. (Think Reid and Shields Gardens when JCCWMG assumed responsibility for their care.) All interns and Master Gardeners would be eligible to manage or work on this effort which could begin in early 2008. Your indication of interest in

this project will help the Board make a decision about proposing this project to the Membership. Please contact Pat Crowe (pk.crowe@cox.net) or Anne Odle (anneodle@cox.net) by November 15 if you would like to participate.

## BE THE FIRST IN YOUR NEIGHBORHOOD TO HAVE A MATTEY'S GARDEN T-SHIRT Genrose Lashinger

Exclusive to JCC-Williamsburg Master Gardeners: The first and only Matthey's Garden t-shirt is available. The t-shirt is made of excellent material (Gildan 6.1 oz. 100% cotton) and displays the logo (see right). Shipping is free and there is no sales tax.  
 Cost: \$5.95 youth small to adult XL  
 \$7.95 2XL  
 \$8.95 3XL

JCC/W MGA is covering set up cost (thanks, Dave). I must have orders of at least 30 before I may place an order. We have order a minimum of 50. If you wish to order one (or more) please send me a check made out to JCC-W MG's with memo of Matthey's t-

shirt and the size you wish. I will let you know as soon as I place the whole order.

My address is: 2513 Campbell Close, Williamsburg, VA 23185



## 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](http://www.jccwmg.org). All nominations must be received by December 1.

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

Many thanks to Carol Fryer, Anne Neilsen and Helen Hamilton for their presentations about Master Gardener College and the Williamsburg Botanical Garden at our October meeting...their pictures and narrations were so helpful!

# The Colonial Master Gardener

## The 2007 America's Anniversary Garden Project and Contest Pat Rathke

The 2007 America's Anniversary Garden™ (AAG™) Contest was designed as the culmination of the America's Anniversary Garden project. The project was started in 2005 by four Virginia Cooperative Extension horticulturists – Drs. Joyce Latimer and Bonnie Appleton along with David Close and Leanne DuBois.

localities also sponsored their own contests.

My neighborhood won Category 3 - Neighborhood Garden.. We have four active MG in the neighborhood: Sue Quick, Bill Pearl, Joan Jones and me.

I am quite proud for our community to have won this. Last year we did a test run and improved it this year to look even better. Last year the display was used as an example which was very rewarding for the community.

The AAG™ contest had 109 entries from 45 cities stretching from Wytheville to Virginia Beach to Alexandria. Several

The award was given out at the State Fair in Richmond on Friday, October 5.



## DIRT FROM MATTEY'S GARDEN Gen-rose Lashinger

Mattey's Garden was recognized with an Award of Excellence by the 2007 Anniversary Committee for the red, white and blue garden planted by Mrs. Whitley's fifth grade class.

The award was presented to Debbie Besnier, assistant principal at Matthew Whaley School, and me by Tommy Norment, Virginia State senator, at Legacy Hall on October 21.

The Williamsburg Land Conservancy has awarded Mattey's Garden in 2004, 2005, 2006 and 2007. Most recently, the Williamsburg Garden Club, the major impetus behind the building of Mattey's Garden in 1997, had a silent auction to raise money for the garden. Over \$900 was raised to be used for large expenses such as an additional umbrella and stand, new tools, and additional plant signs.

## Upcoming Dates to Remember

- Nov 13 Deer Resistant Plants, Jim Orband, Williamsburg Regional Library, sponsored by the Williamsburg Botanical Garden
- Dec 6 monthly MG meeting, 9:00am, Williamsburg Regional Library
- Dec 12 VMGA meeting, see page 4 of this newsletter

## It's time to order MG logo jackets, caps, and shirts again

The items that can be ordered are shown below. Contact Judy Hansen at lhansen100@cox.net with questions or to order. Please make a check out to JCCWVG .

# James City County/ Williamburg Master Gardeners



### Stedman® by Hanes® - 7-Ounce Pique Knit Sport Shirt. 055X

Fabric/Style: 7-ounce, 100% cotton pique, welt collar and cuffs, double-needle bottom hem. Two-button placket with wood tone buttons.

Adult sizes: S-2XL

Available color: DeepForest, Natural  
Price embroidered \$20.00



### Port & Company® - Long Sleeve Value Denim Shirt. SP10

Fabric/Style: 6.5-ounce, 100% cotton denim, garment washed; generous cut, double-needle stitched, tuck-in tail, button-down collar, horn tone buttons; patch pocket, with button-through sleeve plackets and adjustable cuffs.

Adult sizes: XS-2XL

Available color: FadedBlue  
Price embroidered \$23.00



### Sport-Tek® - Nylon V-Neck Wind Shirt. JP72

Fabric/Style: 100% nylon shell, lightweight flannel body lining, nylon lining in sleeves for easy on/off; 1 x 1 polyLyca-ribbed cuffs/collar/waistband, locker loop, side-seam pockets.

Adult sizes: XS-2XL

Available color: Hunter  
Price embroidered \$26.00



### Port Authority® - Medium Length Apron with Pouch Pockets. A510

Fabric/Style: 100% cotton with Teflon finish for added protection; 3 pouch pockets, 1 pen pocket, 1" wide neck and waist ties, adjustable neck strap. This apron is a great way to stay clean while gardening and other pursuits. Measures 22" w x 24" l.

Available color: Hunter  
Price embroidered \$15.00



### Port Authority® - Fine Twill Cap. CB00

Fabric/Style: Fine twill provides a wonderful feel and added polyester makes this cap a great performer. 65/35 poly/cotton, 6-panel construction, structured, high profile, self-fabric closure with grommet, stitched eyelets and a fashion-curved bill. Buckram lining in the front helps cap retain its shape. The high profile construction provides a large embroidery surface.

Available color: Hunter, Khaki  
Price embroidered \$12.00 ea.



### Sport-Tek® - Sideline Jacket. JP71

Fabric/Style: 100% nylon shell with lightweight flannel lining in the body, nylon-lined sleeves for easy on/off; locker loop, slash pockets, raglan sleeves with elastic cuffs, drawstring bottom hem, inside pocket with Velcro closures.

Adult sizes: XS-2XL

Available colors: Hunter  
Price embroidered \$28.00