

The Colonial Master Gardener

PUBLICATION OF JCC/WMASTER GARDENER ASSOCIATION &
VIRGINIA COOPERATIVE EXTENSION



March 2014

**First day of spring!
Thursday, March 20**

THE PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

BY MARGENE HARTSOUGH

I know we all love our flowers and grow many on our own but there are times we just cannot resist a beautiful bouquet at the store. A recent article in the Virginia Gazette revealed the amount of chemicals allowed on these beauties. "Cut flowers can contain up to 50 times the pesticides and fungicides allowed on our food crops." This was startling to me. The flower industry is huge and even has its own political lobby. The volume of flowers arriving to our country from afar makes it unfeasible to keep track of where these flowers originate or the conditions under which they were cultivated. The good news is this industry is getting greener. This does not just include organics but other flower growers in the U.S. are working to go beyond the use of chemicals and improve the safety of workers in the fields, the water quality and living wages. If we cannot pluck them from our own garden our local farmers market is one place we can have some degree of certainty of getting flowers free of chemicals.

Thanks to all our membership for getting their dues paid, the recertification form completed and submitted,

completed the Civil Rights Training and recorded their volunteer hours. This makes the work of our VP for Administration and his committee much easier and allows our organization to make an accurate report to Virginia Tech regarding our active membership. Please tuck it away that this is an annual exercise for all of us.

With all the cold weather and snow these past weeks found this quote to be a good reminder of why we are gardeners.

"Good gardeners are always young in spirit, for their minds are fixed on spring when others feel only the bitter sting of winter."

Mary Fenton Roberts, 1864-1956, American Author, **The Touchstone**, October 1917

Happy Gardening Margene

YOU'RE INVITED

BY SALLY SISSEL

The Colonial Triangle Unit of Virginia Unit of the Herb Society of America's March meeting will be open to the public. The featured speaker will be Eric Bailey of Landscapes by Eric Bailey. Eric will be speaking about "Introducing New & Under-Used Plants in Your Garden".

The meeting will be held Tuesday March 11 in the fellowship hall of Our Saviour's Evangelical Lutheran Church, 7479 Richmond Rd., Norge. Refreshments will be served at 1:00 with presentation to begin at 1:30.

PROJECT CHAIRS:

Interested in having a display table at Turf University on March 15, 2014?

If so, contact Barb Foley or Pete Sweet at the Extension office!

**Next Meeting:
Thursday, March 6**

Speaker:
Helen Hamilton,
Wildflowers

The Colonial Master Gardener March 2014

2014
MG Board

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Margene
Hartsough

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Sue Liddell

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564-2170

INTERNAL EDUCATION

BY JUDY CASONE

Well, I had hoped for a moment we might have a little more Springish weather but no. That's what I get for being impatient. So back to planning and education.

The Gardening Symposium at CNU should have contacted everyone by now. You can register on line at gardening.cnu.edu. The date is April 12 and features Bob Goodhart - Gardening to Attract Birds and Butterflies; Lisa Ziegler - Downstream; Marie Butler - Garden Design That Supports Wildlife. The afternoon is for workshops. I can recommend it as a day well spent.

As we have discussed before, we are merely keeping the land for those who come behind us. To that end The Virginia Gazette reports that as of July, residents will be able to recycle all of their rigid plastics, including yogurt cups and grocery store clam shells. If you did not see this article it was featured in the February 19th edition. It certainly important to all of us.

Also featured in the Gazette were programs offered and many speakers are our own Master

Gardeners. The first program at the James City Recreational Center was by Brett Heath and sponsored by the Williamsburg Botanical Garden. Programs include information on birds, herbs, butterflies, art in the garden, Bluebirds, Reptiles and snakes, reblooming iris and more. The entire program and all of the information was featured in the February 19th Virginia Gazette. There is a wealth of information and education here in Williamsburg if we but look for it.

For future programs for Master Gardeners we have Helen Hamilton - Wildflowers on March 6; Mike Androckz - Camellias on April 3; Frank Reilly, VT - Climate Change on May 1.

While our publicity chairs are doing a great job on getting the word out to the public about our programs, if you belong to a Garden Club, tell your members. We think they would enjoy the speakers.

Shake off this last cold spell (coming) and get ready to enjoy your garden.

VMGA MEETING NOTES

BY ANGELA CINGALE, VMGA REP

Following is the VCE Report by John Freeborn from the February 8 VMGA meeting in Appomattox.

MG College: 90% of speakers are secured. Keynote speakers include Joseph Tyconovich, Cole Burrell, Felder Rushing, and Joe Murray, to name a few. Some unique tours will be offered, such as a **guided kayak trip** on the New River and a **bike ride** on a converted rails to trails area in Giles County, as well as **golfing** at the Pete Dye River Course.

VMS Update: The Old State Record Keeping System is no longer being updated, but folks can still access data until the system is taken down. Milestone requests have been made and are due by the end of February to our office.

Weekly E-mail: VCE has been compiling all upcoming events and other items into a weekly e

-mail format to minimize the e-mail traffic from VA Tech.

Special Newsletter: There is a special newsletter that has detailed our Strategic Planning Process for the Extension Master Gardener program. It can be downloaded from the main website.

VCE Website: We are in the process of redesigning our website. We have a work-study student who is heading up that project. We look to have something out this spring. We are going to have a password protected area where we hope to be able to share items that Coordinators and Agents utilize, such as a listing of speakers and presentations that can be downloaded.

The MG Board meets on the third Friday of each month, at 9:00 am, at the James City County Health and Human Services Building, on Olde Towne Road.

The Board meetings are open to all Master Gardeners, and all are encouraged to attend.

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IT'S TIME FOR THE 2014 FARMERS MARKET SOME CHANGES HAVE BEEN MADE!!

BY SALLY SISSEL

After more than 10 years of supervising the MG presence at the Market, it has been decided to begin in April (instead of May) and finish at the end of September (instead of October). That is the same number of markets for us—just moved calendar up a month.

Therefore the first market of the season will be on Saturday, April 5. We also will have new tent canopies!!!

As most of you know, we have 2 spaces in front of the CW Craft House every other Saturday from 7:30 until 11:30. I will begin scheduling volunteers for the first half of the market dates very soon and for the 2nd half of the market dates in mid-June. I am scheduling only for the Q&A table—the theme chairs schedule their own volunteers.

I am counting on “veteran” market volunteers to return and will contact you if I don't hear from you first! Those of you who have not been able to volunteer in previous years and, particularly, those who were interns last year would be most welcome to join us.

My goal is to have 2 “real” MGs at that table with 2 interns—so if you would be interested in helping (most of you know how much fun it really is!), please let me know all of the dates for which you would be available. Then I will sort out and send you a final schedule.

Dates will be: April 5, April 19, May 3, May 17, May 31, June 14, and June 28.

Special note to Interns: You all will be hearing about all the projects soon and will be able to sign up for the projects of your choice at your project fair. I look forward to meeting and working with many of you during the summer.

Thanks,
Sally Sissel, co-chair

NEW KENT UPDATE

BY SUE DONNELLY

On Mar 22, 2014 the New Kent Master Gardeners will be holding a Raised Bed Vegetable Gardening Clinic from 10:00am-12:00 pm. The location will be the New Kent Extension Office at 11809 New Kent Highway, Suite 1, New Kent, VA. Master Gardeners and guest speakers will talk about the advantages of raised bed vegetable gardening, what it takes to have a successful vegetable garden, how to create a garden design, good soil composition, ways to add organic matter, how to raise your vegetables organically, plus other vegetable gardening topics.

A visit to Carole's Garden, to New Kent Master Gardeners' demonstration garden on site at the Extension Office is included in the clinic. Reserve your spot by calling 804-966-9645 or email Patty Townsend at patric4@vt.edu.

FREE SYMPOSIUM

BY LIZ MONTALVO

Incredible Edibles are announcing a free symposium for vegetable gardeners to be held at the WJC Recreation Center on Longhill Road on March 29. Speakers will discuss garden design, container gardening, and pest management along with displays and demonstrations. Registration and refreshments begin at 9:00 a.m.





LANDSCAPE LOVE

BY GARY STREB



It is starting to look like Spring! My crocus and snow drops are in bloom and the daffodils, English blue bells and leucojum are about 6 inches out of the ground. Time to think about your Spring volunteer activity, and especially Landscape Love. All of you that have participated in the past; I would be honored, and extremely pleased, if you were to join us again. For those of you who feel that you are missing out of the fun and excitement of Landscape Love I would like to invite you to join us.

The registration period for the Spring session is from March 15th until April 15th and can be done by filling out the application at www.jccwmg.org/LandscapeLove. If our requests track with the last few years we should expect between 55 and 80 registrants. Don't worry –we divide the share among five teams and then each team will have several customized sub-teams to do the homeowner visits. You can do as many or as few as you like.

The timeframe for the visits is late April thru the end of May. We have scheduled an organization/training/ refresher meeting for **Thursday, April 17th, 9 a.m. at the JCC Rec Center, Room A**. The second/makeup session is Monday April 21st, JCC Rec Center Room A, 9 a.m. The meeting will be about an hour.

I will email each of the Current Landscape Love volunteers soon to ask for recommitment plans and which meeting you would like to attend. If you would like to rejoin us or participate for the first time let me know at gstreb11@gmail.com.

Happy Spring and happy gardening!

BARRELS AND BINS

BY DENNIS WOOL

Barrels and Bins Project is available for demonstrations and programs to garden clubs, neighborhood associations, garden workshops, etc.

It is always a fun interaction between MGs and participants demonstrating how to make and use rain barrels, composters, and grow boxes. Contact: Dennis Wool

BEATRIX POTTER'S GARDENING LIFE

BY AILENE BARTLETT

How many of you remember THE TALE OF PETER RABBIT from your childhood, or your children's or grandchildren's childhoods? Did you know that the author, Beatrix Potter, wrote a large number of children's books, illustrated them, was an artist, gardener, and yes, a FARMER?

I've just finished reading Beatrix Potter's Gardening Life, by Marta McDowell (Portland Oregon, Timber Press, 2013), and it is an amazing biography of an amazing woman, along with all sorts of great information about her gardens, what she grew and how she grew them. It even includes lists of plants which she grew, and lists of plants that appear as illustrations in her books.

Today we're thinking about putting vegetables alongside the flowers in our flowerbeds; she did that. And putting berry bushes along with the ornamental shrubs in the borders; she did that. She dried fruits and vegetables, made jellies and preserves, and canned food. And she raised Herdwick sheep. All the while she was writing books, doing sketches and watercolors, and acquiring land, including her Hill Top Farm which later became part of Britain's National Trust.

If you go to England, make sure you visit Hill Top Farm in the Lake District! If you don't go to England, DO read the book, and become inspired!

UPCOMING FARMERS' MARKET DATES

April 5	Water Wise + Barrels and Bins
April 19	Gardening with Children
May 3	<i>National Herb Day</i>
May 17	Flowers
May 31	Water Stewards
June 14	Incredible Edibles
June 28	Vegetables

ADMIRE IT OR EAT IT?

BY BARBARA GUSTAFSON

Why not plant vegetable seedlings in self-watering containers, as edging for flower beds, in flower beds, and on fences or trellises? We're hoping that at our Plant Sale we might sell groupings of vegetable seedlings as attractive container plantings with planting and care instructions and as suitable plantings in flower gardens and along fences. Ailene Bartlett and Art and I got together and made up the following guidelines.

As we visualize this working, we could sell a group of seedlings in biodegradable pots to plant together in a container or plant within a flower bed, as edging to a flower bed, or as ornamental plantings along a fence. Many vegetables are too large, too sprawling, or need special care so we decided to suggest some specific varieties. Here are some of the ideas we've come up with.

For edging in flower beds we suggest lettuce, spinach, kale, chard, onions, garlic, radishes, runnerless strawberries, and low-growing thyme. To plant among the flowerbeds try beans, determinate tomatoes, bush peppers, herbs, and blueberries. Pole beans, vine cucumbers, sweet potatoes, and gourds work well for climbing on fences or trellises. Many vegetables do well in containers, such as bush squash, bush cucumbers, kohlrabi, potatoes, small determinate tomatoes, herbs, and strawberries and some do well in hanging baskets such as peas and cherry tomatoes. Ailene has seeds for many of these ideas that she can share with anyone interested in starting some seedlings for our sale.

We also found some great ideas in a book, Crops in Pots by Bob Purnell, Reader's Digest, 2007, that we thought we could adapt. Some of these are "Peas in a Pod" with peas and sweet peas, "Tumbling Toms" with cherry tomatoes and parsley, "Pasta & Pizza"



with plum tomatoes, and suitable herbs, "Purple Dream" with a dwarf eggplant and dwarf red runner beans, and "On Fire" with sweet red and yellow bush peppers, a red chili pepper and orange nasturtiums. Art has ordered seeds for some of our favorite "Crops in Pots" to share with anyone who would like to put together some both to try and for the plant sale. If any of you are interested in trying this with us, you can contact any of us, come over and pick up some seeds, or wait for a mass e-mail we plan to put out shortly.



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WILDFLOWER OF THE MONTH – MARCH 2014

BY HELEN HAMILTON

JOHN CLAYTON CHAPTER, VIRGINIA NATIVE PLANT SOCIETY

Pinxterflower

Rhododendron periclymenoides

Blooming in late March, Pinxterflower produces clusters of soft pink to white, slightly fragrant, funnel-shaped flowers, each with 5 distinctive long curved stamens. A deciduous native shrub, the plant grows dense and bushy 2-6 feet tall.

Many *Rhododendrons* are commonly known as azaleas. Nine species occur in Virginia, three are native in the Coastal Plain: *R. atlanticum* (dwarf azalea), *R. periclymenoides* (pinxterflower), *R. viscosum* (swamp azalea). Many introduced species and cultivars of the natives are offered for sale in the nursery trade.

Pinxte grows best in acidic, organically rich soil which must be well-drained. Dappled sun or open shade is preferred. The shallow, fibrous root systems benefit from a mulch to help retain moisture and keep soil temperatures stable. Widespread across Virginia, the range is from Massachusetts, New York and southern Ohio, south to Georgia and Alabama.

“Pinxter” means Pentecost (the 7th Sunday after Easter), in reference to the blooming time.

Caution: The leaves and flower nectar may be toxic or



Photo: Pinxterflower
(*Rhododendron periclymenoides*) taken by Helen Hamilton in Williamsburg Botanical Garden

lethal, including honey made from the plant nectar. Small amounts of water-soluble compounds can cause effects similar to that of digitalis – mild paralysis and convulsions, difficult breathing, coma.

For more information about native plants visit www.claytonvnps.org.

SAD DAY AT NEW KENT

BY PATTY TOWNSEND

PROGRAM ASSISTANT – HORTICULTURE
VCE, NEW KENT COUNTY

It is a sad day for me, but a great day for my co-worker and friend.

The Virginia Cooperative Extension office in New Kent County will be losing Mary Mills, the Unit Administrative Assistant, to retirement. She has always been self-motivated and invaluable to her co-workers and to the public seeking answers to issues that concern them. She will be missed for her leadership and enthusiasm in promoting Extension in our community. I wish her well in her new adventure in life. This is truly a sad time for me because she was supportive of all my endeavors but most of all, a wonderful friend.



BENEFITS OF COMPOST

BY JOHN ALLISON, ANR EXTENSION AGENT

CHARLES CITY AND NEW KENT COUNTIES

- ✦ Improves soil structure
- ✦ Improves nutrient holding capacity
- ✦ Reduces soil compaction and crusting
- ✦ Reduces fertilizer requirements
- ✦ Increases ease of cultivation (tilth)
- ✦ Improves root growth
- ✦ Improves water infiltration and permeability
- ✦ Increases microbial and earthworm populations

Texture, structure, density, porosity, water content, and color are physical properties of the soil that we depend on in our gardens. They determine permeability and availability of soil air and water, and the ease of root penetration. Soil texture cannot be modified easily. Soil color changes with oxidation state and organic matter (OM) content. Structure, density, water holding capacity, and porosity can be improved with compost.

Soil Color

Soil color is controlled by iron and OM. Most all soil particles are coated with rusty iron. That coating imparts the color of the rust to the soil. Red, yellow, and brown are the common soil colors. Those are also the colors of rust. Sand particles in the top soil often are uncoated and exhibit the color of the rock it came from unless OM is present. As OM oxidizes its identity becomes less and less recognizable. The endpoint of OM decomposition is the stable organic compound called humus. Humus is dark colored and has the consistency of glue. It coats all soil particles it comes in contact with. Much of the dark rich color of natural topsoil comes from the presence of humus coating each soil particle.

Soil Density

Soil density is referred to as bulk density (BD). BD is weight of soil per unit volume in its natural state. It includes pore space, soil particles, and OM. BD is expressed in grams per cubic centimeters. Values of 1.1 to 1.4 are dense and compact. Higher values indicate lots of pore space. Compost increase BD values by bulking up the soil. This means more pore space and easier root penetration.

Water Content

Infiltration is the process of water and air moving through the soil surface. It is like walking through the front door to enter a house. Permeability is the process of water and

air moving through the soil profile. It is like walking through the rooms of the house. Available water is the water left after water drains out of the soil in response to gravity. These processes are dependent on the soil texture, structure, and porosity. Or restated, they are controlled by the Bulk Density of the soil. The amount of water already in the soil will also affect infiltration and permeability. Accessory parameters such as soil crusting and compaction have an adverse effect. Vegetative cover and root and earthworm channels have a positive effect. Infiltration is rapid into large continuous pores at the soil surface. Permeability decreases with depth as pore size is reduced. Adding compost will improve the bulk density. This in turn will reduce crusting and compaction, and increase infiltration, permeability, and available water in the garden soil.

Generally, a soil with a high water-holding capacity will provide more plant-available water. Clayey soils hold the most, sandy soils the least, and loamy soils intermediate amounts of water. However, loamy soils provide the most plant available water because much of the water in the small pores in clayey soils is held too tightly to be available to plants; and the large pores in sandy soils can not hold much water. OM physically holds more water than mineral soil. Therefore adding compost increases any soil's water-holding capacity.

Soil Nitrogen

Nitrate (NO_3^-) and ammonium (NH_4^+) are the only forms of nitrogen that can be used by plants. Microbes use all forms. Chemical nitrogen fertilizers add ammonium or nitrate directly to soil. Nitrogen in OM such as crop residues, compost, and manure must be mineralized by microbes into the inorganic nitrate and ammonium forms before they can be used by plants. Ammonium is either directly taken up by plant roots or soil microorganisms, or converted to nitrate. However, most Nitrogen in garden soils is taken up as nitrate nitrogen.

Nitrate can leach through soil if it is not taken up by plant roots or soil microorganisms. Nitrate that is leached through the soil profile becomes unavailable to plants. It may contaminate surface water and groundwater as well. Adding compost reduces inorganic Nitrogen losses and provides a supply of slow release Nitrogen throughout the growing season.

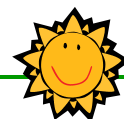
Important Dates

- 3/06 Monthly Meeting @ WRL
- 3/11 Herb Society Meeting
- 3/22 New Kent Raised Bed Gardening Clinic
- 3/24 Newsletter Submissions Due
- 3/29 Incredible Edibles Symposium
- 4/5 Farmers' Market
- 4/12 CNU Gardening Symposium

NEXT NEWSLETTER DEADLINE

The deadline for submissions to the April newsletter will be **Monday, March 24**.

Please send any submissions to Cathy Lohwater, newsletter editor, at cathy.lohwater@cox.net.



SUNSHINE NOTES

Over the past month, the organization has sent cards to:

Rosemarie Brennan – medical
Linda Lucas – death in family

The organization would like to send cards to members with difficult medical issues or who have experienced a death in the immediate family. Please provide names to the MG Secretary, Patsy McGrady, 258-1181, patsymcgrady@cox.net.

JCC/W Master Gardener 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.

ABOUT THE VIRGINIA MASTER GARDENERS AND VIRGINIA COOPERATIVE EXTENSION

Virginia Master Gardeners are volunteer educators who work within their communities to encourage and promote environmentally sound horticulture practices through sustainable landscape management education and training. As an educational program of Virginia Cooperative Extension, Virginia Master Gardeners bring the resources of Virginia's land-grant universities, Virginia Tech and Virginia State University, to the people of the commonwealth.

Extension is a joint program of Virginia Tech, Virginia State University, the U.S. Department of Agriculture, and state and local governments. Virginia Cooperative Extension programs and employment are open to all, regardless of race, color, national origin, sex, religion, age, disability, political beliefs, sexual orientation, or marital or family status. An equal opportunity/affirmative action employer.



Virginia Cooperative Extension
Virginia Tech • Virginia State University



Raised Bed Gardening Clinic

Saturday, March 22, 2014



10:00 am - Noon

FREE!!



Pre-registration required

Location:

New Kent Extension Office
11809 New Kent Highway, Suite 1
New Kent, VA

Master Gardeners and guest speakers will talk about the advantages of raised bed gardening with vegetables, what it takes to have a successful vegetable garden, how to create a garden design, good soil composition, ways to add organic matter, how to raise your vegetables organically, plus other vegetable gardening topics.

Visit Carole's Garden, the New Kent Master Gardeners' demonstration garden on site at the Extension Office.

To reserve your spot please **register by March 14th** by calling or emailing the New Kent Virginia Cooperative Extension
(804) 966-9645 / email patric4@vt.edu

If you are a person with a disability and desire any assistive devices, services or other accommodations to participate in this activity, please contact Cynthia Rowles, New Kent - Virginia Cooperative Extension at (804-966-9645/TDD*) during business hours of 8:00 a.m. and 4:30 p.m. to discuss accommodations 5 days prior to the event. *TDD number is (800) 828-1120.

Virginia Cooperative Extension programs and employment are open to all, regardless of race, color, national origin, sex, religion, age, disability, political beliefs, sexual orientation, genetic information, marital, family, or veteran status, or any other basis protected by law. An equal opportunity/affirmative action employer. Issued in furtherance of Cooperative Extension work, Virginia Polytechnic Institute and State University, Virginia State University, and the U.S. Department of Agriculture cooperating. Edwin J. Jones, Director, Virginia Cooperative Extension, Virginia Tech, Blacksburg; Jewel E. Hairston, Administrator, 1890 Extension Program, Virginia State, Petersburg.



UNIVERSITY

Sat., March 15

9 a.m. to Noon

**James City County
Recreation Center,
5301 Longhill Road**

**SPRING
LAWN CARE** → **FAMILY
FUN ALL
SUMMER!**

- ✓ **How to Grow a Healthy, Attractive Lawn**
- ✓ **Turfgrass Selection**
- ✓ **What Are Rain Gardens**
- ✓ **How Can They Help Water Quality and Chesapeake Bay Clean Up**



Pre-registration required! Call Virginia Cooperative Extension at 564-2179 (leave name, phone, and number attending) See you there!

If you are a person with a disability and desire any assistive devices, services or other accommodations to participate in this activity, please contact Sandra Kee (757-564-2170/TDD*) during business hours of 8 a.m. to 5 p.m. to discuss accommodations 5 days prior to the event. *TDD number is (800) 828-1120.

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Virginia Cooperative Extension

Virginia Tech • Virginia State University

Grow It and Eat It!



Herb & Vegetable Gardening For Home Beds & Containers

Saturday, March 29 Basics of Veggie Gardening
Container Gardening
Companion Plants & Common Pests

**9:00-11:30 JCC Community Center,
5301 Longhill Road-Rooms A&B
Presented by JCC/W Master Gardeners**



Check our website: www.jccwmg.org