

The Colonial Master Gardener

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



May 2007

Our thoughts and prayers go to the victims, their families and all those affected by the tragic events at Virginia Tech on April 16, 2007.

President's Corner Charlie Clapper

"To say 'gardening is the best therapy there is' has become a cliché but, like most clichés, it has become one because it is true. So many gardeners will tell you that whatever the stresses and strains of the day, there are very few problems that an hour or two pattering in the garden won't at least put into perspective."

From The Healing Garden by Gay Search

Awakening this April 15 morning to the sound of heavy rain and a breeze made the process of getting out of bed a bit easier. I wanted most to see the effects that the rain and breeze were having on the dogwoods outside our bedroom window. This year has been a particularly beautiful year for the Dogwood -- white lace against this week's brilliant blue skies. Sometimes Redbud, Forsythia or Azalea joined this display of white finery. Wonderful!

"We are engaged in a visioning process that will define and lead us toward a future that we have determined together."

After reassuring myself that the Dogwood remained beautiful white, intact and swaying in the breeze my thoughts turned (can you believe it!) to Master Gardening and the future of our Association. We are engaged in a visioning process that will define and lead us toward a future that we

have determined together. The Board is meeting with members who provided written comments on the draft Vision, Goals and Measurements. A meeting of the Project Chairs will be held on April 27. On May 3, the entire membership will discuss together for a "Town Meeting." We want a common Vision, Goals and ways of measuring the goals that the membership can support. Then we can move forward together to meet the challenges of a future. We will then be prepared to meet requests that our current programs are continued and expanded and for requests for new programs as well.

In July the new Board will take over. The Nominating Committee for that new Board has begun its work. I urge you to support that work by considering joining the Board. As I reflect on the past two years as President of the MG Association I believe that much good has been accom-

plished. Our community has benefited from many hours of volunteer time and expertise that have contributed to brighter futures for our homes, our environment and our children. All of this good work has been made possible by *your* dedication: thank you!

Next Monthly Meeting

Thursday, May 3, 9am,
WJCC Community Center
on Longhill Road, Master Gardener "Town Hall Meeting," a dialog for discussion and consensus of the future of our MG organization.

PLEASE NOTE CHANGE IN MEETING PLACE

Upcoming Dates to Remember

- Apr 29 VNPS & JCC/W MGA Plant Sale, Williamsburg Community Building, 12-4pm
- May 2-5 International Master Gardener Conference, Little Rock, Arkansas. For more information: <http://mg2007.uaex.edu> or call 501-671-2000.
- June 7 monthly MG meeting, Stephen Living, Watchable Wildlife biologist
- June 19-24 MG College in Blacksburg, details to follow once registration is online
- Oct 22-28 OPERATION REJUVENATION - Rebuilding community gardens devastated by Hurricane Katrina. Coordinated by Dave Close, State MG Coordinator. Mark your calendars, details forthcoming. Departing from and arriving in Blacksburg.

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FROM THE EXTENSION OFFICE LEANNE DUBOIS, EXTENSION AGENT,

The Sunshine Fund sent a remembrance this month to:

Andrea Eadie
Cindy Halliday
Jerzy Nowak

2006-07 MG BOARD

PRESIDENT

Charlie Clapper, '02
564-6191

PAST PRESIDENT

Barbara Gustafson, '99
564-1888

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Rich Strenkowski, '04
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VP INTERNAL ED

Jean Winters, '01
564-1662

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Lynn Flood, '02
220-3864

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Mary Ann Kimminau, '04
565-6272

TREASURER, WEBMASTER

David Banks, '03
258-8632

STATE REP

Anne Odle, '04
259-9025

VINTAGE MG

Ailene Bartlett, '85
229-2822

EXTENSION AGENT

Leanne DuBois, '96
564-2170

Helpdesk Office Makeover

Just in time to welcome the new interns into the Hot Seat of the Helpdesk Office....the Helpdesk Office has experienced a drastic makeover. The helpdesk Office renovation could not have happened without the talents of many Master Gardeners on the Helpdesk Team and especially by Jarl Christensen whose talents in carpentry have transformed the workspace into a showroom(maybe not a showroom but a drastic and needed change.) Now we can greet our gardening public in style and have plenty of room to research, study plant and in-



Jarl Christensen showing off the helpdesk office renovation.

sect samples and even put both feet up if you're lucky enough to have a quiet moment. With most of our information on the computer the old file cabinet is gone also. Some of you remember publication files just a few years ago before we printed our information on an as needed basis. If you see Jarl, give him a nice pat on the back for going beyond the call of duty.

Hot off the Press – Latest Virginia Tech Publication

A new publication has been released through the Virginia Tech publication Department called Reducing Pesticide Use in the Home Lawn and Landscape. It's written by Elizabeth Bush who works in the Plant Pathology Department and assists in the Plant Disease Lab at Virginia Tech. It discusses IPM plus basic common sense approaches to develop good Horticultural practices to reduce problems in the landscape that require chemical solutions. Many of the samples we send to Virginia Tech for diagnosis come back as Environmental Problems related to planting site, plant selection and soil. Check it out at the link below:

<http://www.ext.vt.edu/pubs/plantdiseasefs/450-725/450-725.html>

EDITORS NOTE: The deadline for submission of material for the June Newsletter is May 15. Please send to Lise Kline, newsletter editor, at legskline@cox.net or call 757-259-9477. Comments and questions are also welcome. Thank you.

Internal Education News Jean Winters

The earth, gentle and indulgent, ever subservient to the wants of man, spreads his walks with flowers, and his table with plenty...

Pliny the Elder

We see such soft-colored beauty every day now...how fortunate we are! Enjoy all you can!

I thank all those who participated in the recent "MG Dialogue" about the environmental topics addressed at our April meeting, hopefully all of us have gleaned a better understanding about those topics. It was a wonderful offering for our new interns, we were glad to have them with us!

The May meeting will help us to better un-

derstand the "new" concepts we hope to include in our work as Master Gardeners here. We look to that dialogue for discussion and consensus on what we plan for the future. As has been said by our president, "it is better to hang together than separately". That meeting will be held at the Recreation Center on Longhill Road, rather than the Williamsburg Library, at the usual time of 9:00 a.m.

The June program will be given by Stephen Living, Watchable Wildlife Biologist, from the Virginia Department of Game and Inland Fisheries...please mark that June 7th date on your calendar! Our learning continues!

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

May Musings HELEN HAMILTON

DON'T PLANT THAT! An alien, invasive, that is. Recently a paper was published by graduate students at the University of California, Davis on the response of the horticultural trade to voluntary initiatives to curb the sale of invasive plants. Some do and some don't. Many nursery professionals mentioned lack of information, i.e. insufficient outreach by concerned citizens.

When you see an invasive plant in a local nursery (1) don't buy it and (2) tell the nursery manager about its invasiveness. This website www.state.va.us/dnh/ provides a list of invasive species ranked Highly, Moderately, or Occasionally invasive. It's no surprise to us in James City County that tree-of-heaven, stilt grass and kudzu are on the highly invasive list.

But unless you have done battle with other species, their invasive character may not be immediately apparent. And there are native and oriental look-alikes:

(1) Beware of wisteria. The Chinese wisteria (*Wisteria sinensis*), and Japanese wisteria (*Wisteria floribunda*) are nasty invaders, spreading rapidly by rhizomes. Colonial Nursery sells American wisteria (*Wisteria frutescens*) which behaves itself.

(2) Oriental bittersweet *Celastrus orbiculatus* is an invader, but the American species *Celastrus scandens* is innocent.

(3) Multiflora rose, *Rosa multiflora* can take over an area, crowding out natives; swamp rose, *Rosa palustris* and Carolina rose, *Rosa carolina*, are widely distributed in Virginia and eastern U.S.

(4) English ivy, *Helix hedera*, is widely sold in local nurseries as a dependable evergreen groundcover. It can destroy trees, forming thick vines which smother the bark and leaves. English ivy spreads by budding from underground stems and it produces adventitious roots which cling to surfaces like brick, which will eventually crumble. The Plant Conservation Alliance, <http://www.nps.gov/plants/alien/fact.htm> lists English ivy as a "Least Wanted Plant" along with other invasives.

Suggested alternative groundcovers are wild ginger (*Asarum canadense*), Alle-

gheny spurge (*Pachysandra procumbens*), and green and gold (*Chrysogonum virginianum*). Native vines are trumpet creeper (*Campsis radicans*), Virginia creeper (*Parthenocissus quinquefolia*), passionflower vine (*Passiflora lutea*),

DAFFODILS. Did they do well this year? Extension agents recommend removing the flower stalks so the plant sends energy to bulb formation, not seed-making. And leave the foliage intact to allow photosynthesis to continue, encouraging strong bulb development. Although not attractive, let the foliage stand or fall on its own. Don't cut or tie it up, as this interferes with the flow of water and nutrients from the leaves to the bulb. Violets interplanted among the daffodils makes a nice color contrast.

THE SHAD ARE RUNNING! And you can buy shad roe in the grocery store. That means shadbush is blooming – *Amelanchier canadensis* follows the pear and flowering cherry in early spring blossoms. Folklore states that plant's flowering time signaled to early American pioneers that the ground had thawed enough in spring for the burial of the winter's dead.

Shadbush is a tall shrub or small tree, which can grow to 25 feet. White blossoms with linear petals appear in March-June, followed by sweet, purplish fruits in summer, which can be harvested for jams and jellies, although their popularity with birds makes harvesting difficult. An attractive ornamental tree in the spring, the leaves of shadbush turn brilliant orange or red in the fall.

Widely distributed along the east coast in eastern Virginia, shadbush was exported to England in the 18th century. George Washington grew the tree on the grounds of Mt. Vernon.

The Native American food pemmican was flavored by serviceberry fruits in combination with fat and dried meats, and the stems were made into arrow shafts.



Shadbush photographed at the entrance to Freedom Park in early April.



MGs Pat Rathke and Mary Ann Carlson at work in the Reid perennial garden.



MG intern Pembroke Hoffmeir works with DJ Montague Elementary School students during a SOL seed investigation.

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MG Program Updates (and other info)

Melissa's Meadow will be holding a regularly scheduled work day on May 17. Come around 8:30 with your favorite tools to weed among the daisies and the like. All are welcome.



MGs presenting on various environmental topics at the April MG monthly meeting.

NEWS FROM JMG KARI ABBOT, PROJECT CHAIRPERSON

As the school year comes to a close the big excitement for the year end field trip builds.

May 1, 2, 3, the first graders from DJ Montague will go to York River State Park for a walk in the woods, and see a lot of the things they learned about in real life. The field trip is a lot of fun and if you would like to join us, please let me know, everyone is welcome. Training packets have been put together so the information is all in one place.

The interns had training on April 18th.

May will be spent with the first graders talking about water pollution and who causes it. It is a great class to end the year with.

The Third Graders will go to Jamestown 4-H Center on May 24th. Their field trip will have three stations where the children will learn about the water cycle, wetlands, and how aquatic insects tell you the quality of the water they inhabit. It will be a hands-on adventure for everyone. Again everyone is welcome!

If you think you would like to volunteer zap me a note, bearsbaskets@cox.net.



MG work day in the Waterwise Garden in early April.

TURF TOPICS BOB WINTERS, CHAIRPERSON

On Wednesday, May 23, the Super Turf Saturday VI Steering Committee will be meeting at 1:00pm at Human Resources Center on Old Towne Road. Please call Bob Winters (564-1662) for an advance program package and 2006 evaluations. Following that meeting there will be a Turf "U" Advanced class for Lawn Rangers from 2:00 to 4:00pm. Don Parker, Tom Rogers and Bob Winters will hold forth on:

- Soil Testing for the Lawn and Landscape
- Proper Turfgrass Selection
- Turfgrass Establishment
- Fertility programs and application principles
- Mowing programs and principles
- Cultivation programs and principles
- Irrigation principles
- A few specific "spring things" and thoughts on diseases and Insects

SEEDS OF LEARNING MARY ANN KIMMINAU AND ALICE KOPINITZ, PROJECT CHAIRPERSONS

The Seeds of Learning project is currently in full swing. When we visit each classroom, three learning stations are set up. The students learn about seeds, plants and do some hands on planting. Thanks to Helen Hamilton (for inspiration from her theatrical production), the classes are participating in the "Sunflower Story" (see picture left). There has been much positive feedback from students, teachers, and MGs. We will be in schools through the middle of May and when completed we will have seen about 1,000 students. The interns have been fabulous this year and we have about 10 MGS helping so all is going well.



Students at Matthew Whaley Elementary School participate in the SOL "Sunflower Story."