

# The Colonial Master Gardener



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

October 2007

## WATER STEWARD REPORT SUBMITTED BY SUE LIDDELL, COORDINATOR JCC/W WATER STEWARDS

Two major projects were developed after the Water Steward Class graduated.

Linda Lucas and Rich Strenkowski worked on a Water Quality PowerPoint presentation. To get the Power Point correct (with both technical information and governmental policy) they had meetings with the CBF, JCC Environmental Division, Colonial Water and Soil Conservation District plus members of the Community Conservation Partnership. The presentation describes the water quality issue facing James City County and Williamsburg and can be modified to address almost any audience, to educate about how people are negatively impacting the quality of the watershed and what we (individuals, Home Owners Associations and others) can do to help solve the problem. For example, HOAs can be shown how they impact their particular sub-watershed, and ultimately the Bay, and what their responsibilities are. Linda showed part of the presentation to the training class in March in connection with the class on water. The trainees also heard Larry Foster and Libby Norris of the Chesapeake Bay Foundation. Linda and Rich's presentation could be a lead-in to other workshops on storm water management, proper plant choice around retention ponds and in RPAs, use of rain gardens, rain barrels, and proper use of irrigation systems.

Alice Kopinitz and Anne Haltiner prepared a booklet entitled "Who You Gonna Call?" JCC Water Quality Resources and Directory. The water pamphlet answers many questions homeowners have related to water.

Water Stewards have used their education in other projects such as Landscape Love and Youth Programs.

Since the Water Stewards graduated, Kari Abbott has received \$5,150 to educate both children, adults, and teachers in environmental education. Those programs include: Wetland Habitat Workshop for adults in April 2006; training teachers in 2006 in Project Learning Tree focusing on water experiential learning in the classroom; and compiling curriculums for first and third grades that incorporate a Meaningful Watershed Educational Experi-

ence as defined by the Chesapeake Bay Foundation. The Environmental Education modules were awarded the 2007 Master Gardener College Sustained Excellence for Children and Youth Education Award. School children at DJ Montague and Matthew Whaley Elementary School received the curriculums in spring 2006 and school year 2006-2007. The Environmental Education modules educated 140 first graders over nine months in 2006-2007, and 195 third graders over nine months in 2006-2007 in water based environmental education.

Individuals have been working in their neighborhoods as well.

Last year Helen Hamilton received two grants of \$500 each, one from PRIDE and one from Clean County Commission (through Neighborhood Connections). Last fall the neighborhood had \$1,000 worth of plants installed around the three ponds at the front of Seasons Trace Development -- lizards tail, soft rush, pickerel weed, hibiscus, blue flag iris, cardinal flower (blue and red), sweet flag, and turtlehead.

Lynn Flood's community, as represented by the Greater First Colony Area Civic Association, has been very proactive in water issues. Each month an article is sent out to the 550 residences. Many of these articles have come from the help of other water stewards. They are now professionally monitoring the water quality of Lake Pasbeheg. Dr. Randy Chambers from the Keck Lab at William & Mary is doing the water testing. Several improvements have been made to the Lake and dam. The community is applying for a grant from CCP to make further water/nutrient improvements. Bob Winters has conducted a workshop at their clubhouse and two more are planned before next spring. Community volunteers have already logged in more than \$15,000 of in-kind volunteer work. They have been working with all state, county and regional authorities to help them comply with Chesapeake Bay regulations.

Pat Rathke and Lynn Flood potted up 60 pots of plants to be used as terrarium plants for a local church's "Earth Stewardship" Summer school program. Ann Davis also demonstrated the Enviroscape for them. Helen Hamilton and Susan Voigt compiled a list of native plants and recommendations for RPAs. Pat, Ann, and Susan are not Water Stewards but

### Next Monthly Meeting

October 4, 9:00 am,  
Williamsburg Regional  
Library, 2007 MG College Report, Caryl Fryer  
and Anne Neilson



### Inside this issue:

INTERNAL ED NEWS	2
GREEN YOUR BACKYARD	3
COMMUNITY GARDEN	4
TREE STEWARD REPORT	5
MG UPDATES & INFO	6

Continued on Page 2

## Internal Education News Jean Winters

*"Autumn arrives in the early morning, but spring at the close of a winter day"* Elizabeth Bowen

*"Nothing is so interesting as weeding. I went crazy over the outdoor work, and had to confine myself to the house, or literature must have gone by the board"* Robert Louis Stevenson

Yes, autumn arrives soon as of this writing, weeds have accumulated probably, but they will die off (hopefully) only to reappear next year to annoy us again! That's part of the "joy of gardening", don't you think?

We have a change in plans for our speaker at our October meeting. We hope to see Charlie Staton some other time. In his place we have

asked Caryl Fryer and Anne Nielsen to share their experiences at the 2007 Master Gardener College this past June, held at Virginia Tech, our great source of information for sharing gardening and horticulture concerns. I am personally pleased that we will have this opportunity. I have been to Virginia Tech with that lawn person with whom I live, but have not been to MG College. Please join me in welcoming these gals to our program!

We continue to work on programs for the future. Good wishes for a pleasant autumn and cooler weather! Nicole Schermerhorn will be with us in November. Her topic is "Herbs for the Holidays," timely for Thanksgiving and Christmas!

### 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.



Long time Master Gardener Jim Pressly will be at the Farmers' Market in October to answer questions and give tips on plant propagation.



MG Jacqui Winter at last year's Farmers' Market Herb Day. Herbs will be featured again at the Farmers' Market in October.

**EDITORS NOTE:** The deadline for submission of material for the November Newsletter is October 22. 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.

### Water Steward Report, Continued from Page 1

bring their expertise for successful completion of the project.

I am a member of a Ford's Colony group studying its six entrances and major intersections to inventory the plants and make suggestions for drought tolerant, easily maintained plantings. The second step will be to study the roadways and ponds. Bob Winters is also on this committee and has already toured the property with a representative of Inland Fisheries. I am also in a group that monitors the oxygen content of the water passing through Ford's Colony.

### 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, by MG mass email, 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.

**HOW TO "GREEN" YOUR BACKYARD**  
HELEN HAMILTON

"Backyard environmentalism", or how you can help save the planet! Think of the benefits: conserving water, cleaning the air, attracting birds and butterflies, etc.

Consider: the average lawn generates enough oxygen for a family of four; the cooling effect of eight average-sized lawns can equal 70 tons of air conditioning! Each year, grasses in the United States trap an estimated 12 million tons of dust and dirt in the air.

Here's how you can help:

Water Use

Use a layer of mulch around plants to reduce evaporation and retain moisture. Water in the early morning when temperatures are cooler and winds are lighter. Keep a mowing height of 3 inches to foster a deep root system, which will better utilize moisture.

Clear the Air

Plant trees to help remove air pollution, filter water, capture carbon, provide homes for wildlife and keep your home in the shade, especially when planted on the south or west side of the house.

Leave grass clippings on the lawn to help recycle plant nutrients back into the soil.

Gardens

Cover bare soil with composted bark to prevent weeds

Choose easy-to-grow plants that are well-adapted or native to your region.

Create a four-season garden by selecting plants with multiple features: colorful flowers, foliage and fruits.

From [www.scotts.com](http://www.scotts.com) and HOME, August 2007

Surely, all Master Gardeners are well aware of the points in the article above, which I think is a good example of the green industry's response to increasing concerns about the health of our soil.

\*\*\*\*\*

Have you planted your fall vegetables yet? Lacking garden space (or mobility) I found a discarded child's swimming pool, punched holes in the bottom, filled it with ground-up leaves, compost and topsoil, and spread a packet or two of lettuce, spinach

and salad greens. Watered it and covered with squirrel-proof netting; it sits on my deck where I can easily care for it, and harvest the crop as it appears.

\*\*\*\*\*

**From Fine Gardening, August, 2006**

Watering on a slope: Cut off the bottoms from plastic containers and clip the rings over the plants and into the soil. Hide the edges of the containers with mulch. Now the water stays inside the rings and soaks the roots of the plants rather than the rest of the hillside.

Paper compost: A composter that can handle kitchen waste also will break down paper towels, napkins, and plates, and shredded personal papers as well. Another way to conceal personal information!

Allium flowers: An inexpensive way to grow beautiful pink and lavender flowers – plant leek seeds or young transplants in groups in flower beds. Resist harvesting them in the fall, and the reward is an amazing show in the spring that lasts five to six weeks. Plant new batches each year, as they are biennials.

Vine trellis: Do you want annual vines on the sides of a building? If the twine can be attached to the eaves, use bricks or rocks to anchor the twine and keep it taut throughout the growing season. Other plants will hide the supports, and the vines and twine (particularly jute) can be composted during the winter.

Mulch bags: What to do with all those plastic bags of mulch or potting soil? When empty, they make great protection for new transplants and other small plants around the garden. Just slip them over a tomato cage or some bamboo stakes. These mini greenhouses can be vented by poking a few holes into the bottom of the bags, and they can be staked down in heavy winds.

Lily Stakes: When planted new lily bulbs (or any bulb that will require staking), place the support stake in the hole before replacing the soil. Wait until the lily starts to grow, and you risk damaging the bulb.

2007-2008 MG Board

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



## Community Gardens, English Style, Part II submitted by Art Gustafson

*Editor's Note: This account was sent to Art by Tony Dion, a former JCCC/W MG who now lives in England. Part I appeared in last month's MG newsletter.*

### Fatherford Road Allotments, Okehampton, Devon

#### Greenness

All plots have at least two compost bins where home and garden waste is composted. Our community college plot has four bins where the students are running tests to determine which composting methods and ingredients are better. Most plot holders use composted farmyard manure on their plots, some much fresher than others! Most plot holders also have two or more water butts to save rainwater. Several of our plot holders use companion planting to deter critters that want to eat their stuff, and they are totally organic in their approach to gardening. We are at the northern edge of Dartmoor National Park, and from our plots we can see the rolling hills of Dartmoor. Several plot holders have bird feeders on their plots that are routinely filled and cleaned. One plot holder reports flocks of 25-30 green finches at and around his feeders at one time, and washing or drinking in his in-ground bird bath. We have a resident male pheasant who takes pride in routinely patrolling his allotments, and this fall he showed two of his youngsters how to go about it. After a while you become used to seeing him. However, he regularly and routinely has a habit of walking up fairly close, and making his call - which if you haven't heard it, or are unaware exactly how close he is, can be quite unnerving and awakening! Seeing him perched on top of a compost bin, eating from a bird feeder is quite unique. For those of you who have bird feeders in your garden at home, having a resident pheasant eliminates any seed on the ground - better than a Hoover! You also don't need to worry about having mice around the feeders, as the pheasant is an excellent mouse deterrent.

#### Community

We are absolutely thrilled at the wide spread of ages among our plot holders. Having both a community college and a quite large handicapped organisation as plot holders allows us to engage with them and to provide assistance in their growing endeavours. When our site was planned, it was with the thought of having both vehicular and handicapped access to all plots. There is a car park that will hold thirty or so vehicles, as well as wide, level, graveled paths bordering all sides of each plot. Our new communal shed is 20' long by 10' wide, and allows a common area for information posting, meetings, lunches, seed and storage for our upcoming

rotovator which can be used by all. We held a Grand Opening when over fifty people were present for the formal opening of Fatherford Road Allotments on 19 August 2006 in Okehampton, Devon. Those present were the Okehampton Mayor, Okehampton United Charity trustees, several Okehampton councillors, an NAGT officer, Fatherford Road Allotment plot holders, representatives from the *Okehampton Times*, and partners and children of the above. Mike Tyson, the Chairman of the Fatherford Road Allotment Association introduced Mayor Frances Luxton. The mayor said that when she had first visited the site and had a tour two weeks ago, she was impressed by the quality of the plots, the variety of fruits and vegetables growing, the overall productivity of the gardens, and the enthusiasm of the plot holders. After the grand opening, the majority of the people toured the allotment plots and saw for themselves what was said earlier about the condition of the plots, the diversity of what is being grown, and also had an opportunity to talk with individual plot holders. From 11:00 until 2:00 there was an Open House where an additional forty or so of our surrounding neighbours got an opportunity to see for themselves what made this such a special allotment site. Tours were given, many questions were answered, and some names were taken for prospective plot holders. Most folks went away quite impressed with the layout of the allotment site, and again, with the productivity and diversity shown of the fruit and vegetables grown. Two of the photographs enclosed are of the Grand Opening and subsequent coverage in the *Okehampton Times*.

#### Beauty

If one were to gather together groups of allotment holders in order to plan how to lay out a new allotment, they would be highly recommended to visit Fatherford Road Allotments in Okehampton to see how it should be done. All plots were laid out on an exact grid; wide roads making all plots vehicular accessible; graveled paths and wooden borders around each plot; gently sloped for good drainage; water provided; large car park; and fantastic views of Dartmoor. The entrance way has plants and shrubs all along it to encourage wildlife. The overall beauty of the site comes from the individuality of each gardener; the tremendous diversity of what they grow; how they grow it; what it looks like while plants are growing and then being harvested; efforts made to renew the soil; and pride in what they have done.

When we win the competition, we will use the money to help fund a large communal polytunnel. The intent is that each plot holder can have a section to be used for starting seed, growing on plants, and for those plants that need a greenhouse-like environment.

TREE STEWARD REPORT 2007 SUE LIDDELL

In January we welcomed Jim Orband to the George Reid Garden for a fruit pruning clinic. George Anderson is Project Chair of the Orchard.

In February Art Gustafson presented a pruning clinic at the Williamsburg Botanical Garden. Since that time a Pruning Group of Master Gardeners has been formed so that Tree Stewards (TSs) will no longer be in charge of pruning training. However, two TSs are members of the new Pruning Group.

In March we worked with Karen Cox, Associate Extension Agent in Forestry & Natural Resources and the Society of American Foresters to put on an educational field day or a "Walk In The Woods" at the New Kent Forestry Center. We helped to bag the trees along with other Master Gardeners who are interested in trees. On the day of the Walk we helped give away several species of bare-root seedlings and instructed on how to plant and care for them.



In April a Hampton TS and I presented the tree portion of the Horticulture Class at Merrimac Detention Center.

We work with other Project Chairs to our mutual benefit. We participated in the Farmers' Market, have representatives on Landscape Love teams, and are available for presentations. I presented a slide program to a local garden club and with the help of Art Gustafson put the program on PowerPoint so that others may show it.

We have joined with the Master Naturalists in the Big Tree Project. There are a number of trees that have not been measured in the last ten years. If they are not remeasured by the end of this year they will be deleted from the Big Tree List. We had a training session led by Virginia Tech forestry professor and extension specialist Jeffrey Kirwan. After explaining the program and showing us how to access information on the computer we practiced measuring trees on the grounds of the Norge Library. I teamed with a MN to measure a Corktree, *Phellodendron amurense* (shown in photo on right) on the William & Mary campus. There is the possibility that this will be the National champion. Barbara and Art Gustafson will be measuring a Pawpaw, *Asimina triloba* on the campus.

We have three continuing projects. Ann DeForest, Art Gustafson and Rich Bunger created an apple orchard at Stonehouse School as part of their Tree Steward Graduation Project in 2004. They are still overseeing this project.

Barbara Gustafson and a York County TS chair an Inventory at the 4-H Camp. This has been stalled by weather, change of staff at the camp and time commitment. We should finish this up this year.

Laura Tucker chairs an Inventory at Makemie Woods Camp and Conference Center in New Kent. This will also be completed this year.

New Inventory Projects include the area surrounding the library in Williamsburg, chaired by Flora Adams, and possibly the trees at Chambrel.



We meet quarterly as Peninsula Tree Stewards, including York County, Hampton and Newport News. This keeps us in touch with happenings around us and also gives us the opportunity to work together on some projects. We include an educational program as part of our meeting. Programs this year have included a presentation by Jonathan Short of the Virginia Department of Forestry on Firewise Landscaping, and Hazard Tree Training presented by Karen Cox. This program was opened to all Master Gardeners.

Motivational Workshops to Benefit the MG Annual Plant Sale

The following workshops are being presented to offer MGs an opportunity to participate in a variety of ways in the 2008 Plant Sale. Attend as many as you would like! The workshops can be applied toward recertification training hours.

Plant Propagation

Workshop, presented by Jim and Nelda Pressly, on Saturday, October 20, 9:30-11:30 am, at Becky Sutton's home, 124 Swinley Forest in Ford's Colony, contact rebecca.sutton@cox.net.

Future workshops include:

Hypertufa (Trough) Construction

Coming soon

Vine Wreaths and Dried Arrangements

Coming in early 2008

Starting from Seed

Coming in spring 2008



Mark your calendar the Plant Sale will be April 26, 2008 12:00 noon to 4:00 pm At the Williamsburg Community Building

## MG Program Updates (and other info)

### Melissa's Meadow

will meet around 8:30 am on OCT. 18, the third Thursday of the month. We will be concentrating on collecting seeds for next spring's plant sale. Come enjoy the fall in the meadow.

### E2 – Back in Action Kari Abbott, E2 Project Chairperson

The Master Gardener awarding winning Environmental Education program is back in action this fall at DJ Montague Elementary School. September started off with seeds and how they move around. It is another exciting year for E2. Many thanks to Nancy Harding, John Giffin, and Ruth Schultz, they did a great job in engaging the children while they were outside learning about seeds.

Next month will be exciting depending on the roll of the dice. E2 has been asked to provide school art work from DJM for the North American Association of Environmental Educators Conference to be held in Norfolk this November. If the exhibit needs tree vests then the children will be making tree vests. If another school has agreed to help, (not to worry DJM became famous last year with their leaf art, which will be on display) then the class will be working on insects. As always people are welcome to come and help.

E2 is also offering advanced training opportunities. Project Wild is being offered on October 23, 2007 at the marine science building at the Jamestown 4-H Center. To register cut and paste the link, it has to be entered specifically.

### 2008 MG Training Class Mary Liz Sadler and Reba Hazelwood

Letters, with applications, will be mailed to people who have indicated an interest in the MG training class for 2008, about the first of October. The class will begin January 7, 2008. If you have friends and/or neighbors who haven't signed up yet, please e-mail their names and addresses to Sandra Kee at the Extension

Project Wild

<https://survey.vt.edu/survey/viewResults.jsp?id=1190736157450>

Project Learning Tree is being offered October 30, 2007 again at the same building at the Jamestown 4-H Center. To register also cut and paste the link.

Project Learning Tree

<https://survey.vt.edu/survey/viewResults.jsp?id=1190736157450>

Both are advanced training for Master Gardeners, and should be a very informative day. Both classes would be fun if you want to volunteer for E2.

Susan Powell and I have written an article along with Kelly A. Kelly, first grade teacher at DJM that has been accepted for publication this spring in the Virginia Association of Science Teachers journal. The issue is about partnerships, E2 being a 4-H, Master Gardener partnership fit the criteria nicely.

If you have any questions please email me [bearsbaskets@cox.net](mailto:bearsbaskets@cox.net). This year is off to a good start!

Office. The application deadline is Oct. 31. Three information sessions will be held for those with further questions: Oct. 18, at 10:00; Oct. 23 at 2:00, and Nov. 7 at 2:00. These sessions will be held at the EOC building, and will last about an hour.

#### Possible Advanced MG Training

Feb	Maymont Garden Show <a href="http://Maymont.org">Maymont.org</a>
Mar	Garden Expo Walsingham Academy
Apr	CNU Garden Symposium <a href="http://www.lifelonglearning.cnu.edu">www.lifelonglearning.cnu.edu</a>
May	Williamsburg Garden Symposium <a href="http://www.history.org/history/ii">www.history.org/history/ii</a>
June	Annual MG College
Aug	VA Camellia Society Workshop Norfolk Botanical Garden <a href="http://vacamelliasociety.org">vacamelliasociety.org</a>
Aug	Turf Love Super Saturday
Sept	The Garden of Learning HR Agricultural Center <a href="http://www.vbmg.org">www.vbmg.org</a>
Oct	Tomato Disease Workshop VA Tech <a href="http://www.cpe.vt.edu/tdw">www.cpe.vt.edu/tdw</a>

Smithfield Gardens  
[Smithfieldgardens@yahoo.com](mailto:Smithfieldgardens@yahoo.com)

Lewis Ginter Botanical Garden  
[lewisginter.org](http://lewisginter.org)

Norfolk Botanical Garden  
[norfolkbotanicalgarden.org](http://norfolkbotanicalgarden.org)

#### Plus

- Any Extension Office or VA Tech sponsored workshop publicized by WJCC MG mass email
- Any workshop given by approved MG projects such as composting, pruning, etc.
- CW workshops for Reid/Shield or Meet the Gardener
- MG monthly meeting programs
- Native Plant Society programs
- Herb Society Programs

## August VMGA Board Meeting minutes Submitted by Anne Odle

- VMGA Fall education programmed postponed.
- VMGA membership is at 464 members
- New fundraising items (benefiting Endowment Fund): license plate frame , \$3 and window decal, \$2
- New business was brainstorming on ways to increase participation in the MG College Brag board display "Search for Excellence.
- Next meeting October 13. Hosted by Fairfax at Green Springs. Williamsburg will host Dec. 8<sup>th</sup> VMGA meeting at First Colony.
- 2007 MG College had 250 enrolled with 40 speakers and special guests.
- 2008 MG College is 6/17-22 with land care stewardship theme

- Training handbook revision update projected by Fall 2008. 2007 International MG Conference had over 1,300 attendees.
- 2009 International MG Conference in Los Vegas and 2011 in Charleston, WV.
- 2008 Southern Region MG Conference in Oklahoma 6/18-21<sup>st</sup>.
- State Fair 9/27-10/7 at Richmond Raceway Complex. Plant sale of all display containers will be on 10/8. Still 3 open slots for units. Looking for volunteers for evening shifts. For info visit VMGA.net or Christy Brennan at 804-741-0801.
- VA Garden Festival 9/27 looking for units to exhibit
- The Garden of Learning Conference by VA Beach MG's is 9/15 10-3pm. For info visit [www.vbmg.org](http://www.vbmg.org) or 757-385-4769.

## Congratulations

to fellow MG Peggy Krapf and former MG Lynn Walker. Lynn and her husband, in close association with Peggy, designed a garden at their Williamsburg home which was featured in the September Southern Living magazine. The article has wonderful photographs of the garden including a featured potting shed.

## A special thank you from Sally Sissel

to all the Master Gardeners who joined the Herb Society for a trip to Buffalo Springs Farm in Raphine, VA on Thursday, September 20. I hope you all had as wonderful time as I did. I had never been there myself and enjoyed it all: the grounds, the lunch, the shop (!!!), the program. Even the bus ride went quickly with all the chatter, food (as if we needed more after that lunch!) and fun. I hope we can join forces again sometime in the future.

## Upcoming Dates to Remember

- Oct 6 9 am until 12 noon, Landscape Extravaganza at St. Joan of Arc Church off of Route 17 in the Yorktown area. Learn more and sign up for the event at [http://www.yorkcounty.gov/vce/upcomingevents/hort/landscapeext\\_07.htm](http://www.yorkcounty.gov/vce/upcomingevents/hort/landscapeext_07.htm) . The focus of the day is that "Fall is for Planting". Classes will address issues that gardeners face and instructors will give helpful hints to solve those situations. The event is free but pre-registration is required. If you have questions, please contact us at 757 890-4940 or [ex199@vt.edu](mailto:ex199@vt.edu)
- Oct 20 Plant Propagation, Motivational Plant Sale Workshop, see flyer on Page 5
- Oct 22-28 Operation Rejuvenation Swarm, , find details at <http://msmastergardener.org/Operation%20Rejuvenation%20Swarm.htm>
- Nov 1 monthly MG meeting, Nicole Schermerhorn, *Herbs for the Holidays*
- Dec 6 monthly MG meeting

### MG Contact Update

Carol Ashton new email:  
[ashtoncl@verizon.net](mailto:ashtoncl@verizon.net)

Ralph Ashton new email:  
[ralphashton@verizon.net](mailto:ralphashton@verizon.net)

The Sunshine Fund sent a remembrance recently to fellow MG Sue Voight following the loss of her mother.



# The Colonial Master Gardener

## They call them “Incredible Edibles,” uh??! Anne Haltiner

In the early warm days of Spring 2007, I was admiring my half acre of paradise, just waking from a winter of cold abuse and little precipitation. Indications were obvious that soon all would be lush green, topped off with early Spring blooms. The perennials were plentiful with new growth just starting to show their little heads. Those plants, for which I spent more than I should, according to my husband, were still ALL alive and starting to rejuvenate themselves! This could be the best Spring yet for my landscape! The bushes are all in bud. The trees are in bud. Even some finches were reappearing to find the fresh food in the only feeder ignored by the squirrels. *Awwww, all's right in the world, here in my little piece of Heaven.*

Then I heard, over my shoulder, those words serious flower gardeners dread..... “Now could you grow something we could eat?” And so begins my mission to put fresh produce in my hubby's tummy.

Now, To Seed or Not To Seed. “Oh goodness, anybody can grow Radishes,” my friend said. “Everyone grows Tomatoes and Green Peppers these days” said my In-Laws, who give armloads of such veggies to their neighbors every summer in Norfolk. “You have to grow Gourds and Pumpkins for your new grandson to play with” chimed in another helpful friend. So, I went to Jamestown Feed & Seed, the resource center of JCC farmers, to get the best recommendations on varieties and seed vs. starter plant. This took a while. Everyone working and shopping in the store that day had an opinion they wanted to share with the Rookie Veggie Gardener. Later, I did try very hard to remember everything they said. *Ahrrrr, did that guy say sun for 8 hrs or gentle morning sun or put them under a grow light until May or.....whatever, I'll figure it out!* I left with Radish seeds to put in the ground and starter plants for my two huge tubs, filled with the best garden soil sold in a plastic bag. *Oh, to present my hubby with a salad of fresh tomatoes, peppers (red and green and yellow), cukes (no seeds to burp), and spicy radishes...would definitely get his attention!* This would be attention I've never received for my bigger than life Hydran-

gea blooms or the Jeffersonian Twinleaf which survived 2 nasty winters to quietly bloom nicer and nicer each year. Nor did he give me much attention when I pointed out the 6 varieties of Pulmonaria, all thriving in various areas of the yard. Men and Turf, that's all he saw. Now he wants to pull Veggies from the ground. Must be another Man Thing.

Now for the Planting: That wasn't too hard to do!!

Radishes are in equal rows in the ground, planted the appropriate inch beneath the soil. This is amended First Colony soil – amended with our own homegrown com-



post. One tub looks spacious with 4 pepper plants surrounding 2 tomato plants. Squash plants are strategically placed to drape over the tub and run merrily along a wire cage, keeping the veggies off the ground. In the second tub, the other 2 tomato plants share the center area while the cuke will cascade over onto another wire cage and run merrily along in the opposite direction. Once a week, after a thorough watering, liquid fertilizer is applied. While the sun isn't above head for 10 hrs a day, it is up there for a good 6 hrs, and the area is still “bright” most of the day, we bet.

Now for the Growing: With my morning cup of coffee in hand, each day I visit the Veggie Garden, nestled in the secluded area of my backyard. This is my space for “triage gardening” also. It's where I nurse the ill plants and bury the too-far-gone-plants. It's my husband's com-

post area. It's my potting and work area. And, now it's has a New Purpose: The Veggie Garden! We feel like proud new parents!

It's Spring at its peak. The radishes are growing, spreading and seem happy. The Veggies are slowly growing and spreading onto the wire cages as we hoped.

It's Summer. The radishes were leafy and plentiful one day and gone the next! A few holes and dirt piles remain which probably resulted from the visiting Raccoon a couple nights ago. He looked real “cute” from our den window! Umph!

The tubs of veggies are straining and straggly. A couple cukes are trying to puff themselves out from stem to stern like the long balloons of that Clown fellow who entertains the children at parties. I don't think these little cukes have the energy to push themselves out the other end though. Sad little plants. The tomatoes, while still green and upright are producing a handful of cherry tomato sized produce. Where are the “Big Boys”? (Thank goodness my Mother-in-law is pushing her homegrown tomatoes onto us when we visit!) Yes, we have peppers. Two red and three green. They are perfectly shaped, no disease, no black spots. But their dimension is no larger than most of the tomatoes... about 2 inches on an average. Maybe I selected Mini-Veggies by mistake at Jamestown Seed and Feed!!! I'll have to ask them!!! Oh, the Squash? What squash? Vines are there and blooms were there last month, but nothing now.

It's almost Fall. We have the most beautiful and healthy clumps of tomatoes I've ever seen. The plants are strong, spreading, plentiful with produce and happy as they can be! My mission is realized = to serve my hubby a salad of fresh veggies. But, do I need to tell him the tomatoes are from a volunteer tomato plant growing right next to our Mailbox, amongst the Clematis, in front of our house? And that I found the other volunteer tomato plant hidden among my herbs, a seed from my neighbor's last year plant, redistributed with the help of maybe one of those little finches I saw in the early Spring. Do I have to tell him?

Yes, we have some Very Incredible Edibles! Thanks to Mother Nature!