

The Colonial Master Gardener



Publication of JCC/WBG Master Gardener
Association & Virginia Cooperative Extension

September 2005

PRESIDENT'S CORNER CHARLIE CLAPPER, '02

Our membership list has reached 168, a record number I believe. But only a few have been members more than 10 years: 1 – '83, 1 – '85, 1 – '87', 1 – '88', 2 – '90, 1 – '92, 8 – '93, 1 – '94, 5- '95. From '95 onward the numbers increase but only about half (assuming a class of 20) of the Master Gardener class from '00 and '01 remain members of the Association. Sixteen remain active from '02 and fifteen from '03. Many factors contribute to our decision to remain committed to volunteering to learn, educate, and communicate environmentally sound horticultural practices to the James City/Williamsburg community. What can we as an organization give to members to help them decide to stay active and contribute at least the 20 hours of volunteer time annually? I welcome your suggestions.

I want to be sure that you all saw Laura Viancour's e-mail note concerning the memorial for Virginia Gregory, a long time volunteer for Colonial Williamsburg and an active master gardener until her untimely death last winter. Virginia's friends, including many of you, donated a memorial bench placed on the west side of Palace Green in the Historic Area. It's under the redbud tree along the fence between the McKenzie Apothecary Shop and the Elkanah Deane House.

Leanne Dubois, Minouche Robinson and other MGs have been involved in the Jamestown Corridor 2007 improvement project. 2007 is fast approaching and the James City/Williamsburg Master Gardener Association needs to consider our role in this national event. Any suggestions? Virginia Master Gardeners Association members can read the current *VMGA Report* article titled "America's 400 Anniversary –All Eyes will be on Virginia!" by Elizabeth Maurer, VBMG.

An article on the Williamsburg Botanical Garden appeared in the last issue of *The Colonial Master Gardener*. With a demonstration garden site selected, an important step has been made towards a permanent Botanical garden in James City /Williamsburg. At our August general meeting MGs were encouraged to become members of the Garden. How else should we become involved? Are there Master Gardener Association needs that could be met by partnering with the Botanical Garden?

I just finished reading a new book by science writer Elizabeth Royte, *Garbage Land on the Secret Trail of Trash*. "Into our trash cans go dead batteries, bygone burritos, broken toys, tattered socks, eight-track cassettes, banana peels.... But where do these things go next? In a country that consumes and then cast off more and more, what actually happens to the things we throw away?" Do our recycling and composting efforts pay off or will our ever-increasing waste stream overtake us? I found it engrossing and disturbing.

PRESIDENT

Charlie Clapper, '02
564-6191

HORTICULTURAL PROJECTS ASSOCIATE

Leanne DuBois, '96
JCC Coop. Extension Agent
564-2170

WEBMASTER

David Banks, '03
258-8632

NEWSLETTER

Lise Kline, '04
259-9477

The purpose of the James City County/Williamsburg Master Gardener is to learn, educate, and communicate environmentally sound horticultural practices to the community.

NEXT MEETING

September 1,
Williamsburg
Regional Library:
Hydroponics,
Crystal Mihansky,
"Let It Grow
Nursery &
Hydroponics"



ANTS IN YOUR PANTS LEANNE DUBOIS, '96

Think ants are pests? According to myrmecologists (experts on ants) Ants mix and aerate more soil than earthworms. They scavenge both live and

dead insects and other creatures, pollinate certain flowers, and spread the seeds of many plants – a third of the violets, trilliums and bloodroots in Northeast forests are spread by ants.

There are nearly 12,000 species of ants. Some species have been around for more than 20 million years. Several attack termites, so perhaps we should not be so quick to destroy ants around foundations.

Most ants should be welcome in the garden, with a few exceptions such as the Alleghany mound ant, which makes nests over 2' high and up to 9' across, and of course, the stinging imported red fire ant.

For much fascinating information, read the Pulitzer Prize book, "The Ants", by Bert Holldobler and Edward O. Wilson (Harvard University Press, 1990).

AUGUST GARDENING TIPS HELEN HAMILTON, '04

From Helpline FAQs, Sept 2003-4

Gourds, Ornamental: Harvest after first hard frost; clean with alcohol or

diluted chlorox, let dry 3-4 weeks, then polish lightly with furniture wax or apply 3-4 coats shellac.



Squash Bugs: To control, plant catnip and tansy; also interplant radishes, nasturtiums or marigolds, and mint.

Tomato: Often infected with Septoria leaf spot, a fungus causing leaf and stem spots which can become so severe that leaves completely wither and the plant appears to die from the bottom up. Cultural controls: water early in the day; stake

and prune plants to increase air circulation, clean up after harvest, and disinfect stakes and supports.

Violets: If they become invasive, hand pull or treat with Roundup. Otherwise, a very effective ground cover, including spaces between stepping stones.

From various gardening/horticultural periodicals:

Compost: Make a simple compost bin by stacking 9 straw bales in a U-shape. The straw will eventually break down, and become part of a new compost pile.

Deer: They are eating your plants because they are hungry! One solution is to feed them –apples and corn, and install plants known to be deer resistant (although if hungry, deer will eat anything!)

Most commercial deer repellents contain fermented eggs. You can make your own by mixing 3 raw eggs and a quart of water in a blender and then spraying the mixture on your plants. Remix and respray after a heavy rain. Wildlife experts speculate that the sulfur compounds in rotten eggs smell like deer's own "alarm scent."

Garden Hose: To store your hose so it will feed out with kinking, coil one of 2 ways:

(1) Make a regular circular coil, then make one and a half loops, and reach under and complete the second loop by bringing the hose under itself. The next coil is created like the first one, and the following (fourth) coil is pulled under like the second one. Proceed over and under, over and under until you get to the end.

(2) An easier method is to lay the hose down in a figure-eight pattern instead of rolling it into a circle. It takes up more room, but it will pull out without kinking.

Perennials: Fall is a great time to pick up bargain perennials, and the best time to plant them. If a plant is root bound, carefully disentangle the roots and spread them out in the planting hole. Or, make 3 or 4 vertical cuts with a sharp knife into the root ball, and gently pry the sections apart a little. You may also need to cut an inch or so

off the bottom of the root mass. Just don't plant them with the roots still circling. Circling roots don't anchor the plant firmly in the ground. They will also keep growing around the plant, eventually strangling it.

Plantings: Many gardeners achieve success without first creating layouts. "You will learn as much from the mistakes of your first effort as you will from hours of reading, sketching, and planning. Most great borders evolve from the process of trial and error." –Amy Fahmy, "Don't Plan, Just Plant", Fine Gardening, December, 2003.

JUNIOR MASTER GARDENERS KARI ABBOTT, '04



Milton Berube, '05 and Lynn Flood, '02 helping at the Bugs and Books class.

As the last days of summer heat up, so does JMG! The Bugs and Books class finished August 10. The last class was a blast with edible insects as the topic. There were some squiggles and wiggles as everyone tried cheese flavored mealworms. Parents and children went home thinking about insects as menu items. We hope it made for some lively discussions that night at dinner. If anyone needs a recipe for "Infested Fudge" just ask, we have it!

Planning for the fall has been exciting! Susan Powell and I are working on a new course for Matthew Whaley. It is going to start with soil, as that is where it all begins and ends. We hope to do soil samples and some fun things with dirt and mud, before we move up to plants. The course is going to focus on a tree and the habitats and ecosystems that are centered in a tree. The class

is going to be fun and yet the children will learn some good stuff. We are getting lots of support from outside agencies collecting pieces and parts for this class, the Department of Game and Inland Fisheries have been great with pictures of plants, animals, and insects, track charts and such. We are putting together investigation boxes, with magnifying boxes, rulers, collection bags, and such...to keep young minds asking questions.

At Williamsburg Christian Academy, we are working on several modules for the children. One unit is on Herbs and Linda Lucas has been so very helpful. The children will be growing herbs inside to use in cooking classes, tying Junior Master Gardening to other class work. This will lead to medicinal uses of herbs, and identifying poisonous plants that are all around us. In all the units this year, I will try to tie together careers that are available in the horticulture world, careers these children may be able to pursue. Other units include weather and water lessons, building on the water unit we did last year together; and of course, there will be insects interjected, because I still have insects on the brain. These may be the first children who get to try the INSECT BINGO game we have developed, which includes 75 bugs! Exciting horizons are ahead for these special children.

Donations of books keep rolling in. (An aside for those of you who loved "Diary of a Worm," there is now "Diary of a Spider" and it is great! It is a super book for adults and children alike.) As always there are many things to do in JMG and if you would like to play with us, you are welcome. If you have any questions about JMG, want to join in the fun, call, or email (bearsbaskets@cox.net). Everyone is welcome.

PLEASE NOTE THE FOLLOWING ADDRESS CHANGES

Mary Mills

millsmd1@cox.net

Jacqui Winther

moonhyme@aol.com

Jean Barter

6261 Weathersfield Way Williamsburg, Va. 23188

wjmanj@cox.net

UPDATE ON HARRISON GAY SALLY SISSEL, '99

Harrison Gay is a MG from the class of 2004. He was savagely attacked on Dec. 22, 2004, was in a coma for weeks, then in the hospital and rehab until April.

Harrison returned to the hospital in early August, for treatment of a urinary infection. Blake, his wife, had been taking him to Dominion Village on a daily basis for respite care where he suddenly became ill. After hospitalization, he will be going to Tandem Health Care to live.

Blake has understandably been overwhelmed with all her new responsibilities. There were many, many areas of their daily lives that Harrison took care of that now are her sole responsibility, plus the challenges of caring for twin girls and a teenage son. Blake and the children have decided that with these responsibilities and challenges that Tandem is the best place for Harrison. He really needs more care than she has the expertise to give, there are areas of his brain that will never be the same, plus she has to go back to teaching for the insurance benefits. Needless to say, their decision has to be one of the toughest a person ever has to make. However, Harrison can still go out, and would enjoy visitors, and cards. I'm hoping he will make it to one of the remaining farmers' markets since he was so close to that project.

Blake said more than once that she didn't know what she would have done in the early times after the assault without the help, love, and support of the Master Gardeners. She truly appreciates all that the members have done for her and her family. There's no reason to stop our support now. I know Harrison would appreciate hearing from you--send a card or drop in for a visit.

Many of you have asked me about the police investigation. Blake is very discouraged about that as police are still trying to say Harrison had an "accident." Blake has two letters from Harrison's primary surgeons stating that unequivocally he was assaulted. I'm afraid we will never know who assaulted him--and changed his life and the lives of all those who love him in just a moment. That's the real tragedy!

GARDENING NEWS FROM ENGLAND TONY DION,'01

The following are excerpts from a letter from Tony Dion, a JCC/W MG from 2001-2005:

We settled and moved into our house on April 22, 2005. Our rear yard or garden as it is called in England is considerably less than our .56 acre in Williamsburg. When we were over here in February 2005 looking for a place, I had already determined that if our gardening space wasn't adequate, then I'd sign up for an allotment. The Allotment Law in England is many centuries old, and requires localities to provide gardening plots for residents. In Okehampton, you can either get a ten-rod or twenty-rod plot. A rod is an old term, meaning length or perch, which equates to 16 1/2 feet. In June I got a ten-rod plot which is 2,722 sq. ft. For those of you who saw my vegetable and orchard plot in Williamsburg, I used 1,700 sq. ft. for both of those, so I got more than enough room to grow what I want here. I'll use roughly a third for veggies, a third for orchard, and a third for wildflowers.

As I was investigating the allotments available, the one I ultimately decided upon was brand new to Okehampton, and only opened up for business in June 2005. Basically, the allotment ground is VERY stony, and easily equates to a rubble pile left over after quarry works. The allotment caretakers didn't want to do anything about it, and so the allotment holders get to move rocks by hand by the ton. I'd estimate that I have moved almost three tons of rocks, and only have about twenty-five percent of the plot cleared. For the orchard I will only sift where I'm planting, and for the wildflowers I'll till 1-2" deep and then rake whatever rocks are there. But for the veggies I have no choice but to sift where the rows are being placed. Hopefully, after several years, most of the rows will be cleared.

As I only started with the plot in June, I won't get any fruit, and the veggies are iffy at best. For vegetables, I have planted carrots (two types), peas, beets, parsnips, peppers, beans, lettuce (two types), and turnips. Carrots here suffer from carrot fly, so they are covered with a fleece cover. The orchard has three red raspberries, two blackberries, two blueberries, two black currants, and a rhubarb plant. Plans are to add two grapes, and three bilberries (an English relative of blueberry - grow wild on the moors here). Because the grapes are well out into the open, I am having three 6' X 6' hurdles made out of willow. I'll place those close behind the grapes to give them protection from the wind, and heat from the hurdles. I'll get the hurdles, grapes and bilberries in September. The allotment is right on the edge of Dartmoor, so the views are fantastic - but the winds can get fierce!

Okehampton, in the county of Devon, is in southwest England, just to the east of Cornwall. There are no extremes of temperature, and we get the benefit of the breezes from the Mediterranean. Rainfall totals are similar to Williamsburg in that we average 41.4" per year. However, the months of October through January account for almost half of that. At both the allotment and at the house we have rain barrels that catch the rain to help out

during the dry months. For watering at the allotment, there is a water outlet - but you can only use watering cans, NOT hoses, and/or sprinklers.

MG CLOTHING ORDER UPDATE Lanyards have arrived! Garden Tote Bags are here and they look terrific! See Pat Crowe or Judy Hansen at the September 2nd meeting to obtain a lanyard or pick up your clothing order.

UPCOMING DATES TO REMEMBER

- September 9 10th annual Waynesboro Plant Health Care for Urban Trees Workshop at the Waynesboro Country Club and Ridgeview Park.
- September 17 6th Annual Community Gardening Festival, VA Beach Master Gardeners, VA Beach, 10am-3pm
- October 6 Monthly Master Gardener Meeting, Williamsburg Regional Library: "Bird Migration & Techniques Used In Tracking Bird Migration," Bill Williams
- November 3 Monthly Master Gardener Meeting, Williamsburg Regional Library: "Orchids," Barbara Wallace
- December 1 Monthly Master Gardener Meeting, Williamsburg Regional Library: "Ten Horticulture Malpractices," Jim Orband

CURBSI DE CONSULTS CAN NOW BE COUNTED BARBARA GUSTAFSON, '99

Recently, Art and I went to The Back Fin for dinner. The manager wandered over,

saying, "I wonder if you might help me out. There is this problem with my large potted ivy..."--most fellow master gardeners can fill in the rest of the conversation. We all have similar experiences, sometimes when one least expects it.

Ailene Bartlett asked me (when I was still your president) if there was any way to count these contacts we all make as Master Gardeners. So, on our Volunteer Activity Report under "A7 MG Video/Media", I added another "Outreach" and got the addition okayed by the Board. Now, whenever you go out to dinner or go shopping or bump into an acquaintance and get that question about how to care for a certain plant or how to ID a certain plant or how to resolve the current landscaping problem, quietly add up the time in your mind as you expound. And when you get home, remember to jot down the time and contact under A7 when you fill in your next monthly timesheet!

SILENT AUCTION ANGELA CINGALE, '00

Ann De Forest and I would like to sincerely thank everyone for their participation at the silent auction. We appreciate your efforts in raising \$422.00 toward the

Virginia Tech Endowment fund for a permanent MG Coordinator position locally. The MG College prizes we contributed helped toward the \$3,400 raised at VT. As you know, when working towards a million dollar goal, no amount is too small or too big.

The following listing is contributors of prizes for the silent auctions at MG College and at our July monthly meeting: Margaret Mondul, Ann DeForest, Minouche Robinson, Irene Francis, Charlie Clapper, and Angela Cingale. These local stores contributed prizes/gift certificates; please support them whenever possible.

The Handmade Furniture Shop

The Williamsburg Brass Hop

Ace Hardware

The Brass Shop

Paws Applause

Sal's by Victor Italian Restaurant

Westpoint Pepperell Bed, Bath, and Linen Factory

The Candy Store

The Regina Shop

Ukrops

A Touch of Earth

Merle Norman Cosmetic Studios

Cooke's Gardens

Atir Nail Salon

Colonial Williamsburg Greenhouse

Wild Birds Unlimited

Schmidt Florist of Williamsburg

Heaven and Earth

Basketville

My apologies if I inadvertently left someone out. If anyone would like to contribute unwanted garden items...new or gently used for next year's silent auction at Master Gardener College, please call or e-mail me to let me know. Thanks again.

TECHNICAL MENTORS NEEDED We're looking for a few MGs who are experienced in putting together PowerPoint presentations and who would be willing to help other master gardeners do the same. This would be on an ad-hoc basis as the need arises. If you'd be willing to put your name on a mentor list, please call or write Greg Allen.

CONGRATULATIONS TO ALL

Here are the volunteer hours and contacts for the James City County/ Williamsburg MG Unit earned through 2004 and awarded in 2005:

Projects	7020
Administration	2652
Travel	1662
Training	1626
GRAND TOTAL	12960
Contacts	5770



Sue Liddell received her award from Leanne DuBois.

INDIVIDUAL AWARDS:

FOR 3000 VOLUNTEER HOURS: Sue Liddell
 FOR 2000 VOLUNTEER HOURS: Barbara S. Gustafson
 FOR 1000 VOLUNTEER HOURS: Eleanor Brennan

FOR 500 VOLUNTEER HOURS: Susan Voight
 Deanna Albright
 Mary Ann Carlson
 Dale Firestone
 Arthur Gustafson
 Margaret Mondul
 Marilyn Riddle

Richard Bunger
 Charles Clapper
 Lynn Flood
 Genrose Lashinger
 Ruth Ann Penberthy

FOR 250 VOLUNTEER HOURS: David Banks
 Linda Lucas
 Mary Sheedy
 Irene Francis
 Susan Morrison
 Bob Winters

THE EARTH BOX ART GUSTAFSON, '01



Yes, the Earth Box, what a nice name for a container gardening concept! The Earth Box holds 2.3 cubic feet of potting mix (sorry, no earth) and has a water reservoir that holds 2.2 gallons of water. Developed by Blake Whisenant and Dr. Carrol Geraldson, the Earth Box indeed is unique: a fertilizer band is put on top of the potting mix at the time of planting your crop. Thus it is fertilized from the top and watered from below. Another unique feature is that it has a mulch cover that prevents weeds and over watering from rain. The main body of the potting mix is not in direct contact with the water reservoir thereby assuring proper aeration of the root system and effectively eliminating root rot. This is indeed a well thought out container for gardening and is particularly attractive to those gardeners who have very little space available for gardening. The down side is not very serious but very surprising to me: I planted two tomatoes plants in my earth box to experiment with container gardening as a part of our Incredible Edibles Project and found that two mature tomatoes plants in 95 degree plus heat can easily evaporate those 2.2 gallons of water in just 24 hours! You must be vigilant and check for water needs daily. Otherwise, I give the Earth Box a big thumb up!