

# The Colonial Master Gardener

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

September 2006



## President's Corner Charlie Clapper

A recent trip west to California, Washington and Colorado let me see what's happening in other parts of our beautiful country. These states face the same issues that we do in Virginia. Local papers are filled with articles on global warming and land use and growth issues. At 115°F Redding, California was only 10° above its normal temperature. Plants were stressed! Proposed new housing developments require roads, schools, water and sewer systems and mean loss of open space and plant and animal habitat. Drivers in Redmond, Washington (Microsoft country) face horrendous traffic clogging interstate and local roads. People on Colorado's eastern slope face inadequate water supplies to keep their lawns lush. Western slope residents struggle with the degrading effects of second home development on fragile mountain environments. In Colorado a bumper sticker read – "Save an Elk, Shoot a Developer". While I don't agree with such extremism it clearly shows some people's attitude.

Closer to home the July 2006 member's survey shows your concerns. The program topics that you want to hear include:

- In-depth seminars on the environment and where it is heading: how this affects our ecological systems
- What the county is doing about environmental concerns, water issues: buffer plants, chemical controls
- Local water issues and history
- Water conservation and water treatment
- Low impact development
- Focus or interest group topics include:
  - Environmental concerns
  - Healthy landscape management within neighborhoods

In conjunction with the Virginia Cooperative Extension, Master Gardener Association volunteers manage many fine community programs and projects. We deserve credit for the many hours spent "educating" and "improving" our environment. As the community

grows and as our Association grows we need to look to the future and how we can best serve the community large and small.

Leanne Dubois and I have begun discussing what the Association's role might be in working with homeowner's associations on conservation issues. James City County has asked for our help in responding to developers' proffers (what developers offer to gain acceptance of their proposals). With growth come these kinds of issues.

Please give some thought to how you see our MG organization best serving our community. I look forward to your e-mails.

America's  
Anniversary  
Garden



## Next Monthly Meeting

September 7, Williamsburg Regional Library, America's Anniversary Garden, Leanne DuBois, Extension Agent

## Inside this issue:

INTERNAL ED NEWS	2
NOTES FROM LEANNE	2
DATES TO REMEMBER	3
SEPT GARDENING TIPS	3
PROGRAM UPDATES	4

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## TAKING ROOT TOUR AND AAG UPDATE LEANNE DUBOIS

### Taking Root Farm Tour



Photos from the Taking Root Farm tour.



Big thanks to all the volunteers who made the 3<sup>rd</sup> annual Taking Root Farm Tour in New Kent County a continued success. Special thanks are extended to the organizers including Ralph and Carol Ashton, Sandy Gauthier, Nancy Harris, Jeannie Gilman, Mary Mills and Sue Voight. Although the crowds were not as large as last year the attention to detail, risk assessment and comfort to tour participants was exceptional. From the pre tour visit on the New Kent Youth Express to the after party at Nancy Harris' home, it was a valuable chance to share friendship, community spirit and to raise the visibility of the important role farms plan in adding to our quality of life. Over 550 contacts were recorded at the Farm Market with an average of 250 people visiting each of the 6

sites. Fan mail was received after the event expressing how enjoyable, educational and informative it was. Every location had something special to offer. Master Gardeners are meeting the many diverse needs in our community and the farm tour helps to support and keep agriculture viable in our community.

### Update on the America's Anniversary Garden

The AAG is gearing up for the coming year to engage a larger audience in commemorating the Jamestown 2007 Anniversary by the signature planting of red, white and blue color theme gardens. Two new publications have recently been published, one on Native Plants which Helen Hamilton and Denise Green gave their valuable expertise on and another on Bulbs, featuring the expertise of Brent

and Becky Heath. I was recently featured discussing the AAG program on the Richmond PBS *Virginia Grown* show and also a news clip on *Home Grown Virginia* distributed by Farm Bureau. (I can't believe how many people watch cable.) Check out the new publications on the link below and I'll have plenty at the September Master Gardener meeting.

America's Anniversary Garden: Native Plants  
<http://www.ext.vt.edu/pubs/envirohort/426-223/426-223.html>

AAG: Bulbs for a Red, White and Blue Spring  
<http://www.ext.vt.edu/pubs/envirohort/426-220/426-220.html>

## Internal Education News Jean Winters

Our Program Planning is moving forward. My "mentor" Gale Hyatt and I have met and have started the process of selecting programs that hopefully will continue to meet the needs and interests of our group, carrying on with the commendable efforts of Gale. I am pleased that three of our interns, Laurie Bland, Toni Webb and Lillian Woolfolk, have expressed interest in working with me as we take care of the details. We will continue to need the support of the membership if we are to

truly accomplish the goals we feel are important. I'm always ready to hear from you!

As our summer months are coming to a close, I trust you have been enjoying your days. I have some lines I want to share with you, penned by Winston O. Abbott in "Have You Heard the Cricket Song?"

*We call them weeds and pass them by,  
the goldenrod and thistle,  
the queen anne's lace and meadow rue,  
these are the weeds,*

*the common people of the earth,  
the first to grow where man has scarred and scorched the beauty of his heritage,  
striving ever to erase the ugliness that is man's thoughtlessness,  
these are the weeds,  
unwanted and disdained and trampled under foot,  
but friend of humming bird and bee and butterfly...*

Have you noticed the many beautiful creatures mentioned in those words? I hope so!

**EDITORS NOTE:** The deadline for submission of material for the October Newsletter is September 15. Please send to Lise Kline at [leqskline@cox.net](mailto:leqskline@cox.net) or call 757-259-9477. Thank you.

## Upcoming Dates to Remember

- Thursday, Oct 5      Monthly MG meeting, State of the Chesapeake Bay, Libby Norris, VA Watershed Restoration scientist, Chesapeake Bay Foundation, Williamsburg Regional Library
- Friday, Oct 27      Fall VMGA Educational Program at Maymont, Richmond. Speakers include Peggy Singlemann (Horticulturist at Maymont) and Leanne DuBois. The basic program charge will be \$12 for VMGA members and \$24 for non-VMGA members (\$12 of which may be applied to membership if desired). For registration and program info. visit <http://vmga.net/calendar.htm> If interested in carpooling, contact Anne Odle at [anneodle@cox.net](mailto:anneodle@cox.net) or 259-9025.

## GARDENING TIPS FOR SEPTEMBER HELEN HAMILTON

Watering? Plants more often wilt from a lack of oxygen than a lack of water. When the soil is compacted, the plant's tender feeder roots and root hairs suffocate. The problem is compounded when the well-meaning gardener assumes this is a sign of water stress and immediately irrigates. Well-aerated soil, enriched with organic matter, allows air and water to circulate freely about the root system creating a vigorous plant.

Wrong Place? Plants can be moved any time, if you treat them right. You can transplant most perennials in mid-summer – dig early in the morning, aerate the soil in the new location by digging a hole several times larger than the root ball, tamp the soil around the plant in the new location, provide plenty of water, and add some liquid nutrient to lessen the transplanting shock.

Perennials. Now is a good time to look for perennials on sale at local garden centers. Installing these plants in the fall gives them time to develop root systems to support vigorous growth next spring and summer.

**From “Trowel and Error”, Sharon Lovejoy, 2003**

Organic Chemicals. Aspirin (uncoated) dissolved in water, fights mildew, black

spot, and more. Sprinkle white flour, not self-rising, on plants plagued by grasshoppers. Isopropyl rubbing alcohol, 70% solution, desiccates and destroys insects. (But be careful – many of those insects are beneficial. “Worms” can be butterfly or moth larvae; others are food for the preying mantis)

Boosters. When your tomatoes, eggplants, and peppers begin to bloom, mix 2 TBP Epsom salts in one gallon water and pour onto the soil surrounding the plants. The magnesium and sulfur in the Epsom salts are macronutrients that foster fruiting. Crush a few empty crab shells, rich in both calcium and chitin, and work the fragments into the soil surrounding your tomatoes.

Ladybird Beetles and their young larvae, aphid wolves, feed on aphids, scale, whitefly, mealy bugs, and mites. Attract them by mixing 5 ounces sugar in 1 quart water. Shake well and pour into a spray bottle. Spray onto aphid or scale-infested plants, but don't spray directly onto the beetles; it will cement their wings together.

Sunflowers, cosmos, dill, anise, fennel, alyssum, daisies, and coreopsis provide the nectar and pollen ladybird beetles love.

Puddling. Salt, minerals, nectar, and moisture are necessities for butterflies,

skippers, and bees. They will often be seen gathered in a mud puddle, taking up the minerals left in the evaporating water. In a sunny area out of the wind, set out shallow saucers containing moist soil and a sprinkling of salt.

Hornworms. That frightening-looking worm eating your tomato plant is the hornworm, the caterpillar of the sphinx moth. To watch the hornworms do their work, you'll have to sacrifice one tomato plant. Cover the plant with cheesecloth and close the tent with a clothespin. You'll be the midwife for the sphinx moth, one of the best pollinators in the world.

Snakes. They help control small rodents and many insect pests, and 99% of snakes found in yards are harmless. There are only a few poisonous species in the entire United States, and we are not likely to see the one or two poisonous species in our home gardens. Our reasonable fear of snakes goes back, says some sources, to the Adam and Eve story!

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## PROGRAM UPDATES (AND OTHER MG INFO)



Ralph Aston, MG, lecturing on herbs at the Reid Garden.



Pat Rathke, MG, conducting a tour of her garden for fellow MGs.



Charlene Talcott, Carolyn Will of the Williamsburg Wildflower Rescue Team, and Mary Apperson of Friends of YRSP, leading tours at the York River State Park for the August MG meeting.

[Melissa's Meadow](#) will be back in the meadow Sept. 21 to begin the fall clean up. Cutting back and looking for seed heads, and of course, pulling any stray weeds. Come from 8:30 am on and stay as long as you like. Hope to see you there. We were very fortunate to have so many butterflies this summer.

### ATTENTION ALL BLUEBIRD LOVERS!

JCC/Wbrg Master Gardeners Association has a great inventory of hand hewed by our master gardeners, [bluebird houses](#), ready for sale. Make wonderful gifts year round. Contact Minouche Robinson for purchase: Phone: 258-3467 Email: [minouche@cox.net](mailto:minouche@cox.net). I can deliver in most cases...or you can pick one or more up at my home. There is also a small inventory at the VA Extension Office in Toano. Mail all checks to: Dave Banks, treasurer of MG Assoc.

215 Charter House Lane  
Williamsburg, VA 23188

Guess what, folks? This awful weather hasn't been entirely bad for our plants! Each summer my porch- and greenhouse-plants go outside, to an unused set of steps on the north side of the house, or on some blocks on the north side of the greenhouse. They LOVE it: enough light but not too much, in easy reach of watering, and they are free to enjoy the heat and humidity! This year a Monstera has just about exploded with exuberance, and a Spathiphyllum which was sickly when I got it has rebounded! In addition, a failing Phalaenopsis orchid has nicely rejuvenated! So, while we humans may be lamenting weather conditions, it's not necessarily the same for our plant friends!

This is a poem written by intern, Lillian Woolfolk, for our [Therapeutic Gardening](#) session at Patriot's Colony. The herb of the day was oregano.

### Oregano

"Joy of the mountain"  
Watch it grow  
In Soils alkaline,  
Very slow.

Ancients already know  
That your nose will  
Lead you to it  
Sprawling in the garden row.

Leaves of gold and green,  
Minty, strong, pungent.  
It is related to mint,  
Not onionet.