



The Colonial Master Gardener April 2020

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

THE PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE BY PATSY MCGRADY

Next Meeting:

Because of the outbreak of the coronavirus, the date of the next meeting has not yet been scheduled.

What a difference a month makes. Last month we were looking forward to the May plant sale and beginning to focus on various projects. I would say the mood at the beginning of March was anticipation. Then everything changed with the coronavirus epidemic.

Presently, I think our collective mood has turned from anticipation to disappointment. There are many things to be disappointed about in this current environment: trips cancelled, activities with friends and family taken off the schedule, and the general loss of the freedom to go wherever, whenever. The recommended restrictions on personal movement are something we've never encountered before and never imagined we would encounter.

Some of our disappointments are related to being a Master Gardener. Given the developing national and state situation with the coronavirus epidemic, the board provided initial guidance on March 14 that terminated certain activities but allowed for some efforts to continue with restrictions. Given the rapid development of the COVID-19 epidemic and related guidance from federal and state governments and the VCE, the board revised the policy on March 18 to:

All work on MG projects involving in-person interaction with other MGs or potential interaction with other people will cease until further notice.

Now we're sitting on a big pause for our projects and wondering when this will ever end.

One of our disappointments is the cancellation of the May plant sale. Hopefully the sale can be rescheduled for fall.

The association supports our projects with dues and revenue from the plant sale. With no spring plant sale, the MG board decided on March 26 that it was necessary to assess members \$30 so that we



Photo by Elijah O'Donnell from Pexels

(The president's message is continued on the next page, page 2)

THE PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE — CONTINUED

2020
MGA Board

President:
Patsy McGrady

President Elect:
Marty Oakes

VP Administration:
Dee Arbegast

VP Projects:
Rick Brown

VP Internal Ed:
Hazel Braxton

Secretary:
Beth Deer

Treasurer:
Kathy Skube

VMGA Rep:
Marilyn Riddle

Past President:
Cathy Hill

*VCE ANR Program
Assistant:*
VACANT

will be able to continue to support our projects once the stay-on-home restrictions are lifted. Master Gardener membership is not contingent on supporting the assessment. That is, you do not have to pay \$30 to continue as a Master Gardener. We realize the epidemic is causing economic hardship for many people and would never want to lose members because they could not afford to participate. Who does and who does not support the assessment will be confidential; for those who do, for your convenience a copy of the form appears at the end of this newsletter. But we do hope that those who can afford a \$30 gift will do so. Any additional donations above \$30 would be most welcome.

Trying to find some silver lining, we are lucky that this is all happening in the era of streaming video, e-books accessible via the internet, drive-through pharmacy pick-ups, video conferencing/Facetime/Skype, home delivery of groceries and home delivery of virtually everything else. If this had happened in the '90s, how would we ever check out and return those VHS tapes to Blockbuster? Most significantly we now have time to devote to our own gardens.

I'll leave you with a quote from the closing segment of NBC Evening News on March 27 that puts a bit of perspective on our current situation:

*Your grandparents were called to war.
You're being called to sit on your couch.*

Take care. Stay at home. Tend your own garden and look forward to better times.

Don't forget to check out our Facebook page: <https://www.facebook.com/VCEMasterGardeners/>. Lots of great articles, educational videos, beautiful photographs, upcoming events, and more! Marion Guthrie is doing a great job keeping us up to date, especially during this time when things are changing so frequently.

To get to our VCE James City County/Williamsburg Master Gardener homepage quickly, click on <http://jccwmg.org/wordpress/>

Newsletter Editor:
Hope Yelich
hopeyelich@gmail.com

The MGA board meets on the third Thursday of each month at 9:30am at the Williamsburg Regional Library, Room B, on Scotland Street, Williamsburg.

PLEASE NOTE:
During the pandemic and while the library remains closed, the board meets through video conferencing.



Jan Meeus for Unsplash

RISK ASSESSMENT REQUIREMENT

BY DEE ARBEGAST, VP FOR ADMINISTRATION

Since we will not have a general meeting in April, we need our members to take the risk assessment training via video training. VCE requires Master Gardeners to complete this training every three years, and this is the year. (Our interns will also have to do this to complete their training.) I know we would have preferred having Janet Spencer conduct the training and sign the forms at our April meeting, but unfortunately that is not going to happen.



pixabay

To access the training, please refer to my blast email of April 2, which contains links to both the video and the pdf version.

I will also send out a group email next week in case someone has missed our newsletter. Please let me know when you have completed training so I can enter this into our system. *You must have completed the training and notified me by April 15.* Thank you so much. Stay safe out there!

UPCOMING SEMINARS AND EDUCATIONAL OPPORTUNITIES

BY HAZEL BRAXTON, VP FOR INTERNAL EDUCATION

Below is a list of free gardening sites that you might like to investigate since most if not all scheduled events and activities have been cancelled.

Archive of VCE Webinars

<https://mastergardener.ext.vt.edu/webinar-archive/>

Additionally, here are links to the VCE on YouTube

<https://www.youtube.com/channel/UCT-rsFK2y4FJDI5ful2JEiw>

<https://www.youtube.com/channel/UCT-rsFK2y4FJDI5ful2JEiw/channels>

Gardeners Academy: Your Online Garden Learning Resource

<http://www.gardeners-academy.com/gardeninghowto.html>

Universal Class: Gardening 101

<https://www.universalclass.com/course/vegetable-gardening-101.htm>

List of Free Online Horticulture Courses and Training Programs

https://study.com/articles/List_of_Free_Online_Horticulture_Courses_and_Training_Programs.html

Greenwood Nursery: Free Online Gardening Courses

<https://www.greenwoodnursery.com/free-online-gardening-courses>

CURRENT MG PROJECTS' STATUS

BY RICK BROWN, VP FOR PROJECTS

The following is an email I sent out to project leaders last week. It explains the reasons behind some of the board's recent decisions, and we thought all MGs would find it useful.

Your Board held its regular monthly meeting on March, 26th, using Zoom technology to observe the guidelines for "social distancing". Given the current state of our volunteer activities and our decision to postpone the Plant Sale, we reviewed our Association's financial situation. We presently have \$1,000 in our checking account and \$9,000 in a reserve account. Our projects are currently suspended but we expect to reactivate them as soon as practicable. It was readily apparent that despite the hiatus, when they resume, without the anticipated funds from the Plant Sale, we would not have sufficient funds to meet our projects' budget requests for the remainder of the year. The Board decided that a request should be sent to all the project leaders asking that they review their budgets to see if we could develop a more realistic picture of their funding needs going forward. Here is the follow-up e-mail that was sent to all project leads on March 27th following their initial responses to our request for review:

"Many thanks to those of you who have responded so quickly to answer our request for reviews of your budgets. It is heartwarming to see the ways that you are willing to pitch in to ensure that we are able to meet the unexpected events that have caused us to give up our volunteer activities for an indefinite time. This is not a crisis but deserves our close attention.

Some have chosen to forego future project expenditures and personally donate the necessary funds required to finish out the year. Others decided to donate, what would be their reimbursements that are due for past expenditures, to help out.

Several projects are making cuts based on the fact that we are not presently spending money that would be required at this time of year. This represents a savings and that helps.

Everyone was looking forward to a great return on our 2020 Plant Sale to raise the funds we depend on to supplement our dues payments to fund the budget for 2020. The PS committee was hard at work to make it successful when the rug got pulled from under us. As your MGA Board we are faced with having to anticipate the unexpected. Tough to do even under pleasant circumstances.

The \$30 assessment requested by the Board from our members is necessary to ensure that we have sufficient operating funds to finish out the year. It's a one-time thing and we hope our members see it in that light. We also hope that those members who can afford to do so will also consider an additional donation to add to the coffers. If there are those who cannot afford the \$30 that is completely understandable too. These are tough times. None of those decisions were made without a great deal of discussion. We currently have a \$9,000 reserve fund that we will tap as necessary. However, no farmer wants to have to eat his or her seed corn.

I sent my check in already and I hope you and your volunteers will consider doing the same.

If you or any of your volunteers have any questions about any of these decisions, or our present financial picture, please tell them to feel free to contact me, 304-561-7134, or any board member. There is nothing complicated or secret about our situation. This is a total group effort that will make sure our organization is just as strong when we can finally get back to the business of being volunteer gardeners. The flowers, vegetables, trees, shrubs, herbs and yes, the weeds are all waiting for us.

Thanks for your understanding and support in these trying times for all of us. Stay healthy and safe. The well-being of our members means more to us than anything else right now. Please free to share this with your volunteers as needed."

Rick Brown
VP-Projects

PLANNING FOR THE FALL PLANT SALE IS UNDERWAY

BY DONNA TIERNEY, PLANT SALE TEAM MEMBER

Disappointing as it was to all of us, the spring plant sale had to be postponed because of federal, state, and VCE guidelines related the current pandemic. As one door closed, a new opportunity appeared—fall - which is a great time for planting and decorating with plants. The committee is now planning a sale where we hope to sell mums, bulbs, perennial plants, hanging baskets, Trash & Treasures, and more!

We are researching a new venue with more foot traffic to potentially increase sales. The status of the pandemic and venue availability will drive the date for the sale. We have only just begun our research, so more details will follow as the plan evolves.

In the meantime, **we need YOUR help** to make this event a great success.

Please:

- Continue to propagate and nurture perennials and keep collecting Trash & Treasures.
- Support our organization by purchasing bulbs from us.
- Support Atlantic Growers when you are able to shop again—they are wonderful partners to our organization.

Our sincere thanks to everyone who has been working so hard on the plant sale. With your continued support, we look forward to coordinating a great sale this fall which will help replenish our treasury!



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All the best from your plant sale team ---Liz, Janet, Marty, Susan, Donna, and Hope

THIS AND THAT



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From the Master Gardeners' Bookshelf

From the Master Gardeners of Northern Virginia comes a review of the *Complete Book of Cacti & Succulents*, by Terry Hewitt. To read about this valuable resource, click [here](#).

—Janet Smith

Help Desk

While most of the Master Gardener projects have been put on hold until the coronavirus has subsided please let your friends and neighbors know that we are still retrieving messages from the help desk phone system.

We are asking people to leave their email address along with as much information as possible about their questions and we will respond accordingly. I hope that at some not to distant date we will be able to resume full help desk operations.

—Bob Howell, project chair

Dining Out While Staying In

Marilyn Riddle passed along a gem from the March 16, 2020, issue of the *Richmond Times Dispatch*. Called "Cooking in the time of coronavirus: these copycat recipes let you eat restaurant favorites at home," by columnist Holly Prestidge, the article gives recipes for five restaurant favorites. If you love Panera Bread's mac & cheese, Panda Express's chow mein, Olive Garden's Italian salad dressing, and more, check out the article [here](#).

EARLY SPRING AT THE WILLIAMSBURG BOTANICAL GARDEN

PHOTOS FROM ELIZABETH MCCOY

Master Gardeners and Tree Stewards completed recent work at the WBG...just in time, it turns out.



MEET SOME MEMBERS OF THE TRAINING CLASS 2020

BY JENNIFER CAMPBELL, 2020 TRAINING TEAM

Like many of our current Master Gardeners, students in the 2020 Master Gardener class have diverse backgrounds and interests. There are small business owners, educators, and professional across a broad range of disciplines. Many are still working while others are retired. Their shared interest is that of gardening, and they have spent the past months learning and pushing instructors to teach them even more. They are eager to get out in the garden, become acquainted with our Master Gardeners, and learn even more.

Until you can meet them in person, you can learn a little bit about them through their profiles. Here are three from the Class of 2020.

Bea Sandford

What inspired you to take the Master Gardening Class? My husband earned his degree in forestry from Penn State University. He has always enjoyed the outdoors so I wanted to learn more so we can garden together.

What types of gardening to you enjoy (natives, vegetable, perennials, etc)? I am interested in natives, perennials, and xeriscaping.

What have you enjoyed most about the Master Gardening Class? It has been like drinking from a fire hose, but I have a greater awareness on how we can help or hurt the environment. Knowing where to access information is invaluable. We have had fabulous instructors who are able to share their knowledge in a way that is accessible to all.



How long have you lived in Williamsburg and where did you relocate from? I am originally from outside of Philadelphia, but have lived in the south since 1985. My husband and I moved to Williamsburg in 2013 when I took a job with St. Bede Catholic Church. Now that I am retired, I have more time to work in the garden and to help others who are interested in gardening in a sustainable manner.

What other community interests are you engaged in? Williamsburg Faith In Action, Our Lady of the Rosary Secular Franciscans, Settlers Mill HOA board member,

Do you have any gardening goals and if so, what are they? I want to find an alternative to water-thirsty lawns that are dependent on chemicals. I am concerned about the impact of chemicals on the web of nature.

What interesting tidbit/factoid/skills would you like your fellow Master Gardeners know about yourself? I am the middle child in a family of fifteen children, so I can manage conflict. I am a person who gets things done; more of a human doing than a human being.



Dot Finnegan

How long have you lived in Williamsburg and where did you relocate from? In 2000, my late husband was the superintendent at the American Battle Monument's Somme Cemetery in France (the WWI Western Front). He planned to come home in September, and we intended to buy a new home. On the market was a replica of the Raleigh Tavern, just off Jamestown Road, and seeing it in April when the landscaped and manicured yard and garden was filled with azaleas in bloom, I thought it was perfect for us. Naively, I thought

The article is continued on the next page, page 8

MEET SOME MEMBERS OF THE TRAINING CLASS 2020—CONTINUED

how much work could approximately 150 azalea bushes take? For the last twenty years, I have discovered just how much, but really had little knowledge to inform my outdoor tasks.

What inspired you to take the Master Gardener Course? Last spring, Frank Caruso advertised in [*Next Door Neighbors*](#) that he was available to help neighbors learn about crape murder. During his visit, he suggested that I seek assistance at the Farmer' Market Master Gardeners' help desk about my boxwoods perhaps being attacked by the blight. A wonderful team led by Gary Streb that included Frank, visited my yard, and while there, encouraged me to apply for the MG course.

Do you have any gardening goals and if so, what are they? My goal has been to learn more about taking care of my azaleas; that is, learning more about pruning them correctly and feeding them, but also to learn about perennials that I might plant that would add successive color to my yard and would stimulate insect ecology. Although weeds are the bane of my existence, I actually do not mind weeding as the beds always look better afterwards and the plant competition is lessened.

What other community interests are you engaged in? Having accepted a call to teach at William and Mary in 1993, I have lived in Williamsburg longer than anywhere else. Leaving my home state of New Jersey at eighteen for college, I have lived in six other states and five European countries, have visited or spent time in Borneo, Burundi, and the Galapagos Islands. Retiring in 2013, I drive for Meals on Wheels, teach once a year for W&M's Christopher Wren Society (now the Osher Institute), and cover right field while playing on the new Senior Softball League; my body is not as flexible as it used to be in my younger days. Working in the yard though keeps me going and somewhat limber.



Nan Snyder

What inspired you to take the Master Gardening Class? I was inspired to take the Master Gardening class by a friend who is active and also by my mother who is now ninety and took the course when she was seventy. I find the creativity of planning what to plant the most inspirational part of gardening.

What types of gardening to you enjoy (natives, vegetable, perennials, etc)? I enjoy perennial gardening the most.

What have you enjoyed most about the Master Gardening Class? The abundance of knowledge I have gained as well as

learning what I have done wrong for so many years. I also have enjoyed making new friends.

How long have you lived in Williamsburg and where did you relocate from? I moved from Newport News to Williamsburg almost twenty-five years ago.

What other community interests are you engaged in? I volunteer for Meals on Wheels and am also a member of Soroptimist Organization for Women.

Do you have any gardening goals and if so, what are they? Once my yard is fenced in, I would like to create a habitat with my own variations.

TREE VIRGINIA AWARDS GRANT TO JCC/WILLIAMSBURG MASTER GARDENERS

BY MARION GUTHRIE



In March, a group of eight James City County/ Williamsburg Master Gardeners from the Peninsula Tree Steward interns class of 2020 were awarded a grant from Trees Virginia (<https://treesvirginia.org/>) to support their efforts to catalog the trees in the Williamsburg Botanical Garden (WBG).

Overall, the project provides the WBG board with a complete inventory of the trees and shrubs currently growing in their garden and will also offer plant-specific information about the specimens to the garden's visitors through their mobile devices.

Elizabeth McCoy, who wrote the grant, explained, "Specifically, the grant covers an estimated \$900 of costs for housing the inventory data in Plants Map (plantsmap.com) and producing the identification signs with embedded QR codes. The garden's visitors can scan the code on the sign with their mobile device to access additional data about each labeled tree. We expect to label over one hundred individual trees and native shrubs with QR tags."

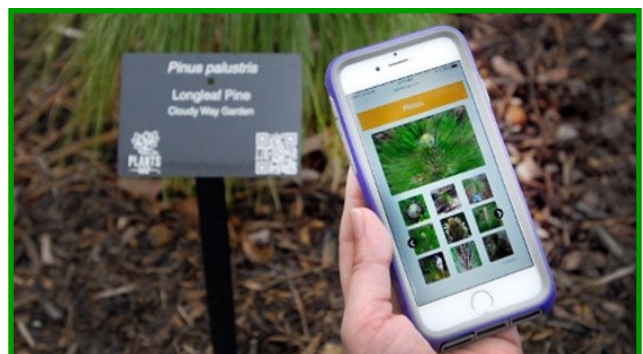
The team, which launched this project in late January, consists of Bill Dichtel, Bob Howell, Elizabeth McCoy, Harry Fahl, Jayce Griffin, Jerry Woodson, Marion Guthrie, and Stephanie Lamb. They have recently completed the course work and volunteer requirements to qualify as Tree Stewards and continue to work, currently remotely, entering information about the various species into the Plants Map site, developing a map of the specimens in the garden and building a presentation.

Once leaves have emerged and the prohibition on working in groups has been lifted, the team will continue with data collection in the WBG, verifying the accuracy of the initial inventory and taking specimen photos. They expect to order the QR signs later this spring.

The Peninsula Tree Stewards include members from five Master Gardener units across the peninsula: JCC/W, York/Poquoson, Hampton, Newport News and Gloucester who have successfully completed Extension Master Gardener (EMG) Tree Steward advanced training.

Tree Stewards are dedicated to working in the community to encourage appreciation of trees and their benefits, enhance correct tree maintenance, and improve tree plantings.

[Trees Virginia](http://TreesVirginia.org) is registered with the state as the Virginia Urban Forest Council. It is a private, non-profit organization with a twenty-six-member volunteer board of directors that guides the council's programs and directions. Members are a diverse group of people who love trees and strive to expand public awareness of the role that trees and forests play in the urban environment.



WILDFLOWER OF THE MONTH APRIL 2020

BY HELEN HAMILTON
JOHN CLAYTON CHAPTER, VIRGINIA NATIVE PLANT SOCIETY

GOLDEN RAGWORT *Packera aurea*

Golden Ragwort is a welcome sign of spring, covering swampy areas with bright yellow, from mid-March through early summer. The buds are purple and open to display yellow disc and ray flowers, unusual for a member of the aster family -- the rays are often white. This native perennial grows one-to-three feet tall, with only a few deeply cut leaves on the stems. The leaves at the base of the plant are heart-shaped, in a large rosette. After the flowers fade, these leaves spread to form a nice groundcover which will persist over most of the winter.

Growing naturally in bogs, wet woods, floodplains, and meadows in eastern North America, golden ragwort occurs in every county in Virginia. The plant thrives in full shade with acid, rich soil, in zones 3 to 9. Because it spreads easily by seed and underground roots, it can form large colonies and will grow under trees where nothing else thrives. In a woodland garden or a perennial border in the shade the masses of golden yellow look wonderful with bluestar (*Amsonia tabernaemontana*) and red columbine (*Aquilegia canadensis*).



Photo: Golden Ragwort (*Packera aurea*) taken by Helen Hamilton

Small bees and flies that emerge early from winter homes are frequent visitors, feeding on nectar and carrying pollen to fertilize neighboring flowers. Among the insects, the green metallic sweat bee is more easily seen than the dull brown or black cuckoo bees and hoverflies. Deer avoid golden ragwort since the leaves contain toxic chemicals.

Two other species of this genus are common in the Coastal Plain. Woolly ragwort (*P. tomentosa*) is a plant of the dunes, sandy clearings and roadsides and Small's ragwort (*P. anonyma*) grows in dry fields, roadsides, and disturbed habitats. There are differences in the stems and leaves of these three species, but where they grow is the best way to identify them.

Golden ragwort is one of the herbs (ground and dissolved in alcohol) that are sold as Lydia Pinkham's Vegetable Compound, widely marketed as a cure for any "female complaint." A tea made from the root and leaves was used by American Indians, settlers, and herbalists to treat delayed and irregular menses, leucorrhea, and childbirth complications, leading to its alternate common name "squaw-weed." "Ragwort" means a plant with ragged leaves, and "wort" is an Old "English word for "plant".

The best place to buy these plants are local native plant sales, since it is not usually seen in commercial nurseries. Online sites such as North Creek Nurseries sell flats of seedlings.

For more information about native plants,
visit www.vnps.org

The Colonial Master Gardener April 2020

Just now, spring might not seem like a time of renewal. These adorable photos are a reminder that this season truly is a time of rebirth. Enjoy.



All images from pixabay, except brown bear, from flickr

Important Dates

- 6/24-28 Master Gardener College. This will be held online this year rather than in Blacksburg.



Aeqexid

SUNSHINE NOTES



The organization sends cards to members with difficult medical issues or who have experienced a death in the immediate family. We also acknowledge achievements/milestones and donations made to the association

This month we sent cards to:

Dean Shostak—Sympathy
Donald Parker—Sympathy

Please provide names to the EMG secretary, Beth Deer, at (757) 435-3183, or elizabethdeer@cox.net

NEXT NEWSLETTER DEADLINE

The deadline for submissions to the May 2020 newsletter will be Wednesday, April 22.

Please send any submissions to Hope Yelich, newsletter editor, at hopeyelich@gmail.com

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.

Virginia Cooperative Extension programs and employment are open to all, regardless of age, color, disability, gender, gender identity, gender expression, national origin, political affiliation, race, religion, sexual orientation, genetic information, 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; M. Ray McKinnie, Interim Administrator, 1890 Extension Program, Virginia State University, Petersburg.

Name _____ Email _____

2020 JCC/W Master Gardeners Assessment (\$30) _____



JCC/W Master Gardener Association

c/o Kathy Skube

3955 W Providence Rd

Williamsburg, VA 23188

Please mail your check for this one-time assessment to the above address. If you would like to include an additional donation to the Chapter's General Fund, please indicate below –

Assessment \$30

General fund _____

Thank you for your contributions!

Volunteer signature

Date