



The Colonial Master Gardener

July
2021

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

THE PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

BY MARTIN OAKES

Welcome my friends and colleagues to the “dog days of summer”. July and August are normally the hot months --- and we will be praying for a drenching rain. The warmth is good for the garden and good for the soul. Enjoy this time but please be careful and vigilant for heat injuries.

According to Janet Spencer, our regional VCE director, Forrest Hobbs will begin his duties as the James City County / New Kent County ANR agent on Friday, June 25. My plan is to have the Board of Directors meet with him at the next board meeting (July 15). I will invite Mr. Hobbs to “meet and greet” with the general membership at the August MG Association meeting. Please welcome him to our unit.

Please remember that the meeting on August 4 will be held “live” at the Williamsburg Regional Library. This will include both the continuing education session and the business session. We are actively working on a system to record or to ZOOM the meeting. Information will be provided in the future.



Photo Courtesy of Elizabeth McCoy

Next Meeting:
Thursday, August 5
9:00am
Auditorium at the
Williamsburg Library

Program:
Taming Peninsula Clay

Speaker:
Andrew Koenig, Master Arborist

The meeting will follow recommendations from the CDC, VCE, and Commonwealth of Virginia concerning the wearing of face coverings. Vaccinated individuals are not required to wear a face mask. Unvaccinated individuals are required. An honor system is in effect. Of course, anyone can wear a covering. I have received the full vaccination series but will wear my mask when possible and practical. Please spread out in the auditorium – not required but makes common sense. Your Board of Directors will host a small celebration after the meeting – a celebration of seeing friends face to face. Please join us for a few minutes.

Projects are beginning to become more active. Please do not hesitate to contact project chairs or the VP Projects (Rick Brown) if you have any questions or concerns. And, of course, you will submit your volunteer hours to the Better Impact system in a timely fashion. I thank you.

I truly look forward to seeing each of you at the August meeting. As always, thank you for the support. Please let me know what I can do to better our organization.

2021
MGA Board

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Martin Oakes

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VP Projects:
Rick Brown

VP Internal Ed:
Bill Dichtel

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Past President:
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*VCE ANR Program
Assistant:*
VACANT

Newsletter Editor:
Katherine Sokolowsky
katherinesoko@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.

VMGA REPORT ON ANNUAL MEETING

BY MARILYN RIDDLE, UNIT REP

The meeting was opened with the vote on bylaws changes involving membership category renaming by the general membership. All passed. Then those members not unit reps had the option to leave.

Central Rappahannock Unit was the host. This unit is primarily in King George Co, which is east of Fredericksburg. As host unit, they presented on their Natives Garden. They were offered a former landfill and both EMGs and Master Naturalists provided the labor to convert it. Their Parks and Rec Department provided minimal help.

Since this was the annual meeting, those minutes that were approved were from June 2020. The total net assets are \$29,689.05 as reported by Georgi Hall. President Leslie Paulson introduced the new Fundraising Chair, Joe Kelly. He is a former VMGA President. Mary Martinez Rigo is the new Merchandise Manager and Donna Vinal will assist. Peggy Fox has resigned as Newsletter Editor. A replacement is needed. **Ruth Huber**, one of our newest members and chair of the audit committee, reported that the audit has been completed and all was in order. This was a continuation of last meeting's report.

Dave Banks was recognized for his many years of service to VMGA as webmaster. Scholarships Chair Tonya Harper announced the nine recipients of this year's scholarships from VMGA for International Master Gardening College. Our unit has one of these winners. She is Kimberly Silver-Perry.
Congratulations, Kimberly!

VCE Report was given by Kathleen Reed.

- 1) IMGC Sept 12-17. Less than 900 have registered but the hope is that will increase to 1500-2000
- 2) Encourage all to sign onto Better Impact. Overall, 65% have signed **in statewide**. (Our unit has bettered that record.)
- 3) Handbook Update continuing; Tree Stewards edition is being done at present; Training Manual Update will be ready in 2023. New training handbook and MG Coordinators' Handbook is also being done. Digital copies will be free; a charge for printing if that is desired.

The next VMGA meeting on August 14 will be via Zoom. The following meeting on October 9 will be in person, although the site has not been determined.

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/>

HISTORIC TRIANGLE LEARNING GARDEN

BY BILL DICHTEL, CO-CHAIR INCREDIBLE EDIBLES

The Historic Triangle Learning Garden is coming out of the Pandemic full speed ahead. Our garden group has been fully engaged. We have been having garden workdays every two weeks to supplement what we do individually in individual garden plots and the garden looks terrific!

We have 15 very active plots actively under cultivation with some transition going on from spring into summer crops. Peas, lettuce, radishes, Swiss chard, parsley, broccoli, kale, spinach and other crops have been harvested so far. Large amounts have been contributed to our food bank charities such as FISH and the House of Mercy under the leadership of Kim Silver-Perry.

Bev Baker and Helen Cronk lead our Pollinator Border Garden crew as that project enters its third year and it has truly come into its own! It is not only beautiful but it is wonderfully functional in attracting pollinators, both insect and avian and is fully enjoyed by all in the garden participants and visitors.

Harriet Parsons has led our internal education efforts and we have had great discussions on our workdays of such topics as "Growing Tomatoes," "Composting," "Garden Insects: Good and Bad," "Intercropping" (transitioning crops between garden seasons) and "Scientific Basis of Companion Planting." Discussions have been active and all have contributed and have been involved. As the Pandemic restrictions lift, we are resuming our educational outreach to the community as well.

The building has been sold and purchased by Children's Developmental Resources. They are planning extensive renovations but we feel fortunate to be the one group who will not have to leave the site or vacate for their plans to proceed. In fact, we have discussed some exciting plans to work with CDR where our missions commingle in caring and educating children and their parents and look for an extension of our educational mission in the future.

Master Gardeners are welcome to visit our site if desired. We only ask that you carefully latch our gates as you found them as we do live in an active wildlife area.

Happy gardening!



Photo Courtesy of Bill Dichtel

SPEAKERS BUREAU

BY JUDITH ALBERTS AND ELIZABETH MCCOY, CO-CHAIRS

Do you have a horticultural passion, or an area of expertise, that you could share with groups in the community? Community groups are planning meetings again, and we are receiving requests for speakers.

What may seem simple to you, like making compost or feeding the birds, might hold great interest for members of local garden clubs, civic groups, and neighborhood associations. The Speakers Bureau maintains a [list of topics and speakers](#) available on the [Master Gardener website](#). The [Request Form](#) collects the details and sends a notification to speakers@jccwmg.org. We then coordinate an email introduction for you to connect and confirm with the requestor.

We are eager to add to new programs so contact us with your ideas. We can brainstorm and assist you as you develop your program. Most, but not all, speakers use a PowerPoint presentation. Some speakers give hands-on demonstrations. During the past year, many of our speakers have learned to give their presentations over Zoom, so they never have to leave home to present to a local group. We can help you craft your presentation, including giving help with PowerPoint.

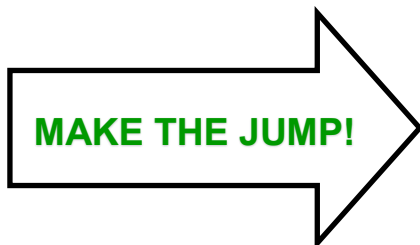
The Speakers Bureau can be a source of revenue for our local Master Gardener's Association. This is a fun way to help contribute back to the group to fund our other projects and outreach efforts.

We especially encourage our newest Master Gardeners, and soon to be Master Gardeners, to consider joining us as a new speaker. Even if you aren't yet an 'expert' in a particular area, developing your presentation allows you to do more research on areas of interest. All of your time spent developing and giving your presentation counts as volunteer hours. This is a wonderful opportunity for you to specialize and develop your knowledge base and skills.

Please contact either of us if you would like to chat about your ideas or ask questions about the Speakers Bureau Project.



Photo Courtesy of Unsplash



WATER WISE GARDEN

BY WATER WISE TEAM

This demonstration project is located at the Human Services Center (HSC) at 5249 Olde Towne Road. It showcases a variety of native and hardy drought tolerant perennial plants in a low-maintenance, low-watering setting. We (the entire team) experiment with new plants and plant arrangements to determine the ones best suited for the micro-climates on each side of the main entrance of the HSC. Susan Neidlinger leads a team of 10 enthusiastic master gardeners who meet every 1st and 3rd Tuesday mornings for 2 hours. Each month a member of our group steps up as a co-chair to assist Susan.

Planning: Early each spring Susan hosts a brunch and planning session for the coming season. Ideas abound for planting, maintenance, and educational opportunities. The February 25, 2020 session focused on expanding our educational and interpretive activities. With the high-volume foot traffic at HSC, we planned to rewrite our brochure, add an information box, and more actively engage with the walk-in public. Covid 19 procedures halted those plans. So, we focused on a low-level redesign and resumed hands-on maintenance as protocols allowed. The team initiated a more comprehensive photo documentation program which includes taking three panoramic photos of the garden each month. Below is a panorama showing the scope of the garden.

Education and Sharing: Before each work segment, a team member gives a 10-minute education session highlighting a garden plant currently growing or blooming. As we go about our tasks for the rest of the morning, we share information about the plants. Jim Akridge observed, "as a current intern, I most appreciate just asking the veteran working next to me all sorts of questions about this garden and my own. Great fellowship!" An added shared benefit is that some of the thinned out plants are donated to a good cause.

We Have Fun: We laugh a lot and smile. Visitors to the HSC see us having fun and now stop and chat as the Covid protocols are lifting. When thinning a bed, our motto is "when in doubt, throw it out" if it doesn't conform to our project's objectives. Another rule is that "certain" folks have to work 20 feet from each other to keep the joke volume (number and decibels) down. Marty and Elvin, you know who you are! As it gets hot and humid, we adjust our hours. Susan's motto is work when you can, but take care of your other life duties. This flexibility is appreciated.

We Inspire: Sandy Liebler observes, "when I was serving as a temporary social worker in the building, I'd come out and see the Master Gardeners hard at work, all having fun while keeping the unimpressive building looking lovely. There was always something in bloom or showing color, year-round. That's what inspired me to become a Master Gardener!" We don't know who or how many



Photo Courtesy of Elvin and Kay Clapp

WATER WISE — CONTINUED



Photo Courtesy of Elvin and Kay Clapp

people look at the garden or sit on the benches. But as we work, we do see the gleam in their eyes and hear the happiness in their voices as they walk by and comment on the mix of colorful plants.

You are Always Welcome: So, stop by our project. We would love to share our experiences, knowledge, laughter, and pride in this garden. Better yet – bring your tools and stay a spell. And yes, we do pull weeds as one of our organic herbicide control methods which is counter intuitive for a “low maintenance” demonstration project. But the weeds don’t read the sign and brochure.

Each month generates new operational ideas, especially in moving to the low end of the maintenance spectrum. The team eagerly waits for the next spring comprehensive planning season and food fest at Susan’s. Thanks to her leadership and to all the team members for providing the community an opportunity “to grow” with this garden.



Photo Courtesy of Elvin and Kay Clapp

PERENNIAL PLANTS OF THE YEAR

BY DEB BUSSERT, PRESIDENT ELECT

Here is the next installment of my ongoing series of articles about the Perennial Plants of the Year and our experiences with them at the Williamsburg Botanical Garden.

2011: *Amsonia hubrichtii*

This amsonia is native to Arkansas and Oklahoma and is commonly known as blue star. It is hardy in Zones 5-8 and grows 2-3 feet high and wide. Bloom time is April/May with abundant powder blue flowers, after which the attractive feathery green summer foliage contributes a nice presence in the garden. Amsonia grows best in part shade in our area and requires average, well-drained soil with moderate moisture. It is a low maintenance plant once established that attracts butterflies, tolerates deer and has a beautiful golden yellow fall color (usually observed when the plant is grown in full sun). The foliage can be cut back to about 6" after flowering to reduce flopping, shape the plant and reduce self-seeding. The genus Amsonia honors the 18th century Virginia physician Dr. Charles Amson, while the species is named for Leslie Hubricht, an American biologist who discovered it growing in the wild in the 1940s.



Amsonia hubrichtii
(Photo courtesy of Deb Bussert)



Baptisia australis
(Photo courtesy of Deb Bussert)

2010: *Baptisia australis*

Commonly known as blue false indigo, this herbaceous perennial in the pea family is native to the Eastern United States. It is hardy in Zones 3 – 9 and grows 3-4 feet high and wide. It blooms in May/June with indigo blue flowers that resemble those of pea plants, and the seed pods look just like dark pea pods. Baptisia is easily grown in sun to part shade in average, dry to medium soil. It will tolerate drought once established. Over time plants develop into slowly expanding clumps with deep and extensive root systems; as a result they should not be transplanted once established. Baptisia develops a shrubby appearance that can be shaped to reduce any tendency to flop. It attracts butterflies and is rabbit and deer tolerant, and is best used in borders, cottage gardens and native plant gardens. We have several baptisias in the perennial garden, including a white variety (*baptisia alba*) that we just transplanted from one of the raised beds where it self-seeded. We decided to try to move it, knowing that we would have to cut the deep roots and that it may not survive. We will coddle it as best we can and hope for the best. There are many other Baptisia species and lots of cultivars. This is a great plant that does well in our area.

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PERENNIAL PLANTS OF THE YEAR — CONTINUED

2012: *Brunnera macrophylla* 'Jack Frost'

Commonly known as Siberian bugloss (derived from a Greek word meaning “ox tongue”), this plant from the borage family is said to be hardy in Zones 3-8, but prefers cooler summers than we have to offer here, and generally will not perform well in our hot and humid conditions. The rough foliage may burn if the plant is grown in too much sun. Where growing conditions are optimal, *Brunnera* is easily grown in average, well-drained soil with plenty of organic matter and moderate moisture in part to full shade. It grows to 1-1.5 feet high and wide in clumps that slowly spread and that may self-seed. The flowers look like blue forget-me-nots and appear in April/May. *Brunnera* has no serious insect or disease problems and is rabbit and deer tolerant. It is best used in borders, woodland and naturalized gardens. The species has solid green foliage; 'Jack Frost' is a cultivar that has distinctive silvery white leaves with green veins. At the WBG, we have planted and lost several *Brunneras* over the years, although we currently have two substantial plants that seem to be fairly well-established. These are beautiful plants, but I question whether they are worth the effort in our area which really does not suit their needs.



Brunnera macrophylla 'Jack Frost'
(Photo courtesy of Deb Bussert)



Zebra Swallowtails enjoy *Agastache* 'Blue Fortune' at the Heath's display gardens in Gloucester, Virginia
(Photo Courtesy of Elizabeth McCoy)

PLANTS I LOVE ... AND DEER IGNORE

BY ELIZABETH MCCOY, MG AND TREE STEWARD

Gardening should be fun and bring joy to our lives. That is why I am always happy to discover a new group of plants that thrive in our climate, grow beautifully without a lot of fuss, and that won't attract the attention hungry deer looking for the salad bar. Allow me to share one of my favorites....

Anise hyssop, hummingbird mint, *Agastache*; this well-mannered native mint may not be our first pick at the nursery. These aren't particularly seductive plants at first glance. Their leaves may seem rather dull and their flowers a bit coarse, if colorful. *And that name?* I still mumble and stumble over pronouncing it around a fellow master gardener. (For the record, it is ah-GAH-sta-kee.)

I never gave *Agastache* a second glance until one August morning in 2018 when we visited Brent and Becky Heath's Gloucester display gardens. Their gardens were filled with every imaginable August blooming flower, but the butterflies were clustered on a few pots of blooming *Agastache* in their nursery area behind the shop. With 10 acres of delicious flowers to visit, we found the butterflies crowded together to sip from the few potted *Agastache*, in a puddle of sunshine

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PLANTS I LOVE ... AND DEER IGNORE — CONTINUED

on their patio. I watched in amazement as the butterflies bumped into one another to have a chance to sip this *Agastache* nectar.

Of the 22 species of *Agastache*, most are native to North America. You will find a wide variety of named cultivars whose flowers bloom in shades of blue, purple, white, orange, peach, red, and yellow. Most grow into tall, bushy plants absolutely covered in panicles of tiny, two lipped flowers for several months from early summer through frost. The Sandy's Plants online catalog, which lists an enormous variety of cultivars, is my 'go-to' source of information about them.

Agastache thrives in our coastal Virginia climate. Grow them in full to partial sun on well-drained but evenly moist soil. *Agastache* proves drought tolerant once established. It may not tolerate heavy, wet soil in the winter, so do not plant it in a wet spot, and wait until spring, after the last frost, before cutting back old plants. Watch for new growth from the crown in spring before cutting the old stems away. A hardy, native herb, *Agastache* isn't particularly fussy about soil, moisture or light and easily adapts to many situations.



Agastache 'Crazy Fortune' is a new, variegated sport of A. 'Blue Fortune' (Photo Courtesy of Elizabeth McCoy)

Agastache leaves may be brewed into tea. Their fragrance and texture make them unappealing to herbivores. Grow *Agastache* with confidence that it won't be grazed, and you won't need to treat it for pests or disease. Do deadhead the old flower stems from time to time to encourage more blooms. Pinching back in the spring also encourages a bushier, more floriferous plant.

Like its close relative *Nepeta*, the cat mints, *Agastache* clumps rather than runs. You should still leave plenty of space for it to grow, as it may be 3' tall and 3'-4' wide, depending on the cultivar, by August.

Agastache 'Blue Boa' and A. 'Blue Fortune' have been popular in recent years. Both are tough and dependable, with large blue clusters of flowers that begin blooming in late May or early June. A new introduction, *Agastache* 'Crazy Fortune,' a sport of 'Blue Fortune,' displays variegated cream and dark green leaves beneath its blue flower panicles. This one commands attention, as its new growth is tinged with lavender, making its foliage as attractive as its flowers.



Agastache rupestris blooms in the Iris Border at the Williamsburg Botanical Garden. (Photo Courtesy of Elizabeth McCoy)

I am trialing a pink flowered cultivar, *Agastache* 'Morello' this summer for the first time. Its color is lovely, but its stems seem less upright, and overall, it is a softer plant than many other *Agastaches*.

Agastache rupestris, known as threadleaf giant hyssop or Mexican hyssop, is a much airier, more delicate plant with tiny leaves and more widely spaced, large flowers. Find it in many beautiful shades of peach, coral and orange. For pots or a smaller space, try the 'Kudos' series of *Agastache* cultivars, which all remain smaller than 2' tall and wide.

Agastache may be used interchangeably with most *Salvias* in a planting design, and it also thrives in pots. But grow it where you will pass by often, so you'll have a front row seat for the incredible display of butterflies, clear wing moths, hummingbirds and native bees that *Agastache* will attract to your yard.

THIS AND THAT



Crinum x. powellii 'Album' (Lily)



Ruellia humilis (Petunia)
Photos Courtesy of Elizabeth McCoy



Asclepias tuberosa (Milkweed)

Better Impact

All volunteer and continuing education hours should be entered on Better Impact no later than **Thursday, July 1st** for this reporting period.

– Rick Brown, VP Projects

News from the Williamsburg Botanical Garden

Thank you to all the Master Gardeners who continue to make the WBG a delightful place for visitors from all over the nation as summer travel ramps up.

Learn and Grow programming is taking a summer break and will return in October via Zoom. We plan to return to in-person Learn and Grow programs at the Interpretive Center in January, and we are always on the lookout for interesting programs. If you have suggestions for us, please contact Judith.Alberts@gmail.com.

The **WBG's Butterfly Festival** will return this year in a modified form. Mark your calendar for September 11 and 12 and watch for details via our eNewsletter. If you're not on the WBG's list, sign up at www.bit.ly/wbgnews.

The Garden was dedicated 15 years ago on July 29, 2006, and we will have a casual reception in the Garden on July 31 from 5:30 to 7:00 pm with light refreshments. (Rain date is the same time on Sunday, August 1.) If you have ever volunteered at the Garden, please complete this short form so we have your current info: <https://www.questionpro.com/t/ATGywZnPdP>.

– Judith Alberts, WBG Board Chair

Important Dates



Photo Courtesy of Elizabeth McCoy

THINKING OF OUR MEMBERS

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:

If you know any member who should receive a card, please contact our new secretary, Paulette Atkinson, at (757) 813-7234 or papinehurst@gmail.com

NEXT NEWSLETTER DEADLINE

The deadline for submissions to the August 2021 newsletter will be Wednesday, July 28

Please send any submissions to Katherine Sokolowsky, newsletter editor, at katherinesoko@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.