



The Colonial Master Gardener

August
2021

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

THE PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

BY MARTIN OAKES

Good day fellow Master Gardeners. I truly hope each of you are happy and well. The heat and humidity of summer in Virginia are upon us. But it could be much, much worse. The western section of our country is under a severe drought and extremely high temperatures. In addition, wildfires are burning the beautiful forest land. So, it could be worse.

On a positive note: the crepe myrtle trees are beautiful this year. Full of flowers - just spectacular. Yes, I know this is a non-native species. Do not get mad at me. Please take a few minutes to enjoy their wonder.

I look forward to physically seeing the membership at the August monthly meeting this Thursday. Location will be the Williamsburg Regional Library. Rick Brown and Bill Dichtel are working to record the meeting and transmit via ZOOM. I will keep you informed. Again, the library does not require masks for vaccinated individuals. I personally encourage mask use in large group settings.

It will be my pleasure to introduce the new VCE / ANR agent for James City County and New Kent County. It



Photo Courtesy of Marty Oakes

Next Meeting:

Thursday, August 5
9:00am

Auditorium at the
Williamsburg Library

Program:

Taming Peninsula Clay

Speaker:

Andrew Koenig, Master Arborist

will be exciting to welcome Mr. Forest Hobbs (fhobbs@vt.edu) to our Master Gardener community. Following the business section of the meeting, the Board of Directors will host a small reception to rekindle friendships and to welcome Mr. Hobbs.

Remember to input your volunteer hours into the Better Impact system. This is extremely important to our organization.

Thank you for your cooperation.
Have a good day --- and remember:



2021
MGA Board

President:
Martin Oakes

President Elect:
Deborah Bussert

VP Administration:
Vickie Rockwell

VP Projects:
Rick Brown

VP Internal Ed:
Bill Dichtel

Secretary:
Paulette Atkinson

Treasurer:
Linda Neilson

VMGA Rep:
Marilyn Riddle
Alternate:
Joanne Sheffield

Past President:
Patsy McGrady

*VCE ANR Program
Assistant:*
VACANT

VMGA UPDATES

BY MARILYN RIDDLE, UNIT REP

I have notified Christy Brennan that we want to work at the VIRGINIA STATE FAIR. The preselected open dates are Sept 30 and Oct 2. If you have serious interest, please contact **Marilyn Riddle** at mriddle@cox.net soon. That way the date can be confirmed and placed on her calendar. Since she has not advertised with specific information to the VMGA audience, we should be able to get the date where most can work. Nothing prohibits us working two dates at the state fair. A limit of ten max from each unit is the desired workforce. She receives that many free daily passes for workers. Obviously, some are not used.

Gary S, Su C and I held down the fort two years ago, the last time the event was held. We worked in a tent with big fans for ac. Two from our group were all over the fair site in 2019; one hung to a chair. You get the picture!

The dates of the fair are: Sept 24-Oct 3. We sincerely hope that VA Tech returns as a participant this year. VSU historically brings their aquaculture display. Jeremy Johnson, former longtime 4-H JCCWA agent—now in administration at VA Tech—regularly works this event. We are hoping that our new agent, Forrest Hobbs, can arrange to work in New Kent that day and slide on up about 25 miles to join us for an hour or so. **There are also applications on the fair website for vegetables that are outstanding.** In the distant past, our own team at the Reid Garden brought home ribbons.

Also, I just received notice from the Piedmont master gardener's unit — as some of you probably know — the spotted lanternfly has reached the Charlottesville area. Since I love my ACC sports, that tells me that some UVA football fans may return home without knowing that they are carrying an unwanted guest to the rest of the state and even further! Since I have a vivid imagination, it takes only one car to bring that guest down from a UVA home football game and stay attached until the next WM home football game!!

THIS MONTH'S SPEAKER

BY BILL DICHEL, VP FOR INTERNAL EDUCATION

We are extremely pleased to have Andrew Koenig as our speaker at the August Meeting of the James City County/Williamsburg Master Gardeners' Meeting on Thursday, August 5th at 9:00 AM.

Andrew graduated with a degree in Forestry from the University of Illinois in 1994 but was drawn to Urban Forestry, Arboriculture and Horticulture. From the outset, he appreciated the scientific approach taken by Bartlett Tree Experts and he joined their

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.

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/>

THIS MONTH'S SPEAKER — CONTINUED

site in Williamsburg and has provided services with his team here on the Peninsula since 2001. Andrew is a Board Certified Master Arborist and has been a frequent instructor for Master Gardeners, Tree Stewards and for other gardening organizations throughout the area.

We have thrown a challenging topic for discussion to Andrew this time: We all have our struggles with lack of drainage through peninsula clay and other soil problems that go along with that. Whether your gardening focuses on tree stewardship, vegetable gardening, growing herbs or tending flowers, you will definitely get pointers from Andrew's presentation.

Because of continued concerns about Covid, particularly the delta variant, the meeting will be simultaneously available by Zoom and will be recorded for delayed viewing for the convenience of our members. Those attending in person are requested to wear a mask even if they are vaccinated per recent CDC recommendations. We hope to see many of you there in person!

HISTORIC TRIANGLE LEARNING GARDEN

BY BILL DICHTEL, CO-CHAIR INCREDIBLE EDIBLES

July has been a busy month at the Historic Triangle Learning Garden. Gary Streb notified the garden leaders of a possible chance to adopt plants from McDonald's Garden Centers as they closed their Williamsburg locations at the end of the season. The good folks at McDonald's Garden Centers were looking for places for their unsold vegetables that could raise them and donate the vegetables to local food charities.

The garden members stepped up to the task: We quickly filled every available space in the Garden and then worked to expand the Garden footprint. We tilled, prepared, fenced and planted another four hundred square feet of garden space adjacent to our garden space. Harriet Parsons supervised planting of a large number of tomato plants. Even with that, we could not accommodate all of the donated plants and Kim Silver-Perry and other garden members found homes for some of the other left over plants with other garden programs in our area.

We are pleased to report that with ongoing weeding, watering and care, the adopted tomatoes, peppers, beans and cucumbers are thriving and producing. Please see pictures below and feel free to visit our garden including the new annex garden behind the shed to check our progress. Please make sure the gate is latched as you leave as we like to keep our critter neighbors on the outside of our fence!



Ralph Waagner and Marty Oakes install fencing while Carol Mayfield prepares to plant vining beans.
(Photo Courtesy of Bill Dichtel)



Tomatoes, peppers and beans three weeks later and starting to produce!
(Photo Courtesy of Bill Dichtel)

WATER STEWARD UPDATES

BY GARY STREB, LEADER

Do you want to be a VCE Master Gardener Water Steward?

The plan for the next VCEMG Water Steward Training Program is progressing on schedule. This first regional class will consist of VCE Master Gardeners from units both on the Peninsula and Southside, but will be limited to a maximum of 30 students on a first-come-first-served basis. The projected timelines: 9 a.m. to 3 p.m. each Friday, from May 13 thru June 17 (2022) for the classroom portion and the required hours for the project development completed before the end of 2022. Locations will be scattered within the Peninsula and Southside. On-line registration should begin in early April. If we have the interest that I expect we will, we will follow with a JCC/Williamsburg based training class in 2023. More details will follow.

But, in the meantime.....

We are now recruiting for more EMGs to participate in the Shoreline Evaluation Project (SEP) –without your volunteer Water Steward training completed. Our developmental model for the project is the current project of the Northern Neck unit and their SEP has been operating for almost 10 years with not all of their EMGs fully trained Water Stewards because of the lack of training opportunities. Opening of our project is still projected for this Fall, 2021, and training is on-going. There's still the opportunity to get in on the original crew and get the experience from the local experts first-hand!

Training continues with the Colonial Soil and Water Conservation District partners and we will make our first trip to the Northern Neck, Reedville area, on August 9 to participate in a mock, on-site visit at the property of one of the Northern Neck volunteers and will follow-up the next week with another on-site visit to participate in the extensive report writing that is required for the shoreline assessments. Our Northern Neck counterparts have been extremely helpful by sharing their documentation and developing an on-site experience for our preparation to open the CSWCD/VCEMG joint project to the public.

If you are ready to jump in, please let me know. I still have slots for the Northern Neck training field trips. Email at gstreb11@gmail.com or cell 757.871.7369, home 757.565.0250



Only a few years ago this was the site of a trash dump in industrial Portsmouth. Paradise Creek Nature Park
(Photo Courtesy of Gary Streb)



What would you do with this erosion problem at Old Dominion University?
(Photo Courtesy of Gary Streb)



How do you construct a rain garden? Virginia Wesleyan University has several examples
(Photo Courtesy of Gary Streb)



A small inconvenience or significant erosion issue? Learn the answer at ODU.
(Photo Courtesy of Gary Streb)

THERAPEUTIC GARDENING

BY KAREN BROOKS, CHAIR



Hello everyone, I hope that many of you have been able to resume somewhat of a normal everyday life.

It has been wonderful that we have been able to keep up with our MG meetings via Zoom, and now we are ready to have our first, in-person meeting. It will be nice to see smiling faces in person!



I still don't know what the future holds for TG. We were able to hold our first program with Arc of Abilities at Freedom Park Interpretive Center in June. (I had hoped to be in the garden, but the weather did not cooperate.) It was wonderful to see everyone and we picked up right where we left off. We showed and discussed the summer vegetables that would be planted in the beds. We also made plans to meet with them again in September and October.



The Arc group tried to grow peas at their center, but the squirrels were a problem for them. The group visits the garden regularly and harvests what they can on each visit. I met with the group in the garden in July for them to harvest potatoes, and boy did we have fun. We gathered over 10 pounds of potatoes! I wonder what they made with all of those potatoes.



Several MGs have been maintaining the therapy beds at WBG. The fairy garden has been extremely popular with garden guests of all ages throughout the pandemic. We know this because we always see items moved around, new paths made, and tiny items added! The succulents have filled in the bed nicely, and we are happy this is a favorite spot to stop and visit and play.



We will continue to change out plantings when needed at the garden, and the wonderful watering crew keeps everything looking great! We have sweet potatoes, trombone zucchini squash, and sunflowers that are reaching new heights growing in the therapy beds at the WBG, along with some cucumbers and peppers.



Team Leads: this may be a good time to touch base with your facility and see what guidance you can get from them, on where they stand with us returning to hold programs at their facility and when this may happen. Maybe next year, who knows. Also, this is a good time for all of us to consider what part each of us will play in the future of Therapeutic Gardening. Some of you may move on to other projects, this is to be expected with this long down time and other projects opening up so you can get hours.

I will be in touch again towards the end of the year with any new updates to share with you.

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.

2007: *Nepeta racemosa* 'Walker's Low'

Commonly known as catmint, *Nepeta* is hardy in Zones 4 through 8 and grows 2 to 2.5 feet high by 2.5 to 3 feet wide. It blooms from April to September with airy spikes of small, pale lavender blue flowers that are fragrant and very attractive to pollinators. It is easily grown in average, dry to medium well-drained soils in full sun to part shade, particularly in the afternoon heat. Catmint thrives in dry soil and is very tolerant of drought. The foliage is highly aromatic and attractive to cats, though less so than *Nepeta cataria*, the true catnip. Catmint is deer and rabbit resistant and has no serious insect or disease problems. It can be used in rock and herb gardens, naturalized plantings and as a small scale ground cover. This is a great plant that does well in our area. Several well established examples of 'Walker's Low' can be seen in the Perennial Garden at the WBG.



Nepeta racemosa 'Walker's Low'
(Photo courtesy of Deb Bussert)

2008: *Geranium* 'Rozanne'

Geranium 'Rozanne' is a patented hybrid, clump-forming herbaceous perennial that is hardy in Zones 5 to 8. As a member of the genus *Geranium*, its common name is cranesbill, due to the shape of its seed capsules. Growing 1 to 1.5 feet high by 1 to 2 feet wide, it blooms from May to July with violet blue flowers that are quite showy and attract butterflies. It thrives in full sun to part shade and prefers average, medium moisture, well-drained organic soils. Once established, plants are somewhat drought tolerant. After the first flush of bloom, cutting back the plants will rejuvenate the plants and may encourage a second flush of bloom in the fall. 'Rozanne' has no serious insect or disease problems, though in an area with high heat and humidity it may be somewhat susceptible to leaf spot and rust. It is also deer and rabbit tolerant. Although touted for its almost non-stop flowering and exceptional heat tolerance, 'Rozanne' has not performed particularly well at the WBG. Our plants are leggy and have only sparse blooms.



Geranium 'Rozanne'
(Photo courtesy of Deb Bussert)

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PERENNIAL PLANTS OF THE YEAR — CONTINUED

2009: *Hakonechloa macra*

This ornamental grass is native to moist mountain and woodland areas in Japan. Its common name is Hakone grass or Japanese forest grass and it is hardy in Zones 5 to 9, although it does best in areas with cool summers. It grows 1 to 1.5 feet high by 1 to 2 feet wide with yellow-green grassy foliage. It requires a shady location with consistently moist, well-drained soil with a high organic content. Japanese forest grass spreads by rhizomes but is not considered invasive. Little maintenance is required – simply trim the foliage to the ground in late winter to early spring before the new shoots emerge. It is easily propagated by division and has no serious insect or disease problems. Like most grasses, it is also deer and rabbit resistant. Although a number of sources suggest that this is an excellent spreading ornamental grass for shady locations, we have had no success with this plant at the WBG. After planting it in three successive years with total losses by late summer, we have given up on it. I would be interested to know if any of you are successfully growing this plant.



Hakonechloa macra
(Photo courtesy of Deb Bussert)



Verbena hastate at the Stonehouse
Native Habitat Garden
(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 don't attract the attention hungry deer looking for the salad bar. Allow me to share another of my favorites....

The *Verbenaceae* family currently includes about 32 different genera, including both *Verbena* and *Lantana*. Like the closely related mint family, *Lamiaceae*, the various species and cultivars in these groups share tiny flowers that grow in dense clusters, fragrant leaves, tough, sometimes woody stems, and abundant nectar that proves irresistible to a wide variety of pollinators.

Pests and disease just aren't a concern with members of the *Verbenaceae* family. Deer leave them strictly alone. Most are very drought tolerant once established, with *Verbena x hybrid*, the thirstiest of the bunch.

The classic *Verbena officinalis*, known since classical times as a healing herb, remains a favorite in many herb gardens. You may also know it as vervain. Native to Europe, but found growing naturalized throughout the world, it remains an important herbal ingredient in many products today due to its anti-inflammatory, antioxidant, anti-microbial and analgesic properties. It is important in

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PLANTS I LOVE ... AND DEER IGNORE — CONTINUED

Chinese medicine as well as Western medicine. While not a showy plant, it draws its share of pollinators.

You may be more familiar with the perennial native *Verbena hastata*, and the Brazilian *Verbena bonariensis*. These tall, upright hardy perennials bloom over a long season in the summer, self-seed and start easily from cuttings. Both grow quickly into slender, statuesque plants that prove irresistible to butterflies and hummingbirds. They aren't picky about their soil and grow in full to partial sun. *V. bonariensis* may sometimes develop some mildew in damp weather, but it is easily pruned away. I found a huge clump of *Verbena bonariensis* in a West Coast garden that towered over me by at least a foot. It was still in full bloom in mid-October. For a more compact plant, try *V. bonariensis* 'Lollipop'.

The *Verbena x hybrida* found in most garden centers each spring is a perennial, though it is often used as an annual. Available in a rainbow of colors, it will bloom non-stop until frost in favorable conditions. When you examine a nursery pot of this hybrid *Verbena*, you might notice roots growing from some of the stems near the crown. If you prune these off behind the roots, and carefully dig those small roots out of the pot, you have a division ready to plant. A single pot may yield several plants, which is useful when planting up a large basket or pot. Stems also root easily in water.

If you leave the plant to overwinter in a sheltered spot, chances are good that new growth will appear the following spring. For a reliable perennial *Verbena*, try *Verbena canadensis*, 'Homestead Purple.' This is always sold among other perennials, while *Verbena x hybrida* is grouped with the 'annuals.' Both plants perform well as spreading ground covers and form a thick mat of rooted stems.

Full to part sun will keep the blossoms coming, but they are heavy feeders and respond well to time-release fertilizer as well as fish emulsion used several times a month when watering. Keep them watered in very hot weather, and deadhead regularly for the most abundant flowers.

I had one of those "Ah-ah!" moments when I learned that *Lantana* belongs to the *Verbenaceae* family of plants. Of course. *How had I missed that before?*



An Eastern Tiger Swallowtail nectars on *Verbena bonariensis*
(Photo Courtesy of Elizabeth McCoy)



Purple *Verbena x hybrida* grows with coleus and Dichondra
(Photo Courtesy of Elizabeth McCoy)



Pink *Verbena x hybrida* grows with geraniums and Euphorbia
(Photo Courtesy of Elizabeth McCoy)

PLANTS I LOVE ... AND DEER IGNORE — CONTINUED



Eastern Tiger Swallowtail nectars on *Lantana camara*
(Photo Courtesy of Elizabeth McCoy)



Lantana 'Chapel Hill Gold' with *Salvia* 'Mystic Spires'
(Photo Courtesy of Elizabeth McCoy)

Lantana is native along the East Coast to our south and along the Gulf Coast. It is considered an invasive shrub in some parts of its native range. In Virginia, it is just considered a very reliable, wildlife friendly, easy plant to grow.

All parts of a *Lantana* plant are poisonous. Don't allow any child or pet to taste any part of the plant, and gardeners with sensitive skin should wear gloves when working with it. It can cause mild skin irritation, but more serious effects if swallowed.

If you've overwintered *Lantana camara*, you know that some cultivars grow woody in a single season. *Lantana* 'Miss Huff' is the gold standard in our area for returning reliably each spring. Several seedling cultivars of 'Miss Huff' have been marketed in recent years and prove nearly as reliable. I favor *Lantana* 'Chapel Hill Gold' and 'Chapel Hill Yellow,' but there are at least six now in this series.

Lantana montevidensis is sold as trailing purple *Lantana*. It remains low growing, but stems may reach out 3'-4' from the crown. It displays very well in pots and hanging baskets. The flowers are a pastel lilac and may be a bit smaller than *Lantana camara* flowers, but they bloom reliably and will overwinter most years, even in a hanging basket.

Lantana is slow to grow in spring, especially if spring comes late, as it did this year. If a plant doesn't show

growth by mid- May, it likely needs to be replaced. We leave our *Lantana* in place until late February before cutting them back to no more than 12" tall. Cutting the plants back too early may make them less likely to overwinter. Birds shelter and forage among the woody stems and fallen leaves.

Lantana will easily root from the nodes and spread itself into large clumps, if allowed. It will self-seed and cuttings root easily. It is a fast grower. Established plants of some cultivars may top 6' tall by October.

Whenever I am looking for butterflies to photograph, I begin at the *Lantana* or *Verbenas*. There may be four or five different types all feeding together along with many different types of bees and clear wing moths. Hummingbirds zoom in for a sip many times each day. *Lantana* not only supports pollinators, but its fruit supports birds from early summer long into the winter. These are among the easiest and most entertaining plants in our garden.



Verbena bonariensis
with *Calla* 'Bengal Tiger' at the WBG
(Photo Courtesy of Elizabeth McCoy)

THIS AND THAT

Introduction and Welcome

A warm welcome to Maryanne Teed who is a new Master Gardener transfer from PA. She is very interested in getting started on projects here and has already signed up for Turf Love.

– Cheryl Roettger, Member

Name Badges

If your name badge is lost, broken, worn out, or you never received one, please send me your name by August 31 so that it may be replaced. You can email me at: varockwell@outlook.com

– Vickie Rockwell, VP Administration

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:

Rick Brown — Get Well

Suzanne Doley's family — Condolences

Sue Barton — Get Well

Diana Hardy — Get Well

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 September 2021 newsletter will be Wednesday, August 25

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.