



The Colonial Master Gardener

November
2021

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

THE PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

BY MARTIN OAKES

Autumn is fully upon us. Leaves are turning, days are shorter, and the cool & crisp mornings have arrived. This all marks the beginning of the holiday season. Two weeks ago, I spotted Christmas decorations in a number of retail stores. It seems that we are always in a rush for the next venture. We should definitely "slow down and smell the roses."

It was wonderful to have such high attendance at the special training on October 18 (youth risk training). Thank you, Bill Dichtel and Forrest Hobbs, for organizing. Well done. The membership will experience a treat at the November General Membership Meeting. The topic will cover Christmas Decorations in Williamsburg. I look forward to seeing you at the Williamsburg Library – or via ZOOM.

Remember: annual membership dues for 2022. The Nominations Committee continues to work on obtaining a viable slate. At this date, the team is still attempting to fill positions. As I stated last month, please become involved in your organization.

Finally, during the business meeting on November 4, we will have discussions on two topics:

1. Providing a scholarship for the 4-H Summer Camp
2. A new project at the Jamestown Settlement

The Chinese philosopher and writer (about 500 BCE) Lao Tzu: "Nature does not hurry, yet everything is accomplished."

Thank you for the continued support.



Photo Courtesy of Elizabeth McCoy

Next Meeting:

Thursday, November 4
9:00am

Auditorium at the
Williamsburg Library

Program:

Decorating Colonial Williamsburg for
the Holidays

Speaker:

Joanne Chapman

THIS MONTH'S SPEAKER

BY BILL DICHTEL,
VP FOR INTERNAL EDUCATION

Joanne Chapman will be the speaker at the November 4 meeting of the James City County/ Williamsburg Master Gardener Association. She will speak on "Decorating Colonial Williamsburg for the Holidays."

Colonial Williamsburg is known for its beautiful, natural and festive holiday decorations and she will let us know what is behind the wonderful work that her staff and volunteers accomplish to get the colonial city ready for holiday visitors and help us all get into a festive spirit.

Joanne needs no introduction in our area, but here goes anyway!

Joanne was an honors graduate from Davis and Elkins College. After working as a nursery manager for a few years, she moved to Reston, Virginia where she became the horticulturalist at Hidden Creek Country Club for a decade.

To our benefit, she then moved to our area and became the Landscape Maintenance Coordinator in Yorktown and York County, winning awards for her work on the Yorktown Waterfront. In 2009, she joined Colonial Williamsburg as Supervisor of

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THIS MONTH'S SPEAKER CONTINUED....

2021
MGA Board

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VP Projects:
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Patsy McGrady

Associate Extension Agent:
Forrest Hobbs

Landscape Operations where many of us have come to know her in the Master Gardener Reid and Shields Gardens. Earlier this year, she became the Landscape Director for Colonial Williamsburg on the retirement of Laura Viancour. In addition, Joanne is one of the founding members of the Williamsburg Botanical Garden and is Vice-Chairperson of the Board of Directors.

This will be a great program that you won't want to miss!

If you attend in person, please wear your mask. The meeting will be available by Zoom and we will be making a recording for those not able to be there at 9:00 AM.



Joanne Chapman

SPEAKERS BUREAU BY JUDITH ALBERTS, CO-CHAIR

The Speakers Bureau is a project that runs year-round. If there is a gardening topic you love to talk about, you can share your expertise with local garden clubs and homeowner associations or other civic groups.

Speakers Bureau project hours include the time you spend researching information and crafting your presentation, whether it is an in-person demonstration or a PowerPoint presentation.



Photo Courtesy of Unsplash

Perhaps you are a PowerPoint expert and can help another speaker create a presentation even if you're not comfortable with public speaking.

The current list of speakers and topics is on the JCCW website at <https://jccwmq.org/wordpress/community-outreach/speakers-bureau-topics/> and you will find links to the online request form.

Elizabeth McCoy is stepping down from the SB leadership at the end of 2021, so Judith Alberts is looking for a co-lead to help coordinate the project. Contact Judith at speakers@jccwmq.org if you are interested in any aspect of the Speakers Bureau.

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://jccwmq.org/wordpress/>

TALES FROM THE HELP DESK

BY PATSY MCGRADY

Q. Why are mushrooms in my yard? How can I get rid of them?

A. Mushrooms tend to pop up in the fall due to shady, cool, and moist conditions and the availability of organic material in the lawn. The mushroom is the fruit of an underground feeding network (mycelium) of fungal threads (hyphae). Fungi feed on decomposing plant material and make that material accessible to the grass growing in the yard. Mushrooms do not damage the lawn and can be considered a sign that the soil is healthy below the surface. Mushrooms are a here today, gone tomorrow issue.

They typically have a short lifespan, ranging from a few days to a week to possibly a month. However, the underground mycelium persists – to the benefit of the soil and the various plants living in that soil. If you find it difficult to consider mushrooms an interesting yard ornament or are concerned that children or dogs may digest the mushrooms, there are options.

First, do NOT spray with a fungicide; typically, this will not kill the mushroom because the fungicide will not reach the underground mycelium. A more appropriate approach is to break the mushrooms off at the base and place them in a bag. Close the bag and dispose of it in the trash. Do not put mushrooms in a compost pile; do not mow over mushrooms. Both these options will scatter the mushroom spores and encourage more mushrooms in the future. You can make a mixture of 5 tablespoons of vinegar per gallon of water and spray the vinegar mixture on the area where you just eliminated the mushroom to reduce the probability of a recurrence. However, when the vinegar mixture comes in contact with the grass, it can damage/kill the grass – potentially leaving you with circles of dead grass where formerly there were mushrooms. You can reduce the probability of mushrooms by pruning trees and shrubs to reduce shady areas, avoiding overwatering, aerate the lawn to improve drainage, and dethatch the lawn to reduce the amount of available organic matter.

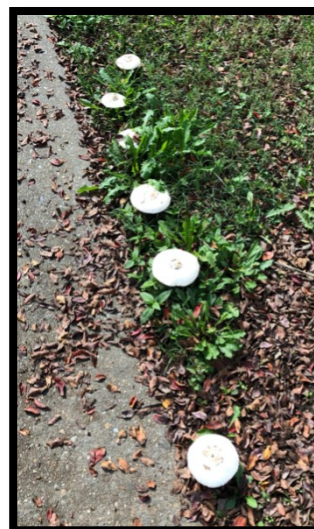


Photo Courtesy of Patsy McGrady

HISTORIC TRIANGLE LEARNING GARDEN

BY BILL DICHTEL & HARRIET PARSONS,
INCREDIBLE EDIBLES CO-CHAIR



Part of Historic Triangle Annex Garden used to grow vegetables for House of Mercy and FISH.
(Photo courtesy of Bill Dichtel)

Earlier this year, we reported on the generous donation of surplus vegetables from MacDonald's Garden's Centers to the Historic Triangle Learning Garden for use in growing vegetables for those who are food-insecure. The Garden volunteers got going, planted in every square foot of the garden not already planted, and fenced and cultivated an additional 200 square feet of garden space.

The work did not go unrewarded: Along with the vegetables in the beds that were already planted for our food charity partners, they have yielded over 210 pounds of fresh produce for House of Mercy, FISH, the William and Mary Food Bank and others, and we are still harvesting. All of the Garden participants have worked hard on nurturing the vegetables, removing weeds, and watering. Kim Silver-Perry and Renee Kingan have largely been responsible for the harvesting and delivery to the distributors.

It is an effort we are all very proud of and we are grateful to MacDonald's Nursery for the plant donation and to Gary Streb for helping us make that contact.

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.

1997: *Salvia x sylvestris* 'May Night'

'May Night' is a hybrid purple sage that is known by several different botanical names (*S. nemorosa*, *S. x superba*) most likely reflecting its confused parentage. It can make an outstanding display under the right conditions; unfortunately those conditions include cool nights and excellent drainage, both of which can be hard to come by in our area. 'May Night' is hardy in Zones 4 – 8 but gives its best performance above Zone 7. Where it is happy, it can grow to 2' tall and throw numerous deep violet blue flower spikes throughout the summer, with the heaviest bloom in May and June. It requires full sun, is fragrant (though some dislike the smell), attracts hummingbirds and is deer resistant and drought tolerant. It is susceptible to foliar diseases. In the WBG, we have had to replant 'May Night' several times. The plants seem to just decline and disappear after a year or two. We are trying several other hardy salvia cultivars to see if we can find one that performs better under our conditions.



1997: *Salvia x sylvestris* 'May Night'
(Photo courtesy of Deb Bussert)

1998: *Echinacea purpurea* 'Magnus'

Purple coneflower is one of the plants of the great American prairie that has made the transition to the home garden as well as any native plant has done. Coneflowers do best in full sun in good garden soil. They are drought tolerant once established and don't seem to mind our summer heat and humidity. (Think how hot it must have been out on the prairie in July!) 'Magnus' boasts broad, non-drooping, rosy purple petals surrounding a dark cone. It flowers from June to August at a height of 2.5 to 3'. These cones, if left standing into the winter, provide an important food source for goldfinches and other seed eating birds. When in flower coneflowers attract butterflies and the plant is deer resistant, although both in the WBG and in my home garden I have had trouble with rabbits eating young plants in the spring. Numerous cultivars have been developed in a wide variety of colors; however, many of these are not nearly as vigorous as either Magnus or the species. Coneflowers are susceptible to aster yellows disease. If you are interested in comparing the many coneflower cultivars, take a look at the research project conducted by the Mt. Cuba Center, which can be found on the web at mtcubacenter.org/research/.



1998: *Echinacea purpurea* 'Magnus'
(Photo courtesy of Deb Bussert)

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PERENNIAL PLANTS OF THE YEAR — CONTINUED

1999: *Rudbeckia fulgida* var. *sullivantii* 'Goldsturm'

Commonly known as Black-eyed Susan, this most popular cultivar was developed in 1937 in Germany. Plants grow 2-3' tall and flower from late summer into fall with persistent orangey-yellow ray flowers surrounding a rounded black disk. Large colonies form rapidly and the plant is easily divided and transplanted, or just given away to anyone who will take it. '

'Goldsturm' is hardy from Zones 3-9. It is a heavy feeder, must have full sun and does not tolerate drought. Rudbeckias are susceptible to various foliar diseases, so good air circulation is important. When planted in bold drifts under the right conditions, this plant provides wonderful color for late fall. The flowers attract butterflies and, like Echinacea, the cones provide winter food for seed eating birds. It is deer resistant, but again rabbits can be a problem. We have lost several 'Goldsturms' over the years at WBG, and just replanted several in a different location, hoping to get it right this time with more sun.



2003: *Leucanthemum x superbum* 'Becky'
(Photo courtesy of Deb Bussert)



(Photo Courtesy of Elizabeth McCoy)

2000: *Scabiosa columbaria* 'Butterfly Blue'

The common name of this plant, pincushion flower, obviously comes from the appearance of the flower head. The genus name, *Scabiosa*, is Latin and refers to the disease scabies, which this plant was once thought (wrongly of course) to cure.

In any event, 'Butterfly Blue' provides persistent flowering (heaviest in spring) on plants that are 12-15" tall when in bloom. Each flower blooms singly on a stiff stem, and the seed heads are quite interesting but should be removed to keep the plant flowering. In the right location it will bloom from April until frost. It is rather insignificant on its own but can be massed, grouped or used as an edging plant. A location in part shade is best. This plant does not tolerate wet soils, especially in winter and prefers neutral pH. It attracts butterflies and is deer and drought tolerant. We have not found the right spot for 'Butterfly Blue' in the WBG yet, but we'll keep trying because it is an interesting and pretty little plant.

PLANTS I LOVE ... AND DEER IGNORE

BY ELIZABETH MCCOY, MG AND TREE STEWARD

In late October our thoughts turn towards our winter gardens, and evergreen plants we can enjoy over the next several months. Evergreen shrubs and trees may be the first to come to mind, but we may not always have space or budget to add evergreen woodies to our existing landscape. Evergreen ferns offer another choice. When autumn slips into winter, the fronds hold up well to freezing nights and shrug off ice. Brilliant green fronds peak out through melting snow, and the plants remain mostly upright well into the following spring.

There are at least five types of evergreen ferns that perform well in our area. Two of them are native ferns: the Christmas fern, *Polystichum acrostichoides*, and ebony spleenwort, *Asplenium platyneuron*. You will commonly find these growing in nearby woods and may have already seen them in your yard. Both will remain green through the winter, but they will look a bit the worse for wear by February.



Christmas fern and Tassel Fern, both are species of *Polystichum*
(Photo Courtesy of Elizabeth McCoy)

I want to highlight three other types of hardy, evergreen ferns, native to Asia, that will hold their color and presence until new fronds emerge next spring. They are all easy to locate in area garden centers.

My favorite evergreen fern is the wood fern. Their fronds are sturdy, bipinnate and very graceful. You may already be familiar with *Dryopteris erythrosora* 'Brilliance.' It was one of the first 'colorful' ferns when it was introduced more than a decade ago. New fronds emerge copper, and slowly settle into a shiny, medium green after several weeks of growth. New fronds emerge regularly from March through late summer. The effect is magical, as many different colors and shades of copper and green mingle on a single plant.

Dryopteris erythrosora grows to 3'-4' tall after several years, forming an ever-thickening clump of fronds. They don't 'run' or send up new clumps nearby. Once established, they prove drought tolerant and take some sun. Grow them on clay, loam, or in a container with potting mix. Water new plantings during dry spells for the first year or so, and then they look after themselves.

I'm planting two new trendy *Dryopteris* ferns this year, *Dryopteris labordei* 'Golden Mist' wood fern and *Dryopteris wallichiana* 'Jurassic Gold.' Both emerge with golden yellow fronds in spring and are said to remain evergreen. These Asian ferns grow to around 2' tall.



Dryopteris erythrosora 'Brilliance'
(Photo Courtesy of Elizabeth McCoy)

The closest native species, *Dryopteris x. australis* and *Dryopteris celsa*, will hold their color and form for a few months more, but won't go the distance until March. You will want a bit of luck finding them on the market. They have a similar form to the Asian wood ferns, grow perhaps a foot or two taller, but don't have the bronze or golden color on their new fronds.

A second tough, evergreen fern with North American relatives is the tassel fern, *Polystichum polyblepharum*. Also known as the bristle fern, this relative of our Christmas fern has distinctive silvery scales that cover its fiddleheads and stripes. It looks furry and you just want to reach out and stroke it. It is deep green with a silvery brown rachis.

This is one of the more interesting ferns to watch as its new fronds unfold, and it has tremendous presence and character. Although newly purchased plants can live the first year in a

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PLANTS I LOVE ... AND DEER IGNORE CONTINUED...

hanging basket or 8"-12" pot, this fern eventually matures to stand about 3' tall and nearly as wide. Its rhizome forms a 'trunk' over time, and it remains well-behaved, growing wider, but not sending out runners. This fern has a more prostrate habit when young, and its fronds always reach out sideways as they arch. It looks wonderful elevated in an urn or basket. Give it plenty of root space in a pot, and plant it in moist, fertile soil in the shade.

The third evergreen fern you will find locally this month is the Japanese holly fern, *Cyrtomium falcatum* (hardy in Zones 7-10) or *Cyrtomium fortunei*, Fortune's holly fern, (hardy in Zones 5-10.) I use these interchangeably, depending on what is available. But I prefer *C. falcatum* for its glossier, more substantial pinnae. This is another large, bold foliage fern. It emerges deep green and remains that way through all types of weather. Some fronds may turn dark by early spring, but new fronds are already emerging by then and you simply cut away old fronds as needed.

This erect fern forms a vase shaped rosette of once-pinnate leathery fronds. But each pinna is toothed and beautifully shaped. A frond reminds me of a branch of Oregon grape holly. This grows beautifully in full shade. Grow in potting mix or in whatever soil happens to fill your garden. Once established, it is reliably drought tolerant.

Fortune's holly fern has a softer look with smaller, lighter colored pinna. It isn't as leathery but has a beautifully dark rachis to contrast with the soft pinna. It resembles our Christmas fern in form, and it grows to about 30" tall. It is a forest fern, and can take some sun, if kept moist. Both holly ferns may naturalize. They aren't invasive, don't spread to form nearby clumps, and simply delight as good landscape plants year after year.

Deer rarely touch ferns. These tough ferns hold no appeal for grazers, so you can plant them with confidence. Most look refined enough to keep even the fussiest HOAs happy. You will find some of these evergreen ferns growing in pots or around the Gravel and Succulent Garden when you visit the Williamsburg Botanical Garden this fall.



Dryopteris erythrosora 'Brilliance'
(Photo Courtesy of Elizabeth McCoy)

2022 MASTER GARDENER TRAINING CLASS

BY SUE BARTON, MEMBER, MG TRAINING TEAM

The application process for the 2022 Master Gardening Training class will open on November 1, 2021. Class size will be limited to 20 students. Since we have already had 78 people express interest, we anticipate the class will fill quickly. Please encourage folks to apply early to increase the likelihood of obtaining a spot.

Planning for this training class is well underway, and our committee is excited about a few changes that we are putting into place. First, applicants will complete the application process on the Better Impact site. Creating an account early will make it easier for interns to record hours, keep track of necessary trainings, and complete background checks, as well as other important items. Second, classes will begin on March 1 and run through May 19. Given this timeframe, trainees will be able to work on Master Gardener projects *while* they are learning, providing a chance to quickly connect classroom knowledge with a practical application in the field. Third, on the first Thursday of the month, instead of meeting in the classroom, trainees will attend the monthly Master Gardener meetings. This will provide opportunities to meet other Master Gardeners, receive additional education from experts in their fields, and learn more about the ways our Association's projects help the community. We see this as a win-win for both the trainees and Master Gardeners seeking volunteers to help with specific projects. Lastly, the Master Gardener Association board has agreed to offer \$350.00 in financial aid to students with demonstrated need. (This is the equivalent of paying full tuition for two students.) Thank you! We are so grateful for your generosity.

Since COVID precluded us from having a training class in 2021, we are really looking forward to welcoming this next group in 2022!

THIS AND THAT

Hello from the Williamsburg Botanical Garden!

The WBG is still lush with late summer and fall blossoms. Our volunteer teams are beginning their fall tasks to put the garden areas to bed for the winter, and various repair projects are in progress. As we wind down the 2021 year, please know that the **WBG is grateful for all the support we receive from the Master Gardeners**. The Garden is a labor of love for our volunteers and we reported 7,323 hours from 93 volunteers for the period of July 1, 2020 to June 30, 2021.

In addition to reporting your time in Better Impact, please take a few minutes to record your time for the WBG's system. We regret asking you to do double-work but our reporting systems are separate and **WBG is required to report hours to the JCC Parks & Recreation Department**. Here's the link: <https://bit.ly/volhourswbg>. Any and all time you spend on behalf of the WBG counts. Thank you for your time and for reporting it.

I hope you are receiving the **WBG's eNews**. With rising costs and reduced service from the USPS, the WBG's primary communication is through our eNews. If you are not on our list, please sign up at www.bit.ly/wbgnews. If you think you are already on our list but are not seeing our emails in your inbox, please contact me directly. It sometimes happens that the system considers an email address as a "bounce", but I can check on it for you.

The **WBG's Annual Meeting** was held via Zoom on October 24. Here is a link to the UNLISTED recording on YouTube: <https://youtu.be/0MX40iUrmxs>. "Unlisted" means it is not publicly searchable on our YouTube channel and can only be accessed with the specific link.

If you are a Facebook fan, the WBG's Facebook Page is no longer visible. We were "unpublished" right after the first outage in early October. Repeated attempts to "appeal" and report a problem have been fruitless.

The **Garden's last Learn & Grow program for 2021 will be "10 Gardening Tips for More Birds in Your Yard"** with Master Naturalist and MG Intern Dean Shostak. Please register for the Zoom program on November 20 at 10 am <https://www.eventbrite.com/e/199795954077>.

Finally, the **WBG's collection of ferns** has grown over the years to include a variety of both native and imported species. You will find a vast collection of indigenous native ferns in The Fernery, where they grow as ground cover through parts of the Old Pine Woods. Native ferns grow in many other garden areas and along the paths. Popular non-native ferns grow in the Perennial Gardens, behind the Gravel/Succulent Garden and in containers. **View the collection on Plants Map:** <https://www.plantsmap.com/organizations/25683>

With sincere good wishes for a Happy Thanksgiving and the Holidays beyond, thank you for your support.

– Judith Alberts, Board Chair, Williamsburg Botanical Garden



THIS AND THAT

A Wonderful Online Botany Primer

A recent program at the Williamsburg Botanical Garden and Patsy McGrady brought to our attention a wonderful online resource highlighting a great deal of information on form, structure and function of plants.

The online publication is entitled **Botany Primer: Understanding Botany for Nature's Notebook**. First published online in 2015 by the USA National Phenology Network, it is a very concise, detailed and stunningly illustrated atlas of plants showing plant structures such as plant vasculature, stems, roots, leaves, fruits, pine needles, pine cones, buds, flowers, etc. It goes into detail about the botanical significance of these structures. It includes an excellent glossary to refer to along the way. It is arranged in 79 pages, all packed with excellent information and outstanding illustrations. You will want to save the link to this resource in your browser among your "Favorites." To reach the Primer, click the link below:

https://www.usanpn.org/files/shared/files/USA-NPN_Botany-Primer.pdf

Thanks to Patsy McGrady and Judith Alberts for telling us about this excellent, free, online publication!

– Bill Dichtel, VP for Internal Education

Fun Fact: Locally sourced Ferns

Here is a list of reliably evergreen ferns that can be purchased locally: *Cyrtomium falcatum*, *Cyrtomium fortunei*, *Dryopteris erythrosora* 'Brilliance', *Dryopteris labordei* 'Golden Mist', *Dryopteris wallichiana* 'Jurassic Gold', *Polystichum acrostichoides* (native), *Polystichum polyblepharum*

– Elizabeth McCoy, Mg and Tree Steward

Quick and Easy Method for Canning Soup

Been canning soup this week getting ready for winter. Follow me for more recipes!



Soup Recipe Courtesy of our Esteemed President Marty Kitchen
(Plagiarized from the newsletter of the Southside MGA)



(Photo Courtesy of Elizabeth McCoy)

NEXT NEWSLETTER DEADLINE

The deadline for submissions to the December 2021 newsletter will be Wednesday, November 24

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

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.

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