



The Colonial Master Gardener

May
2022

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

THE PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

BY DEBORAH BUSSERT

It's May, it's May, the lovely month of May! (Apologies to Alan Jay Lerner, lyricist of the Broadway show 'Camelot.) After many wild temperature swings in March and April, let's hope the weather will finally settle into milder temperatures before the heat of summer sets in.

As I write this, final plans for the Plant Sale are in full swing. Donna Tierney and her team are doing such a great job getting things organized, and I expect we will have a great day and raise lots of money. Many thanks to all for volunteering by planning, digging plants, signing up workers, training to handle the finances, and so much more. This is our most important event of the year and our ability to continue to fund projects depends on its success.

I expect that many of you, like me, wish there was a way to recycle the many plastic pots that sadly get tossed in the trash. When I first started gardening, many plants were still sold in those lovely terra cotta clay pots. No more! The nursery industry has for many years now used plastic pots almost exclusively. These generally cannot be recycled because the mix of plastic resins used to make garden pots, trays, etc. includes some of the lowest value types of plastic. These resins are cheap and the pots made from them are durable, but they are not suitable for commercial reuse. Plus, these pots are usually black, which prevents the sophisticated optical scanning equipment used to sort recyclables from "seeing" them in order to properly handle the mixture of items in a typical single stream system. Finally, garden pots generally contain soil residue, which will contaminate the material stream and endanger the entire recycling system. Although there are alternatives, such as pots made from peat, cow manure, plant fibers and other compostable materials, none of these has yet been implemented except on a limited basis. We should all be looking for ways to reduce our use of non-recyclable plastic and urging the horticulture industry to develop commercially viable alternatives.

The last installment of my series of the Perennial Plant of the Year is in this newsletter. I plan to start a new series (next month, I hope) on native and non-invasive ground cover plants that we can use and recommend instead of the dreaded English ivy, vinca, pachysandra and other bad actors. Stay tuned.

As always, thank you for all you do. The spirit and energy in this Association is fantastic. I am proud to be a part of it.

Next Meeting:
Thursday, May 5 at 9:00AM
Williamsburg Library
Zoom Link:
[https://virginiatech.zoom.us/
meeting/89937684495](https://virginiatech.zoom.us/j/89937684495)

Program:
Tree Stewards

Speaker:
Carol King



(Photo Courtesy of Elizabeth McCoy)

THIS MONTH'S SPEAKER

BY BILL DICHEL, VP INTERNAL EDUCATION

2022
MGA Board

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Forrest Hobbs

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.

Carol King, Leader of the Master Gardener Tree Stewards for the Virginia Peninsula (of which JCC/Williamsburg is a part) will speak at the May Meeting of the James City County/Williamsburg Master Gardeners. Carol is an exceptional leader and a true tree expert. She is largely responsible for the Virginia State Tree Steward Handbook, now available online. She has been in charge of educating Tree Stewards on the Peninsula for a number of years and projects from those groups have resulted in tremendous efforts including the two arboreta, one in Colonial Williamsburg and the other in Freedom Park.

Prior to becoming a Tree Steward, Carol was a Logistical Officer in the U.S. Air Force. She retired after a thirty year career. After coming down to earth, she became a Master Gardener and a Tree Steward, and she has been making great contributions to the beautiful landscapes around us and helping with solving global warming ever since!

The Educational Meeting will begin in the Library Auditorium at 9:00AM on Thursday, May 5. The numbers of positive covid tests in our area has been increasing lately so we ask that you wear a mask in the Library if you are attending in person. We will be offering attendance concurrently by Zoom on the following link...<https://virginiatech.zoom.us/j/89937684495>

Within a couple of days, we will have the educational link up and available on the JCCWMG website (jccwmg.org).

Please note that we also record the Business Meeting as well but we post that on a link available through the Better Impact News Page (sign in page). The Business Meeting is not posted for the public.

We hope to see you on Thursday!

REPORT OF VMGA MEETING

BY JOANNE SHEFFIELD AND MARILYN RIDDLE, VMGA REPS

This meeting was held south of Charlottesville at the farm of Mary Martinez-Rigo on behalf of the Piedmont and Prince William's Master Gardener units. There were 35-40 people in attendance including Dave Banks, Carolyn Stringer and us. The site was lovely and we learned about the alpacas and livestock guard dogs there, plus plans for the farm to be a respite place for former Special Operations soldiers including a venue for weddings, cut flowers and herbs. Unfortunately, it was difficult to hear the speakers in the large open area where we were seated. There had been concern that there could be problems with the internet connection for Zooming. Evidently that worked out nicely, after all.

The usual reports were given and approved. The nomination committee presented the slate for new officers for 2022-2024 who will take over at the June meeting at Master Gardener College. The nominees are Georgianna Hall, President; Cynthia Falconer, Vice President; Stacey Morgan-Smith, Treasurer; Deb Straw, Secretary.

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For timely information available to the public, about our activities, and gardening tips, check out our Facebook page (facebook.com/VCEMasterGardeners) and our website (jccwmg.org). This month the website features a collaboration between Patsy McCurdy and Elizabeth McCoy on the American Chestnut as well as a story from Judy Kinshaw-Ellis that examines where our gardening inspiration comes from! Also if you're looking for a Mother's Day gift, shop our website (jccwmg.org). Click on the tab that says "Logo Gear" for monogrammed hats, shirts, and bags!

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

VMGA REPORT—CONTINUED...

Speaking of Deb Straw, she is the current Membership Chair and is expecting memberships to be renewed or begun as soon as possible as the membership year ends May 31. See the VMGA website for the membership form—<https://vmga.net>



(Photo Courtesy of Joanne Sheffield)

Kathleen Reed gave the report from the State Office. It was basically the same material we have seen in various emails.

Departing gifts for Ed Jones (retiring from VT--Director of Virginia Cooperative Extension) and Dave Close (moving from EMG Program Director to Volunteer Engagement Specialist for VCE) were determined. Frank Reilly recommended a *Friend of VMGA* award for each of them. It was suggested that this not be a plaque, but something (s) more useful.

The good news is that our Unit is approved for hosting the October 8 meeting! More about that as the time gets closer. Of course, the June meeting will be at Virginia Tech during Master Gardener College. No unit has volunteered to be the venue for the VMGA August meeting.

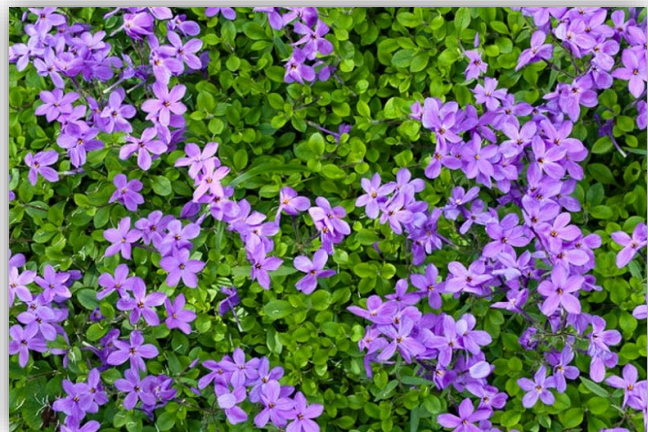
PERENNIAL PLANT OF THE YEAR

BY DEBORAH BUSSERT, PRESIDENT

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

1990: *Phlox stolonifera*

Phlox stolonifera, or creeping phlox, is native to the Eastern United States and is indigenous to rich deciduous woodlands, streambanks, open woods and shaded slopes. Hardy in Zones 5-9, it forms loose mats of semi-evergreen foliage with leafy stems that spread gradually along the ground and branch into upright flower stems. Bloom time is mid-spring through early summer, with lightly fragrant, 5-petaled, rosy-lavender flowers followed by green, inconspicuous seed capsules. If conditions are good it will self-sow. Creeping phlox does best in bright shade with moist, well-drained soil, though it will tolerate dry shade once established. Good air circulation is important and slugs can become a problem with excessive moisture. Although somewhat deer resistant, rabbits may browse this plant. In mild winters, the green foliage remains attractive and the plant makes an excellent ground cover and can also be used in cottage and rock gardens. It provides valuable early season nectar for swallowtail butterflies, hummingbirds, and moths. At the WBG, this plant has done extremely well and attracts many visitor comments when it is in bloom.



Phlox stolonifera
(Photo Courtesy of Deb Bussert)

HISTORIC TRIANGLE LEARNING GARDEN

BY BILL DICHTEL, PROJECT LEAD

Over the last few years, the Historic Triangle Learning Garden has repeatedly been in the position of turning away interested gardeners for lack of available beds. We have had interested Master Gardeners and Master Gardener Interns who have had to “wait their turn” as beds become available. We have also had to turn away interested community members who want to garden and learn with us for whom we had limited space. Last year, we did expand an additional 400 square feet with our “Annex Garden” to increase our growing space for the community Food Bank programs.

In addition, as Children's Developmental Resources gets ready for their construction and their big move into the building, we have had discussions with them regarding how to best serve their children and parents. We are planning on developing an Herb and Fragrance Garden to build interest and educational experiences for them.

With all of this in mind, the HTLG Project applied for and was granted a Microgrant from the Virginia Cooperative Extension Microgrant Review Committee. We were delighted to get that news at the end of April and plan to increase the size of the Learning Garden and add on an Herb and Fragrance Garden as part of the project. We will keep you posted on the project and any Master Gardeners or Master Gardener Interns who want to join in are welcome. We will begin to post our upcoming workdays in Better Impact.



(Photo Courtesy of Bill Dichtel)

TALES FROM THE HELP DESK

BY PATSY MCGRADY

Q. Why should I get a soil test and how do I get one?

A. Gardening without a soil test is like cooking without a recipe. Sometimes the results are good, and other times, not so good. A soil test identifies the pH of the soil and states whether the soil needs to have lime added. The report provides the level of various nutrients in the soil, such as phosphorus, potash, calcium, etc. and includes recommendations for fertilizer.

The pH value is a measure of the acidity of the soil and ranges from 1 to 14. A pH value of 7 is considered neutral. Values below 7 are acidic, above 7 are alkaline, also known as “base.” From a scientific perspective, pH measures the amount of hydrogen ions in the soil. Acidic soils contain a high level of hydrogen ions while alkaline soils have a low level. pH is important because it determines how well various nutrients can be absorbed by plants. For example, iron is more available to plants when the soil is acidic, phosphorus is more available at high alkaline levels, and nitrogen decreases in availability when the pH is less than 6 or more than 8. Some plants such as azaleas, camellias, and ferns prefer an acid soil while other plants such as buddleia, lilac, and lily of the valley like an alkaline soil.

Fertilizer is labeled by its relative content of nitrogen (N), phosphate (P) and potash (K). The soil test report recommends an appropriate fertilizer and an appropriate amount. A homeowner recently shared his soil test results with the Help Desk. His pH level was 7. Phosphate level was very high, potash was medium. Zinc, magnesium, and calcium levels were sufficient. The report recommended using a nitrogen-only fertilizer, suggested four types of nitrogen-only fertilizer, and gave appropriate amounts (pounds and cups) for each.

Soil test kits (box with application and instructions) are available on a rack outside the VCE office at 3127 Forge Rd, Toano. The homeowner takes soil samples at several locations and mails the sample into the VT/VCE address provided. Results are provided by email.



Soil at the Jamestown Settlement MG Project
(Photo Courtesy of Patsy McGrady)

PLANT SALE SNAPS

BY KATHERINE SOKOLOWSKY, EDITOR

In case you haven't heard ... the 2022 Plant Sale was a smashing success! A huge thank you to everyone who made this possible.

Donna and her team will provide you with a full report in our June newsletter. Until then, we have some pictures of the Plant Sale to tide you over. Enjoy!

(All photos courtesy of Kay and Elvin Clapp)



PLANT SALE SNAPS—CONTINUED...



THIS AND THAT

Hello from the Williamsburg Botanical Garden and Freedom Park Arboretum

The Learn and Grow series will resume in person on May 21 at the Freedom Park Interpretive Center from 10:00AM to 11:30AM, **Creating Native Landscapes for Wildlife, Neighbors, and the HOA!** with Peggy Krapf, VCE Master Gardener and Certified Member of the Virginia Society of Landscape Designers.

Registration is required due to limited seating. Please see event details at <https://williamsburgbotanicalgarden.org/upcoming-events/>. WBG-FPA Members receive advance notice of registration. New Membership Perk: Save 10% at the Backyard Birder when you show your WBG-FPA membership email receipt. <https://williamsburgbotanicalgarden.org/support/join/>.

Native Plant Society Plant Sale: May 14 from 9:00AM to 3:00PM inside the Garden. Rain date: May 15. <https://williamsburgbotanicalgarden.org/event/native-plant-society-sale-at-the-wbg/>

– Judith Alberts, Board Chair, Williamsburg Botanical Garden



(Photo Courtesy of Kay and Elvin Clapp).

Kay Clapp giving an educational session on Blue-eyed Grass, *Sisyrinchium angustifolium*, at the April 19 work session for the Water Wise Demonstration Project.



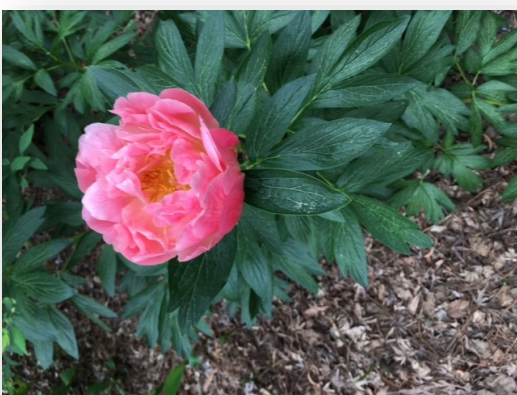
(Photo Courtesy of Kay and Elvin Clapp).

One of the 2022 objectives for the Water Wise Demonstration Project is to make more educational contacts with the visitors to the JCC Human Services Center at 5249 Olde Towne Road



(Photo Courtesy of Magali deVulpillieres Photography)

Sunday, April 24 we participated in a fun-filled, educational festival sponsored by the Williamsburg Regional Library which included live music, crafts, and us, showcasing Landscape Love and our Plant Sale.



(Photo Courtesy of Donna Tierney)

NEXT NEWSLETTER DEADLINE

The deadline for submissions to the June 2022 newsletter will be Wednesday, May 25.

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, Dot Finnegan, at definn@widomaker.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 Cooperative Extension is a partnership of Virginia Tech, Virginia State University, the U.S. Department of Agriculture, and local governments. Its 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, military status, or any other basis protected by law.