



The Colonial Master Gardener

February 2023

We're Celebrating 40 Years of Helping Our Neighbors Grow!

FOR MEMBERS OF THE JAMES CITY COUNTY
WILLIAMSBURG MASTER GARDENER ASSOCIATION

THE PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

BY DEBORAH BUSSERT, PRESIDENT, CLASS OF 2016



Greetings Fellow Master Gardeners and a Belated Happy New Year!

Please be sure that you have completed all the requirements for re-enrollment as an Extension Master Gardener. Remember to date your reenrollment form 12/31/23 so that your status will be maintained through the end of this year. Also, don't forget to pay your dues to remain a member of the JCC/W MGA and have access to all the benefits of membership.

It seems that some members are having trouble getting the required 20 hours of volunteer time to maintain active status because they are no longer able to do much gardening. Fear not! There are many ways to earn volunteer hours without getting down on your knees or up on a ladder. The Communications team is always looking for volunteers to help with the website, Facebook page, newsletter, blog, publicity, etc. The Help Desk is a great way to stay active and engaged with the gardening community. The Social Committee, Training Team and for this year, 40th Anniversary Celebration Committee can all use your help.

Of course, if you come to our monthly business meetings you can easily earn 11 of those 20 hours. If none of these suggestions appeals to you, talk to me or any of the Board members and we can help you generate ideas. We want you to stay active with the Association.

Once again, I have heard that some members received what are clearly spam "phishing" emails purporting to be from me. As I discussed last year both in the newsletter and at one of our monthly meetings, use of Master Gardener roster information is not permitted for any purpose other than Master Gardener business, and I would NEVER solicit anyone in that fashion. I hope that those of you who have received these emails or may do so in the future simply mark them as spam and delete them. If you ever have any doubt about communications from me please email me directly using the contact information in Better Impact.

The garden catalogs are arriving daily, pruning clinic teams are hard at work, the new class is about to start, and planning for 2023 gardening is in full swing. Have you made any personal 2023 gardening resolutions? Here are mine:

1. Take better care of my tools (doubtless inspired by the recent program on that topic);
2. Be ruthless about editing the plants in my garden. Out with the thugs and the underperformers!
3. Eliminate more lawn – or in my case what is passing for lawn after I stopped using chemicals.

On that last point, I draw your attention to a recent New York Times article, *They Fought the Lawn. And the Lawn's Done* (December 14, 2022), about a couple in Maryland who successfully challenged their HOA's lawn obsession and inspired a state law that limits HOA control over eco-friendly yards. The Maryland law forbids HOAs from banning pollinator plants or rain gardens or from requiring property owners to plant turf grass. Virginia legislators – are you listening?

Thank you for all you do. I am so proud of our Association and all the people in it.

- Deb

ECOLOGY CORNER: COMPOSTING

BY JUDY KINSHAW-ELLIS, MASTER
NATURALIST, TREE STEWARD, MASTER
GARDENER CLASS OF 2015

Are you composting yet?

Our climate here in Virginia is great for composting with our long warm summers and sunny days, so if you would like to make your own compost to enhance your garden soil, it is easy to do. While there are many compost bins available for purchase, it is not required. Instead, you can just start a pile in the corner of your yard or build one out of old pallets.

Once you have built or purchased your bin, getting the compost to decompose will include adding both brown (dry) and green (wet) ingredients in about a two to one dry to green ratio to your compost pile. For green or wet materials, add your leftover kitchen scraps to the bin rather than throwing them in the trash or down the disposal.

Do not put in meats or fats, but add plant scraps, avoiding onions and citrus peels. You can also add coffee grounds, egg shells, and even grass and garden clippings, but be careful about adding weeds that might have seeds that will live through the composting process.

For dry ingredients, add brown leaves, shredded newspapers, or twigs. Layer the wet and dry materials, and once items start to decompose, stir the compost pile. This can be done with a pitchfork.

Our climate helps materials to decompose quickly. When the compost is ready, it will be nearly black. It can be screened to get out pieces that are not yet decomposed. When you plant new plants, pot seedlings, or start a garden, use the compost to enhance the soil.

Here are some additional resources.

Build your own bin: <https://www.tenthacrefarm.com/building-the-right-compost-bin/>

Getting the most out of your compost: <https://vtx.vt.edu/articles/2021/07/ext-compost.html>

Photo credit: Unsplash.com



YOUR DUES ARE DUE!

A reminder from your Board

If you are among the almost 90% of members who have already paid dues for the 2023 year, thank you. But if you haven't, your 2023 membership dues of \$25.00 were owed on December 31st.

Pay today. Go to this link on our website—<https://jccwmga.org/wordpress/mg-dues-payment-2022/> or mail your check to: JCCW MGA, PO Box 1951, Williamsburg, VA 23187-1951.

Also for your convenience, for a half hour prior to the February 2 membership meeting, Vickie Rockwell, Christine Mason and Linda Neilson will be available to answer questions and collect dues.

Because of your monetary support and your volunteer efforts, our Association continues to flourish and make a difference. For more information or questions contact Linda Neilson, Treasurer, (lezelln@cox.net).

OUR MISSION

The James City County Williamsburg Master Gardener Association is a volunteer-driven non-profit that supports the outreach mission of the Virginia Cooperative Extension by utilizing unbiased research-based information to educate the public in our communities (James City, Williamsburg, New Kent counties) on the best practices in sustainable horticulture and environmental stewardship.

2022 JCCW MGA Board

President:
Deborah Bussert
president@jccwmg.org

President Elect:
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presidenelect@jccwmg.org

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dfbanks2@gmail.com

Our Board Meets
on the 3rd Thursday of each month at 9:30 am, in Room B at the Williamsburg Regional Library, on Scotland Street.

Newsletter Editors: Marion Guthrie and Elizabeth Myers

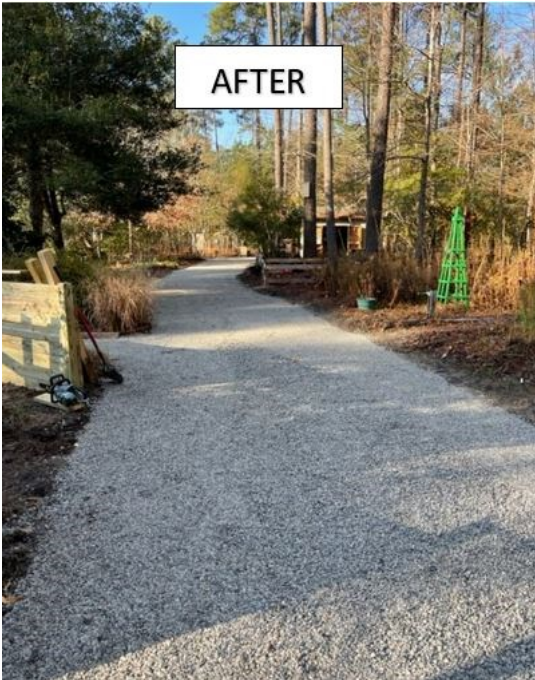
IMPROVEMENTS AT THE WBG -

BY HARRY FAHL, MASTER GARDENER, CLASS OF 2018



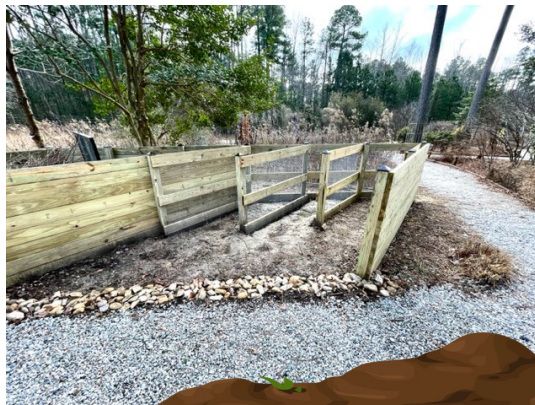
In a year of many garden improvements, this past fall the Williamsburg Botanical Garden and Freedom Park Arboretum (WBG-FPA) rebuilt the main drive. What a difference it makes. At last, the primary passage from gate to gate has a new surface. No more muddy low spots and no more runoff from heavy rains.

The process involved several steps. The contractor removed the top four inches of compacted soil and created a flat, side to side surface. Then textile fabric was installed over the entire length followed by an evenly spread two-inch layer of #57 stone. Next came another two-inch layer of a smaller size gravel and the entire driveway was mechanically tamped. The result is a great looking drive but more importantly a drive that will be pervious, soaking up the water before it creates a runoff situation.



Our second major project was the new storage area for mulch and garden debris with a dedicated compost bin structure. The bin's three sections along with better placement of the trailer make the delivery of mulch easier and less messy.

These two projects were made possible by a special group of James City County Williamsburg Master Gardeners and volunteers who donated their time and efforts. Known as "The Crew," they include Harry Fahl, Jeff Mellinger, Scott Wolz, Fred Rojak, Bill Pearson, Kim Owens, and Dave Mershon with guidance from Judith Alberts and Deb Bussert.



Come take a look! Located in Freedom Park, the WBG-FPA includes several demonstration and learning gardens maintained by James City County Williamsburg Master Gardeners.



CASH RESERVES FOR THE UNEXPECTED

BY LINDA NEILSON, TREASURER AND MASTER GARDENER, CLASS OF 2018

In the November 2022 Board Meeting, the James City County Williamsburg Master Gardener Association (JCCWMGA) Board of Directors voted to establish a Cash Reserve account beginning in fiscal year 2023.

As you may know, cash reserves are funds that companies set aside for use in emergency situations. These reserves can be used to cover costs or expenses that are unplanned or unexpected. Typically, the reserves are for short-term needs.

Our Board determined that establishing a cash reserve is the right step to ensure that we have adequate funds to maintain a balanced budget in the event of an unexpected loss of income. They also decided to use the savings account established at the Live Oak Bank for this cash reserve fund.

To calculate the amount of cash to maintain in this reserve, also called setting the target formula, the Board reviewed three possible methods and choose the following:

§ Setting the Target Formula: To set the target of our reserves at 25 percent, or 3 months, and multiply our total annual expense by 0.25.

This method funds three months operating expense for the initial reserves amount and will increase this amount annually by 1/12 operating expense to ensure that six months' reserves are available. For example, based upon operating expenses for 2022, the cash reserves would be funded from the savings account for \$2,930 and accrued by \$930 over a specified period. These calculations would be based on the prior year's operating expenses.

For more information contact Linda Neilson, (treasurer@jccwmga.org).

NEXT DOOR NEIGHBOR FEATURES OUR OWN BILL DICHTEL

BY MARION GUTHRIE, VP OF COMMUNICATIONS & MASTER GARDENER, CLASS OF 2019



In case you haven't seen January's issue of NDN, Bill Dichtel, Master Gardener and former VP of Education for the Association is featured.

The article highlights many of Bill's endeavors as well as his personal, educational, and professional background.

It's a real tribute to Bill and but it also recognizes the contributions we all make as Master Gardener volunteers.

Here's the link:

www.williamsburgneighbors.com/issues/january-2023/

Find the article on the NDN website in the January 2023 edition on page 23.



UPDATE YOUR QUALIFICATIONS IN BETTER IMPACT

BY CHRISTINE MASON, VP OF ADMINISTRATION, CLASS OF 2022

At the next business meeting on February 2, 2023, in the auditorium of the Williamsburg Regional Library, Vickie Rockwell, Christine Mason and Linda Neilson will be available after the meeting, to help you with updating your Qualifications on Better Impact. Please bring your laptop, iPad, cell phone, or tablet of choice so they may assist you in Navigating your Better Impact needs. Here are the steps you need to take to update your Qualifications.

Qualifications Update and Review in Better Impact 2023



1. Login to Better Impact
Once you're in, this is what you should see your **homepage**:



2. Open **My Profile**, circled above, and you will get the following dropdown:



3. Hit the **Qualifications** dropdown, and you will see the below qualifications questions. You will need to answer your qualification questions and more importantly, you must update the year to be **2023**. Once this is complete, please save your responses.

It looks like you are on a mobile device. For a better experience on smart phones, go to [MyImpactPage.mobi](#). You can

20 STUDENTS ENROLLED

BY SUE BARTON, PROJECT LEAD, MASTER GARDENER, CLASS OF 2020

The Extension Master Gardener Training Team has accepted twenty members into the upcoming 2023 training class. This diverse group has a broad range of ages, backgrounds, and experiences. Some came to gardening having grown up on a farm, while others gravitated to it influenced by a friend or family member. Some are self-taught gardeners who continually experiment in their own backyards while others are indoor plant-enthusiasts.

Many are professionals who have worked, or are working, in a myriad of areas including the medical field, government, landscape planning, landscape design, marketing, accounting, marine science and systems engineering. Several have a connection to the military. Some have lived overseas. One will soon be a Master Naturalist. And one is a former Master Gardener from Arizona who is taking our class to gain knowledge of gardening in Virginia's climate.

Their gardening interests include Japanese gardens, community gardens, pollinator gardens, pruning and propagation, greenhouses, bird sanctuaries, vegetable gardens, ornamental gardening, herbs and native plants, landscape design, fruit orchards, medicinal plants, Xeriscape (a style of landscape design requiring little to no irrigation or maintenance) and permaculture gardening (garden design that considers the needs of the natural ecosystem and climate in addition to meeting human needs).

This promising group of Master Gardener trainees will take their Master Gardener certification classes from mid-February. Classes will run through early May. As part of their training, they will be attending our monthly meetings. We encourage current Master Gardeners to introduce yourselves and get to know your future colleagues.

March's Membership Meeting

**Working with Children
March 2 at 9:00 am**

**Via Zoom and at the Williamsburg
Regional Library's Auditorium**

Our March program will welcome our new interns and cover the required training on working with children. This training is also required every three (3) years for all certified master gardeners.

Join us to meet and greet our new interns and get a refresher in this must-have training session. A Zoom link will be provided closer to the meeting date.



February's Membership Meeting

**Winter Warm Up, Stretching & Strengthening
February 2 at 9:00 am
Via Zoom and at the Williamsburg
Regional Library's Auditorium**

Last year, Jessi Voltin PT, DPT, Cert MDT & Courtney McThery, PT, DPT of Pivot Physical Therapy in Lightfoot, showed us how to take care of ourselves using proper body mechanics when working in the garden.

This follow-up presentation will focus on how to prepare ourselves for the upcoming gardening season with suggested warmups, strengthening and stretching exercises we can do at home. Don't miss this great opportunity to learn from the experts how to get yourself ready for another gardening season, without the aches and pains!

**Join Zoom Meeting
<https://us02web.zoom.us/j/5226402253>
Meeting ID: 522 640 2253**



SURVIVING ON FOREST FOODS AND HOME GARDENS

BY JUDY KINSHAW ELLIS, MASTER GARDENER CLASS OF 2015

In 1803, 27-year-old William Ludwell Lee died and, in his will, freed his slaves. Less than ten years earlier, Lee had inherited nearly 8700 acres and property that included 54 enslaved people ages 16 and older, 11 children ages 12 to 16, and a few children who were 11 and younger. While there is no evidence that Lee freed any enslaved people during his lifetime, upon his death, his slaves were freed effective January 1 in the year following his death (1804).

Hot Tract Became Home

The will also stated that the freed slaves would be provided “comfortable homes” and a “year’s supply of corn.” It took some time for the executor of the will to interpret what a comfortable home would be and have homes constructed. While some of the original enslaved people left the area, the Hot Water Tract became a safe haven for freed Black people of the time. It was home to free Blacks for the first half of the nineteenth century.

Forests As a Food Resource

Tree Stewards in the 2018 class investigated how those early settlers would have used trees and woody plants but found that was too broad of a subject for a project. The team narrowed the focus to what trees and woody plants the settlers might have depended on for food. During the last five years, many trees and woody plants have been identified and labeled and additional trees and shrubs have been planted.

Native Fruits

The Settlement area currently has Muscadine grapes, huckleberries, blueberries, pawpaws, hickories, and a walnut tree. Additionally, during this time period, people would have used acorns for flour produced by the area’s mature oak trees. Native seedlings that have been planted include hackberries, elderberries, persimmons, beautyberries, and passion vine seeds. Because the time period for the Settlement is the first half of the nineteenth century, apple trees would have been present in the region, so apple trees were also planted near the cabins.

New Authentic Plantings

This year, three areas will be planted with shrubs that would naturally grow in clumps. Planting the shrubs together will also make them easier to fence and protect from deer. Highbush blueberries, hazelnuts, and chokecherries will be installed in March. Two mulberry trees will also be planted.

Kitchen Gardens

Last fall, the kitchen garden beds at the front of two cabins were rebuilt. In the past, the gardens were planted and maintained, but they have not been planted for years. Deer browsing complicates vegetable gardening in the Settlement. While all of these plants would not have grown right next to the cabins, they would have been in the nearby woods and Settlers would have foraged for them when they were in season. Next time you are Freedom Park, stop by the Settlement and take a look at what is growing now.

FIRST GRADERS HAVE FUN AT MATTEY'S GARDEN

BY TIFFENI GOESEL, PROJECT LEAD & MASTER GARDENER, CLASS OF 2018

Recently several Master Gardeners from the Matthey's Garden team gathered with first graders indoors at the Matthew Whaley Elementary School to read *Jake's Bird Feeder*, by Barbara Kanninen. They followed Jake's example and made feeders, but the class used cardboard rolls rather than pine cones coated in birdseed.

Many of the students took their bird feeders home, excited at the prospect of hanging them on a tree branch or a bush in their own backyards. Others hung their feeders off their apartment balcony or at grandma's house or on a bush at the park. One little girl planned to hang hers with her dad so they could watch the birds together.

This is just one of many examples of gardening activities developed for the Matthew Whaley students and made available at Matthey's Garden, a hands-on learning garden complete with an outdoor classroom.

This 9600 square foot garden is tucked into a corner of the schoolyard on Scotland Street. It was created by landscape designer Gale Roberts over 20 years ago and was built with the help and contributions from eight organizations including the James City County Williamsburg Master Gardeners Association.

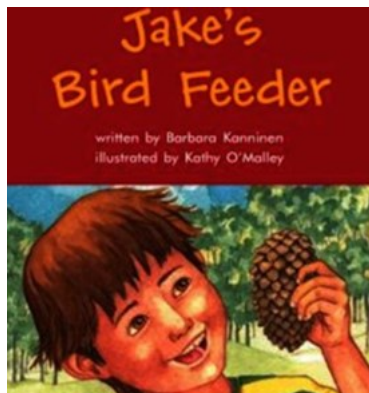
The garden has several sections including the butterfly garden, the herb plot, the sundial area, and the raised beds. In the garden the children learn how to plant various seeds, bulbs (which end is up), discover worms, and watch the plants grow.

Some of their favorite things are picking bouquets, identifying the banana tree, and checking for tadpoles in the pond. The growing in Matthey's Garden is all organic, using only natural herbicides like vinegar and Epsom salts.

Master Gardeners who want to volunteer at Matthey's should contact Tiffeni Goesel, Project Lead, (tiffenigoesel@cox.net).



(Photo: Tiffeni Goesel)



(Photo: Microsoft Creative Commons)



(Photo: Tiffeni Goesel)

LIBRARY LECTURE SERIES CONTINUES ON FEBRUARY 11

BY VICKIE ROCKWELL, PRESIDENT ELECT & MASTER GARDENER, CLASS OF 2019

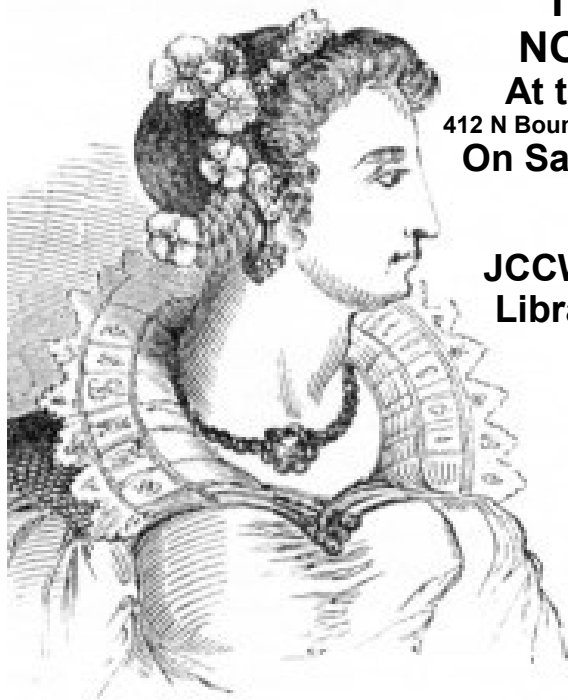
The topic for the February 11th Library Master Gardener Series will be “To Prune or Not to Prune. That is The Question?” Frank Caruso, a Virginia Cooperative Extension Master Gardener will discuss pruning basics, offer tips to successful pruning, and give out complimentary pruning calendars. This program will be at the Stryker Center starting at 10:15 to 11:15 am.

The March Library Lecture will be at the James City County Library on Croaker Road. Gary Streb will be presenting ‘Common Mistakes in Landscaping.’ He will talk about what NOT to do in your yard, possible fixes and importance of “Right Plant – Right Place.” The hour-long program will start at 10:15 am.

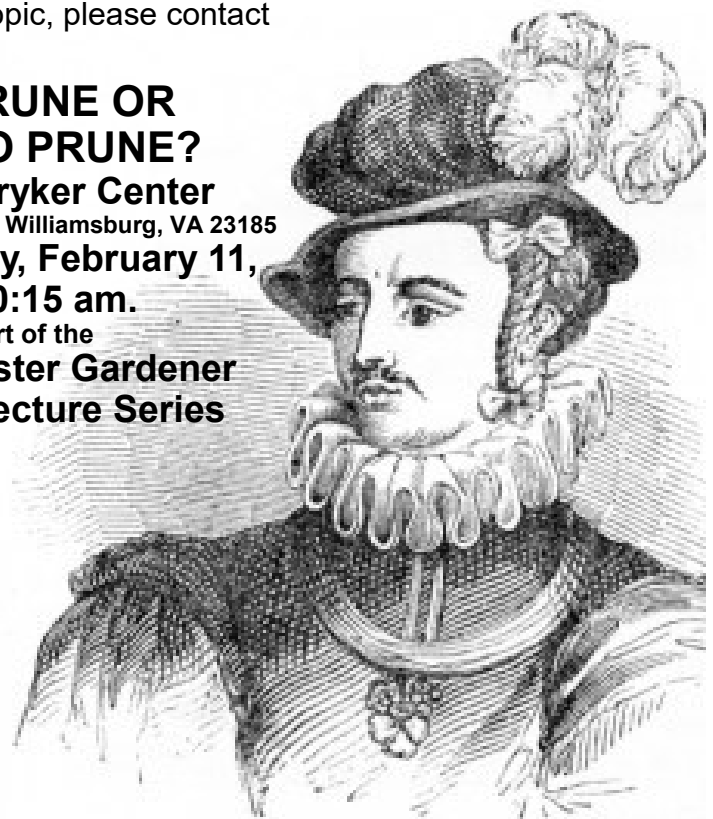
The Library Lectures are the 2nd Saturday of the month and will either be at the Stryker Center or the James City County Library on Croaker Road. Future dates for the Series are:

April 8	Stryker Center	September 9	JC County Library
May 13	Stryker Center	October 14	Stryker Center
June 10	JC County Library	November 11	Stryker Center
July 8	Stryker Center	December 9	JC County Library
August 12	Stryker Center		

If you are interested in presenting a gardening topic, please contact Vickie Rockwell at varockwell@outlook.com.



**TO PRUNE OR
NOT TO PRUNE?**
At the Stryker Center
 412 N Boundary St, Williamsburg, VA 23185
On Saturday, February 11,
At 10:15 am.
 Part of the
**JCCW Master Gardener
 Library Lecture Series**



VMGA UPDATE

BY JOANNE SHEFFIELD, MASTER GARDENER, CLASS OF 2011

The bimonthly meeting of VMGA will be held on Zoom on February 11th at 10:00 a.m. There will be no in-person meeting. Check for the link in Better Impact as we get closer to the date if you would like to attend or contact Marilyn Riddle, vmga-alt@jccwmg.org, or me, vmga-rep@jccwmg.org. Please enjoy reading [newsletters of the Virginia Master Gardener Association \(https://vmga.net/newsletter.php\)](https://vmga.net/newsletter.php). Feel free to submit an article for publication in the Mar/Apr newsletter. The deadline is February 26th and the email goes to newsletter@vmga.net. As always, you are encouraged to support our state association by becoming a member for only \$12.00 a year! Check for the membership form on the VMGA website, <https://vmga.net/wordpress/>.



JOIN LANDSCAPE LOVE. MAKE A DIFFERENCE.

By BARBARA FLOYD, PROJECT LEAD & MASTER GARDENER, CLASS OF 2010

The Dalai Lama once said, "If you think you are too small to make a difference, try sleeping with a mosquito." As Master Gardeners, we know the power of this advice, especially with our Landscape Love projects when the gardening public invites us in to evaluate their yards.

Working in groups of two or more Master Gardeners, we listen, validate, educate and encourage homeowners to make changes that will be more climate friendly, more bee friendly, more bird friendly, more water friendly...you get the idea. We introduce them to alternatives, all with the goal of teaching more sustainable, resilient gardening.

Here's one example of the many compliments we received last year from a homeowner.

Thank you so very much for the time and attention you both gave my little garden and this wonderful list of suggestions for follow up. I'll definitely be ordering the book you suggested.... I've been most impressed with your organization and am very happy to be a beneficiary of your talents!"

If this sounds interesting to you, sign up for Landscape Love by emailing Barbara Floyd at bmfloyd57@gmail.com. We open homeowner applications on the first day of spring, March 21. Homeowners apply for their personalized session via our website, jccwmg.org. The program will run April through October. We will have training meetings the last week of March. It is just around the garden gate, so sign up today!

WHAT'S GOING ON MAY 6TH?

BY GARY STREB, MASTER GARDENER,
CLASS OF 2011

Our annual Plant Sale, that's what. It will be held May 6th, 9 am to noon, to the public in the Williamsburg Botanical Garden at Freedom Park. Hopefully, this is no surprise to anyone and you are already preparing to contribute your talents and resources to this event that raises funds for all of our VCE Master Gardener projects.

The Board accepted Gary Streb's offer to orchestrate the significant efforts already in progress and further build a dedicated Extension Master Gardener team to make this project highly successful again. You will be hearing much more about the Plant Sale in the near future.

Please direct all questions about the Plant Sale including current needs and volunteer opportunities to Gary at gstreb11@gmail.com. Here is a short video of last year's event, with thanks to Odd Moxie Design - <https://youtu.be/JEY8O4C7CvI>.



Photos of 2022 Plant Sale
by Master Gardeners, Elvin and Kay Clapp

CLASSIFIEDS

SEEKING LEAD FOR 40TH ANNIVERSARY CELEBRATION

Did you know 2023 marks the 40th anniversary of our Association? We would like to celebrate with a picnic this July and need a volunteer to coordinate it. If you are interested in leading this event and working with other volunteers, please contact Deb Bussert (president@jccwmg.org) or Elizabeth Myers (vp-projects@jccwmg.org).

If you know of a Master Gardener who is experiencing difficult times or deserves recognition, please let us know by contacting Dot Finnegan, at secretary@jccwmg.org

NEXT NEWSLETTER DEADLINE for March, 2023 is Monday, February 20.

Send your submissions to:
Elizabeth Myers,
egmyers@comcast.net
or
Marion Guthrie,
marion.guthrie@gmail.com



Come Prepared to our Next Business Meeting February 2, 2023, 9-11 am in the Williamsburg Regional Library!

Vickie Rockwell, Christine Mason and Linda Neilson will be available prior the meeting to collect dues. After the meeting, they will be prepared to help you with your Better Impact needs. Please bring your laptops, iPad, cell phones, or tablet of choice so they may assist you in navigating your Better Impact needs.

IN THE GARDEN

more articles on our website, jccwmg.org, in the blog



2023 Perennial Choice

BY DEBORAH BUSSERT, MASTER GARDENER, CLASS OF 2016

The Perennial Plant Association has named a new cultivar of the familiar black-eyed Susan as its 2023 perennial plant of the year – ‘American Gold Rush’. (read more: <https://jccwmg.org/wordpress/2023-perennial-choice/>)



What's the Dirt on Soil?

BY WENDY HAMRICK, MASTER GARDENER, CLASS OF 2017

Dirt or Soil? Although we often use the words dirt and soil interchangeably, the differences between them are vast. Dirt is made up of clay, sand, silt, and rocks with no beneficial nutrients or ..(read more: <https://jccwmg.org/wordpress/whats-the-dirt-on-soil/>)

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