

THE COLONIAL GARDENER

AUGUST 2023

Celebrating 40 Years of Helping our
Neighbors Grow!



*A publication of the
James City County Williamsburg Master Gardener Association*

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Our Board Meets on the 3rd Thursday of each month at 9:30 a.m., in Room B at the Williamsburg Regional Library, on Scotland Street. All members are welcome to attend.

NEWSLETTER

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The deadline for the upcoming September 2023 newsletter is Friday, August 18.

Send your submissions to Elizabeth Myers
vp-projects@jccwmg.org or
Marion Guthrie
vp-communications@jccwmg.org.



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 research-based information to educate the public in our communities (James City, Williamsburg, and New Kent counties) on the best practices in sustainable horticulture and environmental stewardship.



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.





President's Message

DEBORAH BUSSERT '16

Greetings Master Gardeners,

Is it hot enough for you? Alarming reports are coming in every day about heat records being broken around the world. We are used to summer heat and humidity here on the Peninsula, but many others are experiencing these conditions for the first time and are really suffering. Although it may seem impossible for an individual to have any effect on this huge global problem, every little bit each of us does may help. We can drive less, plant more trees, look for ways to use less electricity and support green energy. What other actions can you take to help address climate change?

Our class of 2023 interns are hard at work, and several have already completed their hours requirements. If you haven't had the chance to meet or work with any of them yet, please reach out either at an Association meeting or working on one of our projects. And give a big thank you to our training team who continue to mentor and encourage them. We are so fortunate to have such a strong and dynamic training program. The future of our unit depends on it.

The Nominating Committee is being formed and looking for a few members willing to assist in developing the slate of officers for 2024. This is a key role and an effective way to get involved in a short-term project with a well-defined task. Although it may be hard to believe that we are already planning for next year, according to our by-laws we will be voting on next year's Board in September, less than two months from now. Please seriously consider whether you are willing to take on a leadership role. The open offices include President-Elect and Vice President of Projects. Emily Coyner, Vice President of Administration is heading up the Nominating Committee. If you have questions, please contact her. Of course, I would also be happy to discuss Board positions with those interested.

Finally, don't forget to check our website and Facebook page, both managed by our Communications Committee, on a regular basis for news and information. These are excellent resources. If you have an idea for an article or blog post, let Marion or one of her team know. They are always looking for material. As always, thanks for all you do. We can change the world one plant and one gardener at a time.

Deb

August 3rd Membership Meeting

Join us on Thursday, August 3 at 9:00 am, at the auditorium at the Williamsburg Regional Library (WRL) for our next membership meeting when Mary Toth, Senior Horticulturist at the Norfolk Botanical Garden, will discuss the Simple Art of Moss Gardening. Moss is an extraordinary plant—it grows without roots, flowers, or stems. Also, it provides year-round color, excels in difficult climates, prevents soil erosion and so much more.

Mary became interested in horticulture growing up on a farm and has spent the past seven years working at the Norfolk Botanical Garden where she loves sharing her plant knowledge with guests. Come to the Library's auditorium or attend via Zoom. Our regular business meeting will follow. For more information contact Debera Sineath, VP of Internal Education, at dksineath@yahoo.com.

8/3/2023 AT 9:00 a.m.

**in the Williamsburg Regional Library Auditorium and
via Zoom at us02web.zoom.us/j/2324806347**



In the Garden

ELIZABETH MCCOY '18

Late Summer in the Garden: To Do, To Do Less, and What to Avoid

Autumn is like a second spring in our coastal Virginia climate. We have another 90-100 frost-free days from August 1 until the end of our active growing season in early November. Even then, there is still plenty to enjoy in our gardens and plenty to do...

[Read more here.](#)

But Will Deer Eat It?

The lady checking out in front of me at the garden center had two cute little pots of 'polka dot plant,' *Hypoestes phyllostachya*, and she had a single question for the clerk: "Will deer eat it?" For those of us living among free-roaming herds of deer, which is always the question! [Read more here.](#)

Inviting the Stranger In

We delight in watching the birds come and go, even as they peer in the windows at us. We amuse one another. Cardinals, titmice, and other birds also perch in the crape myrtle tree a little further out in the yard, and feed in the rose of Sharon shrubs growing at the top of the path. As generations of songbirds raise their young in the same shrubs beside our home, we no longer think of them as visitors to the garden. Along with families of squirrels, rabbits, turtles, and skinks, our yard is their home....[Read more here.](#)

Find more articles on our blog on our website, jccwmg.org

40 Years of Helping our Neighbors Grow!

Over 80 of our members gathered at our annual picnic to celebrate 40 years of serving our community. State Delegate Mike Mullin presented President Deborah Bussert with a certificate of recognition from the General Assembly.

Photos by **ELVIN CLAPP '18**







How Our Association Got Its Start

PATSY MCGRADY '10

WASHINGTON STATE UNIVERSITY

Extension Agent, Dr. David Gibby, founded the first Master Gardener Program in Tacoma, Washington. It happened when he was newly hired as an extension agent for Washington State University (WSU). To answer questions and teach gardening to homeowners he used FAQ sheets, published articles, radio spots, and even a televised gardening show. Rather than satisfying the public's need, these efforts only served to increase the public's awareness and increase the demand for information. Frustrated at being able to respond to only a small fraction of the hundreds of weekly inquiries, in 1973 Gibby recruited a colleague, Bill Sheer, from a neighboring county to help him out.

HUGE PUBLIC DEMAND

Experiencing resistance from higher-ups, Gibby and Sheer decided to demonstrate the amount of public demand by holding a garden clinic day, sponsored by Sunset Magazine, at a local mall where they were mobbed by interested gardeners. A follow-up article in the magazine mentioned that WSU was looking for volunteers to help answer gardening questions. That article led to 600 people applying to become Master Gardeners.

CLASSES START!

As a result, two hundred people were selected by WSU faculty for the first gardener training class. A program was developed, and soon the new volunteers were busy with a full day of training, one day a week for five weeks. This initial group served two counties in Washington. The program's success quickly grew to similar training in several other areas in Washington State.

THE PROGRAM TAKES ROOT

In 1973 Dr. Gibby retired from his position as an extension agent and his program assistant, Sharon Collman, took control and created the foundation of today's Extension Master Gardener program. After becoming an Extension Agent, herself, Ms. Collman expanded the Master Gardener concept. Her efforts resulted in the program quickly spreading to other land grant universities throughout the United States and eventually to Korea and parts of Canada. Each program is affiliated with one or more land grant universities and a county cooperative extension office. Master Gardener training was first offered in Virginia in 1978, only five years after its founding in Washington State in 1973.

ORIGINS IN JAMES CITY COUNTY

Three people from James City County attended the Peninsula Master Gardener training class in York County in 1983 and that marks the beginning of Master Gardeners in James City County Williamsburg. Under the direction of the York agent, they reached out to the public in the Hampton Roads area with gardening presentations, workshops, and help desks. They also landscaped public areas, planted highway median strips, and provided office support for their extension.

After attending a training seminar in Blacksburg, the James City Master Gardeners were inspired by the variety and range of MG projects across the state and saw the opportunity for their own group. Also, they realized that to be a more effective organization and be true to their mission, they needed to define and track high priority projects, to have regular meetings and to create a board of elected officers to provide direction and administrative support. They also recommended that their group of 28 members become an association, which it did in September of 1990.

OUR OUTREACH GROWS

Our James City County Williamsburg Master Gardener Association (JCCWMGA) continues to grow its membership and extend its outreach ever since. Today we have over 200 members and over 25 active projects. Many dedicated volunteers have generously given of their time, their expertise, and their passion for gardening over the past forty years since our founding as the JCCWMGA in 1983.

For More Information:

Campbell, Fern. "[Our History.](#)" Piedmont Master Gardeners. April 2020.

"[Master Gardeners Program History.](#)" Penn State Extension. Penn State University 2023.

"[The History of our Program](#)" WSU Extension. Washington State University. 2023.

Weigel, George. "[The Father of Master Gardeners.](#)" George Weigel, Pennsylvania Garden Writer and Horticulturalist. June 25, 2019.

From Garden to Kitchen!

SUE CARLISLE '16

Our James City County Williamsburg Master Gardener team working in the [Jamestown Settlement Cafe Garden](#), harvests baskets of herbs which they delivered to the kitchen. Herbs included basil, parsley, rosemary, thyme, sage, lemon verbena, oregano, garlic chives, onion chives, lemon thyme, and mint! For more information contact Jamestown Settlement Cafe Garden Renovation Project Leader, Angela Cingale (arcingale@cox.net)



Colonial Williamsburg Arboretum Update

SUSAN MILLER '16 & RICK BROWN '17, CW Arboretum Project Co-Leads

The Colonial Williamsburg Arboretum is a Level II Certified Arboretum comprised of 18th-century tree and woody shrub varieties. Last year in 2022, this project received a much-needed infusion of new Master Gardener volunteers when Susan Miller, Stacy DeMeo, Rick Brown, and Bill Dichtel, were joined by several new members, Michele Garrard, Connie Motley, Debe Sineath, Barry Holland, Pamela VanCott, and Dave Kleppinger.

These JCCW Master Gardeners all completed both the Peninsula Tree Steward training and were accepted as Colonial Williamsburg (CW) volunteers. They were eager to volunteer in the Arboretum and

to help CW achieve a Level III certification from ArbNet. The Morton Arboretum ArbNet group is the certification body that links together arboreta throughout the world to promote arboriculture and an appreciation for trees to improve our environment.

To begin preparation of the ArbNet application for certification as a Level III arboretum, we had agreed with the CW staff on December 31, 2022, as the deadline for this team to identify and tag at least 500 species of trees and woody shrubs within the CW Historic Area. Our group exceeded the goal well before the deadline, and we were moving



forward with the process as CW hired Rebecca Macke who, as an Arboretum apprentice, would assemble the information and file the application.

However, just prior to Macke's arrival we learned that the website we had relied upon for five years to display the Arboretum information to the public, PlantsMap, had crashed and in addition it became apparent that the business itself was no longer viable.

This meant our scannable tree tags that identified the tree by name and provided botanical information as well would need to be replaced. Even though we had preserved our data in spreadsheets we now had to begin a serious search for acceptable botanical garden software that would meet the ArbNet requirements for a networked collection database which would share plant collection information with the public and other arboreta.

Luckily Macke had an impressive background in IT work and was a very fast study rapidly getting current on the five years' worth of work we had done in creating the Arboretum. She began the work of evaluating the best software package to meet our needs and provide a reliable product. Currently the plant tags can once again be scanned using QR reader technology easily available using a cell phone.

Our project volunteers have a weekly work session where we do maintenance work, planning and planting in the Arboretum. We also have monthly planning meetings with the CW Landscape Staff. Several of the project volunteers serve as weekly tour guides and offer guided tours of the Arboretum each Monday at 9:30 & 10:30 a.m. Laura Viancour, the former CW Landscape Director designed 2 different tours that we alternate and offer seasonally, and provided the training required by CW to conduct the tours for guests as a public outreach project for our unit. These are part of the project's educational component and provide excellent feedback for the Arboretum from the public attendees.

In the upcoming months we expect to complete the application process to become the world's 46th Level III arboretum certified by ArbNet, and only the 29th such organization recognized in the United States. The only Level III arboretum in the Commonwealth of Virginia is currently located at Arlington National Cemetery. This project has been a great resource for our Master Gardener unit and the Tree Stewards that have taken the training to become volunteers. It also provides a continuing learning experience for our Tree Steward volunteers who enjoy seeing our MG unit accomplish its mission. We are all excited to be part of this worthwhile project.

This article is an update to an earlier one on the creation of the CW arboretum that was published on our website in May 2021 [[CW Arboretum](#)]. Here is the link - jccwmg.org/wordpress/the-story-of-the-colonial-williamsburgs-arboretum-a-tree-steward-project. For more information contact Susan Miller (Susanmiller37@cox.net).



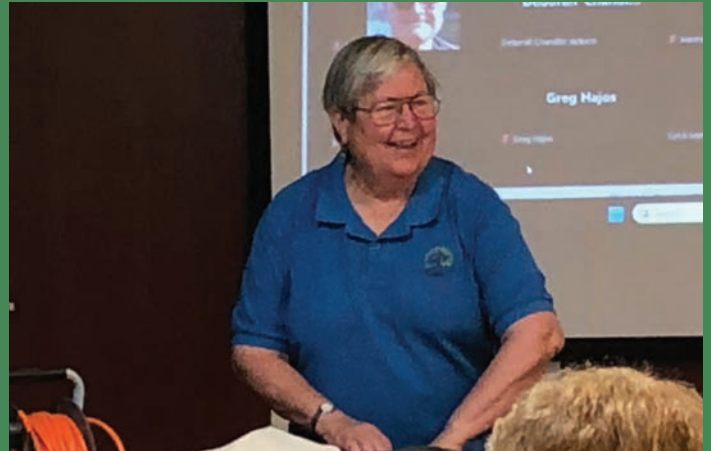
Catching Up with Our Tree Stewards

SHARON MARCIAL '17

This past winter several of our James City County Williamsburg Master Gardeners (JCCWGMG) graduated from the 2023 Tree Steward Course offered through Peninsula Tree Stewards. A range of topics were covered in this 3-month class series, including Tree Families and Tree Identification using Dichotomous Keys with Dr. Stewart Ware (ret W and M), Tree Botany with Dr. Janet Steven of CNU and the Urban Forest with Dr. Eric Wiseman of Virginia Tech and Chad Peevy of VCU. Many of the chapters found in the current Tree Steward Manual were written by our very own JCCWGMG tree stewards, Patsy McGrady, and Carol Fryer.

JCCWGMGs graduates of this year's program are Scott Wolz, Debe Sineath, Connie Motley, Jeffrey Mellinger, David Kleppinger, Barry Holland, Jennifer Campbell, Michele Jett Garrard, Kim Owens, and Shadow Harmon. One of the course requirements is the completion of a 20-hour (minimum) project. Many of these projects have blossomed into some of our most popular tree steward programs, including the Arboretum at Colonial Williamsburg.

The Peninsula Tree Stewards are composed of members of five extension units across the Peninsula. These are James City County Williamsburg, York/Poquoson, Hampton, Newport News and Gloucester. They are trained community volunteers committed to promoting healthy urban and rural forests in Virginia. They offer training classes, educational programs, and projects in their communities intended to increase public awareness of the value of trees while teaching about trees and tree care. With classroom training and hands-on practice, Tree Stewards are equipped to identify trees, counsel on tree selection, demonstrate proper tree planting and follow-up care, and guide removal of invasive plants that threaten trees.



Pictured here is Carol King, the coordinator for the Peninsula Tree Stewards, leading the third quarter meeting at the Denbigh Community Center in Newport News. Carol, an expert resource on trees, is helpful in scheduling educational programs and keeping the Tree Stewards from the five units informed of matters of common interest. For more information contact the project leaders for the JCCWGMG Tree Stewards, Sharon Marcial (samarcial@cox.net) or Susan Miller (susanmiller37@cox.net).

Congrats to our newest Master Gardeners

A Celebratory Visit to KelRae Farms

ELIZABETH MYERS '22

The training class enjoyed a sunny festive field trip to KelRae Farms in Toano in mid-July. We toured the farm by wagon, visited the chickens and goats, spoke with owner Michelle Gulden, had lunch, and shopped the abundant produce. It was also a wonderful way to commemorate three more trainees, Anne Nordin, Jody Stephens, and Diane Perry, who had completed their hours requirement and achieved Extension Master Gardener (EMG) status joining Nancy Lia, Amanda Kiritz, Cheryl Hannah, and Paul Fameli. Congratulations to all!



Ecology Corner

JUDY KINSHAW-ELLIS
Master Naturalist, Tree
Steward, and Master
Gardener '15

Rain Barrels

Do you have a rain barrel yet? With the cost of water and a finite supply, installing a rain barrel is a small way to reduce the amount of water you buy while reducing runoff from your property.

While our yards and gardens are pervious surfaces that will absorb a good deal of the rain that falls, our home's roof may shed hundreds of gallons of water during one rainstorm. Often this water can contribute to erosion and other issues that result from excess water. A rain barrel or two can collect some of that water that can then be used in the same way you use water from your hose—but do not drink it.

Rain barrels need a way to collect water. They can be connected to a downspout or simply placed where water runs off a roof. They also need a spigot to access the water. The third thing they need is some type of overflow valve. The barrels can be made as described in the link below or they can be bought from many sources.

As gardeners, most of us have some plants that need extra care and that often involves more water. Reduce your water bill by installing a rain barrel in your landscape. Here's how to build your own: askhrgreen.org/resource/how-to-build-a-rain-barrel/.





New Sign for Water Wise

ELVIN & KAY CLAPP '18

A new interpretive sign was installed at the Water Wise Demonstration Garden on July 17, 2023. Linda Neilson worked with the James City County (JCC) Sustainability team to design a sign that reflects the water wise principles incorporated in the garden since 2003. JCC was awarded a "Keep Virginia Beautiful Grant" which in turn funded this sign. Cassie Cordova, former JCC Environmental Sustainability Coordinator, worked with Linda Neilson to develop the theme, message, and pictures. Special thanks to Rusty Workman of JCC who braved the heat and humidity to install the sign. This is another step forward to increase the educational opportunities at this garden. For more information about this garden see iccwmg.org/wordpress/demonstration-projects.

Classifieds

LIBRARY SERIES FOR AUGUST AND SEPTEMBER

The August topic is container gardening. Are your containers looking a bit sad? Are your plants dying, overgrown, or not producing new blooms or veggies? Angela Cingale, Master Gardener, Class of 2000, will discuss how to extend your container garden into the late summer and fall. Join us on Saturday, August 12, at the Stryker Center from 10:15 to 11:15 a.m. for an informative and inspirational session.

In September, Dennis Hewston, James City County Williamsburg Master Gardener, Class of 2022, will talk about putting your garden to bed for the winter at James City County library on Croaker Road from 10:15 to 11:15, Saturday Sept 9. To rake or not to rake, that's the question.

MASTER GARDENER ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

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

NOMINATING COMMITTEE SEEKING MEMBERS

The Nominating Committee is seeking three Association members who would like to work as a team to develop a slate of officer nominations for the 2024-26 board term. We expect two open positions and would welcome your participation in the nominating process. The proposed slate is presented to the membership at the September business meeting. The work of the committee lasts about two months during July and August. Please contact Emily Coyner (coyner.emily@gmail.com) if you are interested in this important committee.

WATCH LEARN & GROW ON YOUTUBE

Here is a link to the WBG-FPA Botanical Garden YouTube channel where all the Learn & Grow recorded series are maintained in a single playlist. A wealth of information and some familiar faces too. Enjoy! Go to: bit.ly/3n42Zw3.

STORY TELLERS WANTED!

Your garden tells a story. It is the wind moving like a cat through purple grasses, an abundance of cucumber, the thrill of wildflowers in bloom. It is a timeline of your successes and the challenges you have overcome. Why not tell that garden story? Participate in the Fall Library Lecture series and share your wit and wisdom. We are in search of presentations on gardening topics. Please contact Vickie Rockwell, varockwell@outlook.com.

THIRD ANNUAL PAWPAW FESTIVAL

Your JCCW Tree Stewards are proud to support the Third Annual Pawpaw Festival on Saturday, August 26 from 10 a.m. to 4 p.m. Enjoy free tastings, raffles for Pawpaw saplings, educational booths and talks by the Butterfly Society of Virginia, Colonial Bee-Keepers, our own Peninsula Tree Stewards, Hampton Roads Bird Club, Newport News Waterworks, Peninsula Master Naturalists, Leave no Trace, and Foxy Lady Press. There will be live music, food, and children's activities and free guided tours of the 1769 historic house all at Historic Endview, 362 Yorktown Road, Newport News, VA 23603. Celebrate a Virginia native fruit and George Washington's favorite dessert! For more information see: nnparksandrec.org/event/pawpaw-festival/.



Editor's Message

MARION GUTHRIE '19

It's finally cooled off a bit, but for a moment there gardening was the next extreme sport. Nothing like running outside in 20 minute spurts to keep things watered and combat the weeds. It makes me feel like an Olympic athlete training for the big day.

I want to thank everyone who contributed to this month's newsletter. You are all helping our Association stand out in the community. I also wanted to take a moment to thank my personal Olympians Linda Becker, Michele Garrard, Crystal Skeeter-Davis, and Debe Sineath for your help with the Master Gardener Facebook page. Your hard work and dedication have truly made a difference, and I am so grateful for all the time and effort you put into making our page a success. Your knowledge and expertise have been invaluable, and I know that the community appreciates all that you do. Thank you again for your hard work and commitment to sharing the Master Gardeners!

Keep growing!
Marion Guthrie, Editor
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