

THE COLONIAL MASTER GARDENER

Celebrating 40 Years of Helping our
Neighbors Grow!

2023 JCCW MGA BOARD

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president@jccwmg.org

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Vickie Rockwell
presidencyelect@jccwmg.org

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Emily Coyner
vp-admin@jccwmg.org

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Elizabeth Myers
vp-projects@jccwmg.org

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Debera Sineath
vp-internal-ed@jccwmg.org

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vp-communications@jccwmg.org

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vmga-rep@jccwmg.org

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vceagent@jccwmg.org

PLEASE NOTE:

The October Board Meeting will be held in Room B at the Williamsburg Regional Library at 9:30 a.m. to 11:30 p.m. on Wednesday, October 18 instead of October 19. MGA Members are welcome to attend.

NEWSLETTER

Editor:
Marion Guthrie

Copy Editor:
Elizabeth Myers

Layout & Design:
Odd Moxie

Webmaster:
Dave Banks
dfbanks2@gmail.com

The deadline for the upcoming November 2023 newsletter is Friday, October 20.

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 fellow Master Gardeners!

Fall is here along with the cooler weather we all long for in July and August. Now is the time to plant or transplant so that the plants will have enough time to settle in and grow new roots before winter. A light application of mulch will help. Remember to leave some of your ornamental grasses and perennials standing to provide food and shelter for birds and insects. And don't prune your spring-flowering shrubs or you may lose the spring floral display.

Congratulations to the Board members elected at the September meeting: new members Dave Kleppinger, President Elect; and Gary Griffith, Vice President of Projects; and returning members Dot Finnegan, Secretary; Linda Neilson, Treasurer; and Marilyn Griffin, VMGA Representative. Rounding out the Board in 2024 are Vickie Rockwell, President; Emily Coyner, Vice President of Administration; Marion Guthrie, Vice President of Communications; Debe Sineath, Vice President of Internal Education; and me, Past President. This is a great group, and your Association is in very capable hands.

I recently had the pleasure of viewing a program presented by the Master Gardeners of Northern Virginia on "Native Ground Covers for Sun & Shade." The speaker proposed some plants as groundcovers that are not usually used in that way, such as Clustered Mountain Mint (*Pycnanthemum muticum*), Little Bluestem (*Schizachyrium scoparium*), Eastern prickly pear (*Optunia humifusa*), and even native Violets (*Viola soraria*, *V. pubescens* and *V. striata*). If you haven't looked at their website, mgnv.org, you should. They have a great resource called "Tried and True Fact Sheets." Each one gives a lot of information about particular plants, and different growing conditions. There are sheets on natives, invasives, and "Best Bets" for various conditions. The next time you have a plant-related question, try this.

Finally, many thanks again to Patsy McGrady, Hope Yelich and Gary Streb for their ongoing work reviewing, organizing and preserving the history of the Association and Master Gardening in James City County and Williamsburg. This work is ongoing, so look for more material in upcoming Newsletters. And by the way, if you have attended each of the 2023 Association meetings, including the Continuing Education component, you have now completed your eight-hour CE requirement for the year. Congratulations! and don't forget to log those hours in Better Impact under Continuing Education. That is the third from the bottom item in the pull-down Activity menu for recording hours.

As always, thanks for all you do.
Deb

Master Gardener Merch!

LINDA BECKER '22

Great Gift for the Holidays

Holiday gifts! Does this thought thrust anxiety upon you? I know you lie awake hoping for divine inspiration for the perfect gift for your Master Gardener. Relieve your angst by visiting the [Logo Gear](#) tab on the Master Gardener webpage (jccwmg.org).

Have you seen the lovely red jacket that will keep your gardener toasty during pruning season? The Master Gardener in your life can certainly use a fresh T-shirt. An insulated flask etched with the gardener's name will be the BEST stocking stuffer. Relax this holiday season and shop the JCCWMG's [Logo Gear](#).



October 5th Membership Meeting *First Aid Preparedness*

Being prepared for a first aid situation is extremely important, even if we don't think about it all that often. We are outside, the weather is great, so what could possibly go wrong? Surprisingly quite a few things. That's why we've invited Deena Moore, owner of Hands over Hearts for Life, to give our members a presentation on first aid preparedness. Deena will also include a list of first aid items that would be appropriate for our members to have on hand as well as a sample kit to show us up close

and personal. Being prepared doesn't have to be a big deal. Being unprepared could be. Plan to attend in person on Thursday October 5, at the auditorium of the Williamsburg Regional Library or by Zoom.

Bring a friend - the more the merrier, or in this case, safer.

10/5/2023 AT 9:00 a.m.

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



The Legend of the Compton Oak

RICK BROWN '17

The former Colonial Williamsburg (CW) Garden Historian, Wesley Greene, had a discussion with Scott Hemler, CW's Nurseryman, this year in August about the origin of our famous Compton Oak. In this exchange, Greene raised questions about the "legend" of this tree and how it came to be planted on Nicholson Street in historic Williamsburg.

At Green's suggestion, I began an investigation to see if the Archives at the Rockefeller Library could provide any additional information about the time period and date of transplanting this oak tree.

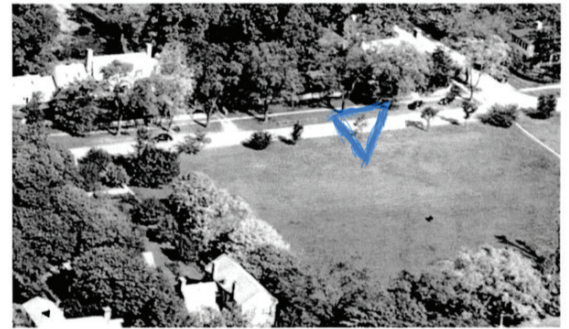
A previous review of photographic records, Greene said revealed that, a number of years ago, Don Parker, former Landscape Architect for the Foundation, gave the Rockefeller Library copies of the correspondence of CW's first Landscape Superintendent, Justin B. Brouwers. In an e-mail, Greene stated that "I have not seen them, and I do not know how extensive the correspondence is, but a trip to Archives would certainly be worthwhile."

Portions of Brouwers's correspondence are, in fact, now a part of the archival materials in the collection and provide an invaluable first-hand account of how and when the Compton Oak came to be located in Colonial Williamsburg's Historic Area. A review was made on August 15, 2023, and according to that correspondence the Compton Oak was discovered by Brouwers in the wild in an area known as "Boush [pronounced Bush] Creek, South of Norfolk, Virginia in 1937."

Here is correspondence from Justin Brouwers to the U.S Department of Agriculture, Division of Plant Industry, dated February 3, 1947, seeking assistance to help identify the specific taxon.

"This tree was growing about twenty-five feet from the water's edge near brackish water. It was dug and transplanted to Williamsburg in 1938. At the time of moving it [was] about 15'-18' tall and had a trunk diameter from three to four inches at the ground. This tree grew no nearer than approximately one-half mile from Live Oak trees. Since transplanting the tree in Williamsburg, it has grown to a height of between thirty-five and forty feet, and its trunk diameter is now from 10 to 12 inches at the ground.

Will you please identify this specimen, giving us the Botanical name, if possible, and any other information you may have for us."



Cropped view of negative # 1098a, showing young Compton oak



Brouwers originally thought the tree was possibly a live oak, *Quercus virginiana*, or perhaps some sort of unidentified hybrid. But, after a few years he apparently became curious when it did not behave like other live oaks in the area and he enlisted the assistance of Dr. J.T. Baldwin, a prominent botanist and head of the Biology Department at William & Mary, to obtain a more positive identification. The tree was referred to simply as “Brouwers’s Oak” during this period.

Baldwin wrote to Ernest J. Palmer, the collector-botanist at Harvard University’s Arnold Arboretum on January 27, 1947, and sent leaf, twig, and acorn samples to assist with the identification. Palmer was a noted botanical taxonomist specializing in the *Quercus* genera (oak trees).

Palmer responded promptly on January 31, 1947, saying that Baldwin’s “surmise as to it being a hybrid between the live oak and a deciduous species is certainly correct, and I think there can be no doubt that the other parent is the overcup oak (*Quercus lyrata* Walt.)”

It was fortunate that Baldwin involved Palmer since the Compton oak was, in fact, discovered and first named in 1918 by his mentor Charles Sprague Sargent who was the first Director of the Arnold Arboretum. Sargent made the discovery after a trip he made to the property of Miss C.C. Compton near Natchez, Mississippi. In his response Palmer describes the origin of the Compton oak at length and verifies that the oak planted by Mr. Brouwers was, in fact, the same hybrid, *Quercus xcomptonae* (sic.).

In the meantime, S.F. Blake, Senior Botanist at the United States Department of Agriculture, Bureau of Plant Industry responded to Brouwers that:

“[n]ot being able to match your oak specimen here I sent it to Dr. Rehder at the Arnold Arboretum. He identifies it as a *Quercus comptonae* (sic.) Sarg.

Thus, Baldwin and Brouwers were initially corresponding independently with different experts at different locations and received the same conclusion from two different authorities, who were both employed at the Arnold Arboretum.

The final question raised by Greene concerned how this Compton oak came to be the lone hybrid of its species growing at Boush Creek. Responding to a request from Baldwin, Brouwers provided further details to Palmer in a letter dated February 17, 1947. In that correspondence from Brouwers to Palmer, Brouwers explained that:

“There was another tree similar to this growing not far away from this tree - near the shores of Bousch (sic.)

Creek - its leaves were larger, broader, and not quite so persistent. The nearest Live Oak to these two trees was about one-half mile away. During the war, this area was taken over by the Government; hence all trees in this location were destroyed.”

I checked historic maps that refer to an area in Norfolk once called Boush Creek. The name derives from the first colonial mayor of Norfolk City, Samuel Boush, appointed by King Charles II, in 1736. Boush was a wealthy landowner in Norfolk City. According to the map Bosch Creek was located at Northern edge of Norfolk City on Willoughby Bay. There is nothing in that area with that designation on modern maps.

The “legend” refers to Pungo as the place of origin for the young Compton oak. That is an area Southeast of Norfolk and South of Virginia Beach. However, there is no reference to “Pungo,” or Virginia Beach, in any the documents I reviewed at the Archives as being the original location of this tree. I am not sure how that reference comes into the description of the original location of the tree. Perhaps there was a small creek in the Pungo area that also carried the name Boush Creek in 1937.

AFTERWORD

Thanks to garden historian Wesley Greene for the initial review of the Archive’s photographic records, for providing the background information and for communicating unanswered questions needed to begin this study. Also, thanks for the invaluable assistance of Donna Cooke, Corporate Archivist and Marianne Martin, Visual Resources Collection Librarian, at the Colonial Williamsburg’s Rockefeller Library, without whose help these materials would surely not have been found.

The author, Ricklin Brown is a James City County Williamsburg Master Gardener as well as a CW Arboretum Volunteer, and Peninsula Tree Steward.



A Conversation with a Master Gardener

**BARBARA FLOYD '10 &
SCOTT WOLZ '19**

Starting a Fall Vegetable Garden

Instead of thinking that the fall is too late to start a garden, think of it as getting a head start. September and October are actually ideal times to set up your garden. If you wait until the spring, you'll have missed not one, but two full seasons of plants that you could have been enjoying fresh from your kitchen garden.

Here's what vegetables Master Gardeners planted on a Friday morning in September, in Colonial Williamsburg's Orr Garden. This list of cool season plants includes Red Russian Kale, Purple Kohlrabi, Purple Broccoli, Brunswick Cabbage, Green Glaze Collards, Yates Collards, Ruby Red Swiss Chard, and Salsify. The rain from the tropical storm, Ophelia, watered the plantings in well.



Fall Gardening

JUDY KINSHAW ELLIS '15

When I first moved to Williamsburg, I signed up for an Osher class about fall gardening. I was new to town and excited to hear just what I should be doing to get my yard ready for the winter. Much to my surprise, much of the class was about leaving my leaves and not cutting back my spent flower heads. This was not going to go over well with my better half, Mr. Clean. Truth be told, I was not sold on the idea either. We had just read our 300-page HOA rules and this guidance did not seem in line with getting along with the neighbors.

We happily live in an HOA community and many of you do, too. What can you do to help maintain habitat for our overwintering insects while keeping everything neat enough to not get THE LETTER?

Some ideas include:

- When you cut back your flowers, leave the stems a little higher than you normally would. Stems provide homes for overwintering insects. When spring arrives and your plants start to sprout, you can cut them back after insects have emerged.
- Rather than mulching your leaves, rake them to your beds and leave them where they will decompose. Many of our moths spend the pupa stage wrapped up in dead leaves and emerge in the spring.
- If you have space in your yard, keep the branches, stems, and twigs that you do trim in a brush pile. It will protect insects through the winter and will provide cover for birds. Insects are on the decline and have been for decades. Creating habitat for them will help improve numbers.



In the Garden



Working with Nature to Put the Garden to Bed **ELIZABETH MCCOY '18**

Letting our gardens take their time to die back and settle into winter allows nature to recycle and re-purpose materials in interesting ways. It isn't so much that you avoid fall-clean up chores rather you strategically tweak the timing of when to do them. [Read more.](#)



Phragmites in Local Wetlands **ELIZABETH MCCOY '18**

Our local creeks, marshes, and ponds lie surrounded by thick stands of reeds called *Phragmites australis*. Although they are an invasive species, their removal is coming under scrutiny, in particular the efficacy and effectiveness of herbicidal treatments. [Read more.](#)

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



Classifieds

CORRECTION

In the September issue of the Colonial Master Gardener there was an error made in referencing the Swem Library as the historical resource for Patsy McGrady's information about the Master Gardeners' early years. Source material was primarily from historical material at the VCE Toano office and a notebook from the 1990s that had been passed down to Gary Streb.

PUTTING YOUR GARDEN TO BED

As part of the Library's Lecture Series, Dennis Hewston, James City County Williamsburg Master Gardener, Class of 2022, will talk about putting your garden to bed for the winter at the Stryker Center, 412 N. Boundary St, Williamsburg, VA, from 10:15. to 11:15 on Saturday November 11. Lullabies aren't needed.

NEXT BOARD MEETING OCTOBER 18

The October Board Meeting will be held in Room B at the Williamsburg Regional Library at 9:30 a.m. to 11:30 p.m. on Wednesday, October 18 instead of October 19. MGA Members are welcome to attend.

SUPPORT YOUR FELLOW MEMBERS

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.

TELL YOUR FRIENDS

Our Training Team is presenting "Becoming a James City County Williamsburg Master Gardener" at the Stryker Center, 412 N. Boundary St., on Saturday October 14, at 10:00 a.m. Interested? Attend this free presentation. For more information visit our website, jccwmg.org or contact Sue Barton (sj3barton@cox.net) or Terry McGlennon (terrymcglennon4@gmail.com). Online class registration starts November 1!



Pam Arnold - Volunteer of the Year!

ELIZABETH MYERS '22 & MARION GUTHRIE '19

As a Master Gardener with the James City County Williamsburg Master Gardener Association (JCCWMGA), Pam Arnold co-chairs the J.B. Blayton School Garden project and she was recently recognized as Blayton's 2023 Volunteer of the Year!

In her volunteer role, Pam coordinates the SHIP Garden Club and works with Blayton's young students teaching them about gardening, how to grow vegetables, and the importance of insects as pollinators. She volunteers in the garden two days a week year-round and leads the SHIP Garden Club in the fall and spring. She has directed unique experiences for SHIP as well, including growing and processing cotton. "From seed to shirt" one parent remarked.

In talking about the Blayton garden, Pam said, "We hope our students take away a love for gardening and a respect for the Earth on which we live, knowing that it is through our deeds and our care of the Earth that we survive and grow."

Congratulations to Pam on receiving the J. Blaine Blayton Elementary School's 2023 Volunteer of the Year Award!

For more information about this Master Gardener Project contact Pam Arnold (pamsmitharnold@gmail.com). Watch a video about Blayton's garden here: <https://jccwmga.org/wordpress/video/blayton-school-project/>.



2024 Membership Dues (Are Due)

LINDA NEILSON

The James City County Williamsburg Master Gardener Association 2024 membership dues are due by year-end 2023. The dues are \$25.00 and payment options are: check, cash, and credit card. We will be accepting payments in person before and after the October and November general meetings. You can use your credit card with the JCCW Master Gardener Association's credit card reader at these meetings.

PayPal* credit card payment method is also available on the [jccwmga.org members website](https://www.jccwmga.org/members) drop-down link.

If paying by check, the payee should be: JCCW MGA and notate "2024 Dues" on the check. If you wish to mail your check, please use the following mailing address.

**JCCW MGA
PO Box 1951
Williamsburg, VA 23187-1951**

Thank you for your prompt attention.

**By using the PayPal service, you agree to pay a PayPal transaction fee.*



Editor's Message

MARION GUTHRIE '19

As a Master Gardener, I am thrilled that it's fall. It's not so darn hot out there while I weed, and there is nothing quite like the satisfaction of pulling out spent annuals, preparing the gardens for fall planting, and watching it all grow. Thanks to this newsletter, and the advice of my fellow Master Gardeners I have started a list of the plants I want to try this year.

Even with cooler temperatures and ample rainfall, you really can plant a variety of vegetables and flowers that will grow in the autumn months. Since moving from the north, I discovered that gardening is really a year-round hobby, especially here in Williamsburg. I can't wait to see what thrives this year in my fall garden.

This newsletter requires many hands to build, and I want to thank all the gifted gardeners who took time to submit an article for this month. If you have something to share with your fellow master gardeners (and everyone I've met has at least one good story in them) please share it with Elizabeth and me - we're always on the hunt for more articles, photos, and (if you're really inspired) video to share on our blog, Facebook page, and this newsletter!

Keep growing!

Marion Guthrie, Editor

vp-communications@jccwmg.org





jccwmg.org
P. O. Box 1951, Williamsburg, VA 23187
757-564-2175