

THE COLONIAL MASTER GARDENER

Celebrating 42 Years of Helping our
Neighbors Grow!



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Our Board of Directors usually meets on the third Friday of each month at 9:30 a.m. via Zoom. If you'd like to join, here's the link: <https://zoom.us/j/98768495293?pwd=f6FfhFVSVVRFBax5QVKLnT3W7oC eAb.1>
Meeting ID: 987 6849 5293
Passcode: 23185

COMMUNICATIONS TEAM

Project Leaders: Marion Guthrie & Wayne Koenig

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The submission deadline for the upcoming September 2025 newsletter is August 22.

Send your submissions to our editor, Marion Guthrie, at vp-communications@jccwmg.org and copy our vice president of projects, Gary Griffith, at vp-projects@jccwmg.org.

The newsletter layout is graciously donated by [Odd Moxie](#).



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 on the best practices in sustainable horticulture and environmental stewardship in our communities, which include Williamsburg, James City, Charles City, Upper York, and New Kent counties.



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

Join Me in Creating Sequential Blooming Plant Schedules

DAVE KLEPPINGER '16

I have become increasingly self-conscious about having too many non-native plants in my gardens and not enough natives. Like many Master Gardeners, I occasionally wake up in a panic because I've dreamed I've run out of space in my gardens and can't add any more plants. Surely adding natives to an already crowded landscape is... totally justified, right? Or maybe it's just time to retire some non-natives, creating new space for those that receive the Doug Tallamy seal of approval.

And looking for another excuse to add plants to my over-landscaped yard, I've become interested in having something blooming throughout the year. Perhaps many or all of these plants can be native. Perhaps many or all can be deer- and rabbit-resistant.

At the other end of the spectrum, I recently did a Landscape Love visit with the owner of a new home, who had just moved here from Long Island and had not yet added any landscaping. She felt like she had a problem, but I saw only opportunities. Of course, she wanted to know what to plant; natives would be great...if they were deer-resistant.

Here is an opportunity to help all gardeners. I would like to form a study team of Master Gardeners to create sequential blooming calendars for the Williamsburg area. Who wouldn't want a landscape where something is always blooming? Bulbs, annuals, perennials, shrubs, and trees; natives and nonnatives; shade and sun, deer- and rabbit-resistant. We could develop one using only natives or another for shade or part-shade gardens. We could craft a garden that deer and rabbits would never want to visit. These plant lists would be especially useful during Landscape Love home visits and at the Farmers Market Help Desk.

For those who would like to learn how to harness the power of Artificial Intelligence (AI) for horticultural research, here is your chance. Let me know if you would like to join me in this research initiative (president@jccwmg.org).



Master Gardener Meeting Programs

At the Stryker Center, A Very Special Members' Meeting

CRYSTAL SKEETER-DAVIS '22, VP Internal Education

Join the James City County Williamsburg Master Gardeners for a unique event at the Stryker Center, Room 127—just steps from the Williamsburg Regional Library—on Thursday, August 7, 2025, from 9 a.m. to 10 a.m. when we present a captivating Zoom session led by Dr. Lester Schonberger, Associate Extension Specialist from the Department of Food Science and Technology.

Dive into the essential principles of food preservation as Dr. Schonberger shares expert guidance tailored for home gardeners, farmers' market enthusiasts, and anyone eager to learn how to prepare and store their harvest safely. Complimentary coffee and pastries will be available —so come early and enjoy a treat before the presentation begins! Dr. Schonberger's special Zoom event promises practical tips and insights into keeping your food fresh.

For more information, contact Crystal Skeeter-Davis at crystalskeeterdavis@gmail.com.

Here is the Zoom link to Dr. Schonberger's presentation: <https://virginiatech.zoom.us/j/85215290780?from=addon>. Dr. Schonberger's presentation will be followed by our regularly scheduled business meeting, which will include Christina Ruszczyk-Murray speaking on "Leading Lightly, What the Garden Teaches Us."

Here is the Zoom Link for our Business Meeting: <https://us02web.zoom.us/j/82108796113?pwd=3X7YO9ErCRcHj17dC2hmvSram4Yg79.1>. This is the same link we've been using for our Business Meetings all year. You can find these links on Better Impact and click to be connected.





You are invited to join James City County Williamsburg Master Gardeners at the Williamsburg Regional Library on Thursday, September 4, 2025.

Robyn Woolsey, Senior Conservation Specialist, will provide practical guidance on selecting and using native plants, and a deeper look at the ecological and community benefits of incorporating meadows, mixed planting beds, tree plantings, filter strips, and riparian buffers into the landscape. She will also discuss the VA Conservation Assistance Program (VCAP), which can provide financial assistance up to \$7,000 to public and private landowners who are interested in conservation landscaping.

Conservation landscaping builds on the foundation of sustainable horticulture by reimagining areas dominated by turf grass or bare soil into vibrant, ecologically beneficial spaces by using low-impact development strategies, and integrated pest management. These landscapes support biodiversity, improve soil and water quality and reduce maintenance and stormwater runoff.

You can view additional presentations by clicking Educational Videos at jccwmg.org.

Conservation Landscaping

Robyn Woolsey
Colonial Soil & Water Conservation District

Thursday, September 4, 2025
9:00am - 10:00am



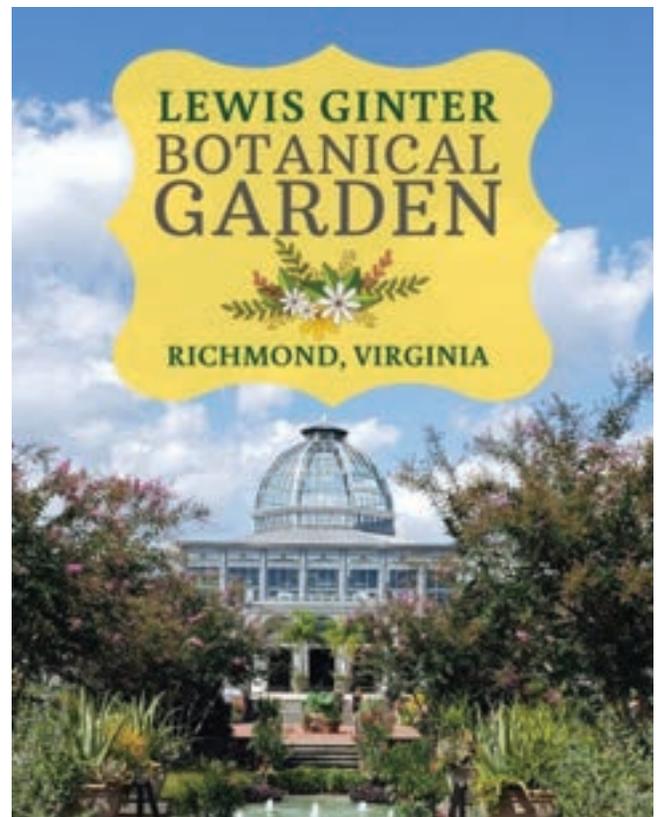
Williamsburg Regional Library
515 Scotland Street
Williamsburg, VA 23185

Explore Lewis Ginter Botanical Garden

Bring a Friend!

Mark your calendar for September 11, 2025, and prepare for an inspiring journey through the stunning Lewis Ginter Botanical Garden. Spanning 50 acres, this breathtaking destination features a variety of themed gardens and a grand, classical domed conservatory, the only one of its kind in the mid-Atlantic. Learn more about this tour, including the cost, ordering your picnic lunch, and reserving your tickets, on our website.

Here's the link <https://jccwmg.org/wordpress/lewis-ginter-reg>. Why not secure your spot and one for a friend today? This event is also open to our gardening friends. For more information, contact Janet Fender (jsfender2@gmail.com) or Crystal Skeeter-Davis (crystalskeeterdavis@gmail.com).





Buzzing with Purpose: A Joyful Recap of the Second Annual Pollinator Palooza at Veterans Park

JEN CAMPBELL '16 and **LIZ GEORGE '16**

In celebration of both **National Pollinator Week** and **James City County's Longest Day at Play (Summer Solstice)**, the Second Annual Pollinator Palooza took place on June 20th at Veterans Park. And what a celebration it was. On an exceptionally glorious day, more than 150 enthusiastic participants joined us for a morning filled with hands-on exploration, artistic fun, and unforgettable education centered around the crucial role of pollinators in our environment.

Bursting with color and activity, the Pollinator Garden served as a vibrant backdrop for a lineup of engaging stations designed to delight children

and deepen their appreciation for nature. Whether assembling a bee hotel and discovering the habits of solitary insects or learning how butterflies use camouflage and mimicry to defend themselves, kids were immersed in discovery at every turn.

A favorite stop was the rock painting station, where children added their habitat-themed art pieces to a communal puddling dish, helping them understand how butterflies hydrate and absorb essential nutrients. At the Plant-A-Native station, families learned about seed dispersal and the importance of cultivating native flora to support pollinator habitats.



The scavenger hunt provided an adventure for the senses—children were challenged with tasks such as identifying flowers likely to attract butterflies and hideouts where insects might seek refuge. Upon completion, they were rewarded with prizes for their keen observations. After creating colorful butterfly masks, many took a moment to pose at the ever-popular photo station.

The learning didn't stop there. Informational displays by the Colonial Soil and Water District, James City County Sustainment Division, Master Gardeners, and Historic Rivers Master Naturalists added layers of knowledge for participants of all ages. Their exhibits sparked curiosity and conversations that carried throughout the event.

The success of this year's Pollinator Palooza would not have been possible without the dedication of numerous Master Gardeners and Master Naturalist volunteers. This year's class of interns was particularly well-represented, with several taking on leadership roles. Additionally, contributions from organizations such as Ford's Colony Garden Club, Dominion Energy, and Bartlett Tree Experts played a vital role in bringing the event to life.

As children departed with full goodie bags, handmade crafts, and beaming smiles, one thing was clear: Pollinator Palooza was much more than just a day in the park. It was a lively, collaborative effort that inspired and educated the next generation of environmental stewards—one pollinator at a time.



Ecology Corner

Master Gardener Magic: Right Plant, Right Place

JUDY KINSHAW-ELLIS '15

One of the biggest lessons I have learned is that to succeed in the garden, you need to place native perennials, grasses, and woody plants in the spots where they thrive. It is a little too early for fall planting and a little too late for spring planting, so now is a good time to plan what you want to plant in the fall or what you want to move.

Are there any bare spots that could use new plants in the fall? Is the area sunny or shaded? Does it receive sun only in the morning or in the afternoon? Is the area usually dry or wet? Does it flood occasionally, or does water stand after heavy rain? If you're unsure about the light and soil conditions, start checking to choose the right plants.

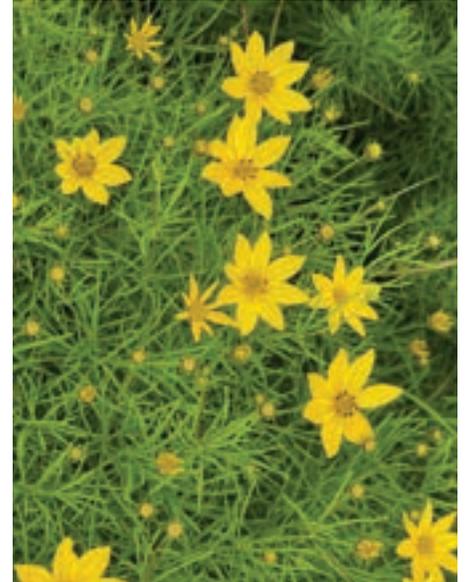
If you have a dry, sunny area and are looking for a great plant that does not get more than a foot or 18 inches tall, Threadleaf Coreopsis (*Coreopsis verticillata*) or Butterfly Weed (*Asclepias tuberosa*) are good choices. The added bonus of Butterfly Weed is that it is a milkweed and host plant for Monarchs.

Do you need something a little taller? Aromatic Aster (*Symphotrichum oblongifolium*) is a good choice, and it will bloom late into the fall. For something other than a forb, Little Bluestem (*Schizachyrium scoparium*) is a grass that provides interest all year round. While it is growing during the summer, it has a blue cast to it. In the fall, it turns a rusty color, and in the winter, it is brown but stays upright.

A sunny and wet area is probably not as common as a sunny and dry one, but fortunately, we have several native plants that thrive in these conditions. Blue Flag Iris (*Iris virginica*) and Rough-stemmed Goldenrod (*Solidago rugosa*) are shorter plants that will work. If you have more space to fill, Swamp Milkweed (*Asclepias incarnata*) and Three-nerved Joe Pye Weed will grow to three to five feet, and pollinators will love them both. If you are looking for a small tree or shrub, consider Buttonbush (*Cephalanthus occidentalis*) or Sweet Pepperbush (*Clethra alnifolia*).

For dry shade, our native ferns are always a good choice, but they are not the only plants that will grow in the shade. Golden Ragwort (*Packera aurea*) blooms early and self-seeds. Once its flowers fade, it

Threadleaf Coreopsis
(*Coreopsis verticillata*)



Butterfly Weed (*Asclepias tuberosa*)



makes a nice groundcover. Blue Mistflower (*Conoclinium coelestinum*) is another plant that happily self-seeds. Both Ragwort and Blue Mistflower are less than 18 inches tall. For something a little taller, try Hoary Mountain Mint (*Pycnanthemum incanum*) and Bluestem Goldenrod (*Solidago caesia*). While you may need to keep an eye on the Mountain Mint if it appears to spread a bit too quickly, the Bluestem Goldenrod is a well-behaved, compact goldenrod that can tolerate some shade.

Some ferns and Blue Mistflower can do double duty by living in either wet or dry shade conditions. Cardinal Flower (*Lobelia cardinalis*) and New York Ironweed (*Vernonia noveboracensis*) are taller plants that can add some height. Soft Rush (*Juncus effusus*) is a lovely clumping grass that can add texture to your shade garden.

If you are covering a fairly large area, consider planting plugs in the fall. Many of them grow surprisingly fast, and within a couple of years, you will not be able to tell that you did not plant larger plants. Now is the time to get those plugs ordered for fall delivery. Take some time now to figure out your growing conditions and select the plants you want to add. Fall will be here soon, and you will be ready to fill any empty spots in your garden.

Blue Mistflower (*Conoclinium coelestinum*)



Photo credit: Judy Kinshaw-Ellis

Gardener's Diary

KATHY LYKINS '08

On July 21, 2025, among the Shield's flowers, it was another hot and humid morning. Lots of leaves were raked from the front of the bed. Deadheading, removal of some balsam, and transplanting a few celosia were the tasks we completed. The phlox, which we reintroduced to the Shields after a few years of absence, is doing well.

Pat A. noticed some summer blight on a few blue lobelia, so it was pulled and treated. There's still plenty of summer left, and so far, the plants and our Master Gardeners are going strong. An interesting note, shared by Janet F. this morning, is that gomphrena is used all over Paris, including in table arrangements. I will no longer consider it a common filler.

By 9:00, we were starting to feel the heat, so we finished up soon after. Thanks to Liz, Janet, Barb, Pat, and Janet F. for their contribution of their time and effort to the CW garden. Take note of the two photos and our first two visitors of the day on the coneflower and lantana. Lots of pollinator activity this am.



Photo credit: Kathy Lykins

Join our Plastic Recycling Project

ELIZABETH OMASTA '25

On May 1, 2025, the JCCW Master Gardeners joined the NexTrex Recycling Challenge. Our goal is to collect 1000 pounds of soft plastic within 365 days. See the link below for a list of acceptable plastics. If we reach our goal, we will receive a bench from Trex to be placed at the Historic Triangle Learning Garden.

Trex collaborates with the community to collect plastic bags, which are then recycled into decking and outdoor furniture. This composite decking is made from 95% recycled materials, helping to reduce plastic waste and keep it out of landfills. You're encouraged to donate your plastic for this project. If successful, we hope to extend the program beyond the initial 365 days and secure benches for other worksites.

Elizabeth Omasta is the project lead for our Association's effort to collect soft plastics for making park benches in our demonstration gardens. Anyone interested in helping should contact either of the co-project leads, Diana Tiller-Dichtel (dptiller221@gmail.com) or Elizabeth Omasta (elizabeth.jones@gmail.com). They will be at the Williamsburg Library parking lot 15 minutes before each MG membership meeting to collect plastic.

Acceptable Plastics (https://stinainc.com/jsfcode/upload/wd_493/20250203122600_9_jsfwd_493_q2_1.pdf)

Home Food Production

Cool and Warm Season Vegetables: How Much to Grow

JANET ROCHESTER '24

Cool Season Vegetables

Cool-season vegetables are those that can withstand a cool spell or frost without damage. They can be planted before the last frost in your area, provided the soil is warm enough. Leafy and some root vegetables are considered cool season, including beets, cabbage, carrots, lettuce, onions, peas, radishes, and spinach.

Warm Season Vegetables

Warm-season vegetables are sensitive to frost and can be damaged or killed by it. They should be planted after the last frost date without protection. These vegetables are mainly grown for their fruits, although beans are often not considered a fruit. They include beans, corn, cucumbers, eggplants, melons, peppers, squash, and tomatoes.

Frost-free Days

The USDA publishes hardiness zones that provide temperature and frost information for the country, updating them periodically based on actual records. The Williamsburg area is in Zone 7b, which means the minimum temperature is likely to be between 10°F and 15°F. The last frost typically occurs between April 5-15, and the first frost between October 25 and November 5. This results in approximately 200 frost-free days, but keep in mind that weather patterns can be unpredictable.

How Much Do I Grow?

Your garden goals will help answer this question. Do you want a large crop of a few vegetables to preserve or share with others? Or family-sized harvests of various vegetables? Consider how much time, effort, and money you're willing to invest. Which vegetables provide the most value?

A general rule is to grow as much as you can care for, not just what you can eat. Most home gardeners aren't aiming for complete self-sufficiency but want a steady supply of fresh vegetables throughout the growing season. Luckily, some vegetables and herbs can survive the winter here, providing a continuous supply of fresh produce all year long. If you preserve part of your harvest, you can enjoy vegetables from your garden every day of the year. Our long growing season also allows for two plantings of cool-season vegetables, one in spring and one in fall.



Brickyard Landing's Latest Improvements

JUDY KINSHAW-ELLIS '15

Photos by **DONNA BENSON '22**

Last month, volunteers at Brickyard Landing finished a large dry riverbed, and in the first week of July, they installed a smaller one. A third will be installed before summer ends. The riverbed swales appear to be functioning as intended with the July rains, which is encouraging.

Thanks to Bob Gaul, the lead park attendant at Brickyard Landing, who installed the first new park bench near the river. The bench was donated by someone who attended a park tour with the Native Plant Society. We have more benches planned, but we also have space for additional ones if you're interested in making a donation. Contact Judy or Donna for more information.

A big thank you also goes to Donna Benson and our team for keeping everything moving this month while Judy was globe-trotting. They continued weeding, cleaning up, and mulching the food forest, which is not easy work but makes a significant difference in the park's overall appearance.

In our flower beds, we seeded Cosmos, Zinnias, and Partridge Pea in spring, and they're starting to bloom. So, look for pollinators. The meadow is a bit overgrown, but we hope our perennials are developing roots and will bloom next summer. Our three interpretive signs have been delivered (and they are beautiful) and will be installed soon.

We always welcome extra help, so if you'd like to see or participate in our progress, our workdays are Mondays and Thursdays from 8:00 a.m. to 10:00 a.m. The Brickyard is located at 990 Brickyard Road, Toano. For more information, email Judy (kinshawellis@gmail.com) or Donna Benson (mid520@mac.com). Stop by and check us out!



Our Archives Delivered to Swem Library

PATSY MCGRADY '10 and **HOPE YELICH '14**

Patsy and Hope (pictured) have collected, identified, reviewed, and categorized historical materials dating back to our Association's formation in the 1980s. The material was delivered to the Swem Library for the Williamsburg Historical Collection on May 28. Their archiving efforts started in mid-January 2025. Most of the material had been randomly stored in files at the VCE office in Toano.

Emphasis was on material not currently available in digital form. They were able to collect James City County Williamsburg Master Gardener Association (JCCWMGA) newsletters from the earliest days through 2003. The newsletters are available digitally on the MG website starting in late 2003. Business meeting minutes were collected for the years through 2007. Board minutes were found through 2015; however, no minutes for 2012 were found. Each year of the various documents did not necessarily include every month.

Other categories of information included:

- Governance documents to include bylaws and mission statements
- Projects
- Photographs
- Newspaper articles and photos
- Various efforts to develop an MG history

If anyone is interested in seeing the materials, Michael Runyon at Swem has advised, "I'm not sure how quickly the materials will be processed, but once they have been processed, MGs are welcome to research with them in the Reading Room. In the meantime, if an urgent situation arises that requires someone to view a specific item or set of records, we will do our best to accommodate their request. "

The Swem Library (<https://libraries.wm.edu/>) is located on Landrum Drive at the College of William & Mary. The library is named for Earl Gregg Swem, College Librarian from 1920 to 1944. In 2008, the Princeton Review rated William & Mary's library system as the eighth best in the United States.



Scavenger Hunt at the Farmers Market

ANNE HUNT '23

We invite you and your kids to explore the fun world of fruits and vegetables with the Fruit Sleuths Scavenger Hunt, hosted by the James City County Williamsburg Master Gardeners Association at the Williamsburg Farmers Market on August 16, 2025, from 9:00 a.m. to 11:00 a.m. This fun-filled scavenger hunt teaches kids that many so-called vegetables are actually fruits (if it has seeds, it's a fruit).

Kids will receive (while supplies last) a colorful lanyard, a clipboard, and a Fruit Sleuths-themed scavenger hunt worksheet to help guide them through five educational stations set up around the Farmers Market.

Master Gardeners will staff these stations, which highlight a “vegetable” that is actually a fruit, such as a tomato or a squash. Kids earn a star sticker on their worksheets each time they find a station! Plus, those who complete their quest will win prizes, including a bottle of bubbles at the Master Gardener Booth, where they can also explore the educational display, “Botanically Speaking, I’m a Fruit”!

Join us at the Williamsburg Farmers Market on August 16 for a morning of discovery, learning opportunities, and fun activities that ignite curiosity and promote a love of nature. This event is in partnership with the Williamsburg Farmers Market’s POP Club (Power of Produce).



AUGUST 2025



Farmers Market Schedule for Summer 2025

Watch the Video - <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=4cGRDOJ0xKQ>

Month	Day	Where	Address
August	02	Williamsburg	345 W. Duke of Gloucester
	09	New Kent County	7589 New Kent Hwy
	16	Williamsburg	345 W. Duke of Gloucester
	23	Toano	7891 Richmond Rd.
September	06	Williamsburg	345 W. Duke of Gloucester
	13	Williamsburg	345 W. Duke of Gloucester
	20	Williamsburg	345 W. Duke of Gloucester
	27	Toano	7891 Richmond Rd.

For more information, click on this link: <https://jccwmg.org/wordpress/find-expert-gardening-help-at-the-farmers-marke/>

SCAVENGER HUNT FARMERS MARKET!



Persimmons at the Governor's Palace

BILL DICHTEL, '18

On July 22, we had a great crew, good weather, and a productive session at the Governor's Palace Herb Garden. After walking over to the garden, we toured the herbs, reviewed their status, and determined what needed to be done. Mother Nature has kept the herbs well-watered, so watering was not one of our duties except for our new plantings.

We had lost our borage, and Jayce worked planting a rosemary bush and two betony plants to fill that area. Work was done to control the overgrown oregano and keep it under better control. The fennel was cleaned up and supported. The herbs were trimmed, and their leaves were cleaned, while invasive grass was removed. The pine straw mulch was freshened, and some plant signs were replaced.

It appears that several volunteers sampled persimmons before I took their picture. Not ripe yet! Here's a link to a short video that demonstrates how to spot ripe persimmons: <https://youtu.be/mlkqUG2wail>. Thanks to an excellent crew for a job well done!





Comprised of over 200 master gardeners, the James City County Williamsburg Master Gardener Association serves the gardening public in Williamsburg, New Kent, Charles City, Upper York, and James City Counties.

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