

THE COLONIAL MASTER GARDENER



**Celebrating 42 Years of Helping our
Neighbors Grow!**

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

SEPTEMBER 2025

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vp-communications@jccwmg.org

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vmga-rep@jccwmg.org

VCE ANR Agent
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vceagent@jccwmg.org

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=f6FfhFVSVVRFBax5QVKLnT3W7oCeAb.1>
Meeting ID: 987 6849 5293
Passcode: 23185

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The submission deadline for the upcoming October 2025 newsletter is September 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.



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President-Elect's Message

ANNE HUNT '23

Dave asked me to write this month's letter, a task I happily accepted as an opportunity to reflect on the events of the past month. Recently, at our Sunday family dinner, my 6-year-old great nephew reminded me that a cucumber is a fruit, something he learned from the JCCW Master Gardeners at the Fruit Sleuths Scavenger Hunt. The event, held at the Williamsburg Farmers Market, was filled with energy and excitement for market-goers of all ages.

As we worked together on this community project, I was truly inspired (and, of course, not surprised) by the incredible positivity and helpfulness of my fellow JCCW Master Gardeners. Sharing knowledge and fostering a love for gardening is what we do best, and witnessing young minds light up with curiosity is a reward like no other.

Coming from a robust Master Gardener program in Tucson to an equally robust program here in Williamsburg (my hometown) has been a dream come true. The friendships I've formed and the connections I continue to make are truly wonderful. I sincerely hope that everyone in our Master Gardener community shares my feelings: the joy and camaraderie that come from our shared passion for gardening are heartwarming and downright fun.

Let's continue to inspire our community and each other, as our collective efforts are what make our Master Gardener program so special.



Fruit Sleuths Scavenger Hunt at the Williamsburg Farmers Market

ANNE HUNT '23

Event Overview

The James City County Williamsburg Master Gardeners hosted the energetic Fruit Sleuths Scavenger Hunt on August 16, 2025, in partnership with the Power of Produce (POP) at the Williamsburg Farmers Market. The event drew 61 excited children and their parents, all eager to explore the wonders of fruits and vegetables.

Scavenger Hunt Experience

Young participants, dubbed “fruit sleuths,” learned the botanical lesson that anything with seeds is technically a fruit. Equipped with vibrant lanyards, clipboards, and thoughtfully designed worksheets from Anne Hunt, the children navigated five educational stations around the market. Each station—manned by two Master Gardeners—focused on surprising “fruits in disguise,” such as cucumbers, eggplants, peppers, and squash.

Creative Engagement

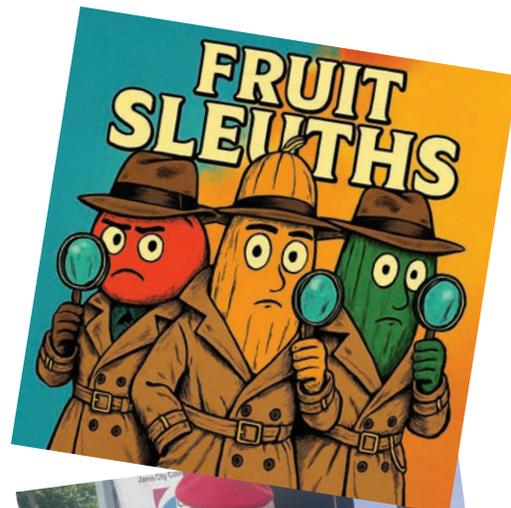
The scavenger hunt was further enlivened with whimsical, fruit-inspired limericks crafted by Sue Barton. For example:

“Some say tomatoes are fruit,
Disguised in a vegetable suit.
I’m juicy and red,
And often it’s said,
I’m perfect on pizza to boot.”

As children visited each station, they collected star stickers to mark their progress. The journey concluded at the Master Gardener Booth, where Michele Garard, dressed as a talking tomato, presented an engaging exhibit titled “Botanically Speaking, I’m a Fruit,” attracting attendees of all ages.

Prizes and Appreciation

Crystal Skeeter-Davis, along with other Master Gardeners, delighted participants with fun rewards such as stickers and bottles of bubbles. The event seamlessly combined education, entertainment,



and hands-on discovery, leaving youngsters and parents alike with a richer appreciation for nature's variety.

Thank You!

A heartfelt thank you extends to everyone who participated, as well as to the dedicated Master Gardeners who made the day possible. Special recognition goes to the Planning Team and Volunteers: Anne Hunt, Crystal Skeeter Davis, Sue Barton, Michelle Gerard, Wayne Koenig, Nancy Clifton, Trey Clifton, Barbara Floyd, Cathy Johnson, Pat Lytton, Carol Moore, Sis Obidowski, Anne Odell, Debbie Sorrell, and Vicky Velez.



Williamsburg Botanical Garden and Freedom Park Arboretum

MARY SIPE '14

The garden looks wonderful with fall blooms already emerging. This two-acre garden is nearly 20 years old and features many mature trees and shrubs, including over 150 species of woody plants. This summer, the Garden and Grounds Crew Teams have done an excellent job maintaining the area despite the hot and humid weather. We especially appreciate the help from the interns, who consistently show enthusiasm for the variety of gardening tasks they are assigned.

In addition to gardening, we are also working on improving the educational information for our visitors. About two years ago, we began replacing some of the educational signs in the garden. The second phase of this project began this year, focusing on providing detailed plant information for all the plants in the garden. Previously, the system mainly documented woody plants. Now with the new Plantsoon system, we can document plants by garden bed and area, eliminating the need for a QR code on each plant. As you can imagine, this is an enormous task with hundreds of plants to add. However, we believe it is essential to supplement our metal plant signs with detailed information about growth habits, requirements, and other relevant details.

We have also updated our website (www.williamsburgbotanicalgarden.org) to address technical issues and enhance the management of FAQs and administrative tasks. It was a significant effort, but well worth it. Be sure to subscribe to our email list on the homepage to receive updates on our events, including Learn & Grow programs, yoga classes, and children's activities.

Since we have no paid staff, we place a particular value on our volunteers. We especially depend on the James City County Williamsburg Master Gardeners, as we couldn't maintain a garden of this size without their dedication and expertise. If you haven't visited the Williamsburg Botanical Garden recently, now's a great time! It is in James City County's Freedom Park, [5537 Centerville Rd, Williamsburg](https://www.google.com/maps/place/5537+Centerville+Rd,+Williamsburg,+VA+23188), VA 23188.



Business Notes



Internal Education

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

Introduction to Container Gardening

Tuesday, Sep. 9, 2025
1-2 p.m.

Historic Triangle Campus in Williamsburg
Library Classroom, 100M



Presented in partnership with the
James City County Williamsburg
Master Gardener Association





Farmers Market Schedule for Fall 2025

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

Month	Day	Where	Address
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/>





A Guided Adventure

Tour the Lewis Ginter Botanical Garden!

JANET FENDER '19 and
CRYSTAL SKEETER-DAVIS '22

Hello! My name is Janet Fender, and I, along with my fellow Master Gardener, Crystal Skeeter-Davis, would like to invite you to attend the James City County Williamsburg Master Gardener Association's fall garden tour. This year, we're headed to the Lewis Ginter Botanical Garden on September 11, 2025.

We'll depart by bus from the James City County Recreation Center at 8:00 a.m. and return at 3:00 p.m. The cost per person is \$50, payable by check or online at the time of registration. Here's the online registration form: <https://jccwmg.org/wordpress/lewis-ginter-reg>. Additionally, you can find information about the tour's special features and the Divine catered lunch. Of course, you're welcome to bring your own brown bag.

As a Master Gardener and Board member of the American Horticultural Society (AHS), I want to address the needs of Master Gardeners. Your input on improving AHS services and connecting our groups is welcome, and I'll share your ideas in upcoming planning meetings. Join me on the JCCMGA Lewis-Ginter Garden Tour—let's chat on the bus!

Seats are going fast! For more details, please contact me (jsfender2@gmail.com) or Crystal (crystalskeeterdavis@gmail.com). Learn more about this tour and get your tickets on our website: <https://jccwmg.org/wordpress/lewis-ginter-reg>.

VMGA Report from August 10, 2025

MARILYN M. RIDDLE, Unit Rep

The Rockbridge County unit hosted the meeting. President S.M. Smith promptly began the agenda, followed by brief reports from officers and committees.

- Communications: Chair F. Reilly requested that all units submit event details to the VMGA website in a timely manner.
- Education: [The next VMGA education event is scheduled for September 20 at Virginia State University, titled “Optimizing Vegetable Gardens with Soil and Water Management.”](#) Two professors will present, and short field trips are included. Cost: \$20 for members, \$25 for non-members; sign up at VMGA.net.
- Membership: Chair T. Harper’s final call for member renewals is September 1; the updated roster will be distributed in October.
- State Fair Nominating: Chair S. Ragon shared the master schedule on August 10. The decision on state fair participation is pending; input from veteran Gary Streb is being sought. For officer nominations, contact L. Paulson (ljp6651@comcast.net) or M. Riddle (mriddle@cox.net).
- State Master Gardeners’ Office: G. Stern is gathering unit histories and will share them via email. Two webinars will continue each month. Leadership development training details are forthcoming. The meeting ended before noon.

The Virginia Master Gardener Association (VMGA) has supported Extension Master Gardeners statewide since 1990, focusing on education, communication, and networking, and coordinating with VCE and VT leadership to address member needs and collaboration opportunities.

Clara Byrd Baker Clean-Up Day

FRIDAY, SEPTEMBER 12

10:00 A.M.-12 NOON

3131 Ironbound Road

(Near the Five Forks Intersection)

Contact Gary Griffith, garygriffithwjccmga@gmail.com

Master Gardener Graduation and Upcoming Events

SUE BARTON '20

Class of 2025 Graduation

The Extension Master Gardeners (EMG) of the class of 2025 have dedicated their spring and summer to EMG projects, logging over 1375 hours of volunteer service. Their graduation will take place at our regular monthly meeting on December 4, 2025.

Community Information Session

The EMG training team is preparing a presentation at the Williamsburg Regional Library Auditorium on October 25, 2025, from 11:00 AM to 12:00 PM. This session will provide an overview of the EMG program and explain how to apply. All community members are welcome to attend. Current EMGs are encouraged to share this opportunity with anyone who may be interested, as many recent participants have joined through member referrals.

Become a Master Gardener!

Applications for the 2026 class will open on November 1, 2025. We anticipate welcoming 22 to 23 new EMG trainees and interns.

Intern Volunteer Milestone - Badge Ceremony

SUE BARTON '20

After completing 50 hours of volunteering, the interns were officially recognized at a badge ceremony. Pictured is Terry Mcglennon, Training Lead, with some of those honored: Arnie Cogswell, La Shala Smith, Mike Beckman, Emily Warren, and Debbie Sorrell.



JCCWMGA Milestone Awards

The James City County Williamsburg Master Gardener Association (JCCWMGA) celebrates its volunteers' achievements that took place in 2024. Awards included recognition for cumulative volunteer hours and a prestigious county-wide honor for a distinguished member.

The county-wide award is the Peg Boarman Lifetime Achievement Award. In April 2024, Master Gardener Judy Kinshaw-Ellis received this award. It is the highest volunteer honor presented by James City County. Her achievements included initiatives at Freedom Park and Brickyard Landing, as well as tree plantings and grant writing.

The JCCWMGA recognizes its volunteers for their accumulated service hours, with pins and certificates from the state office. The awardees who reached milestones from their efforts in 2024 include:

250 hours

Amanda Kiritz
Anne Nordin
Beverly Davis
Connie Motley
Deeno O'Connell
Ellen Lee
Jay Templin
Jody Stephens
Linda Becker
Theasha Faison-Davis

500 Hours

Alexandra Muhly
Camille Fisher
Frank Caruso
Janet Fender
Linda Berryman
Mary Grogan
Nancy Lia
Dot Finnegan

1,000 hours

Barry Holland
Debe Sineath
Elizabeth Myers
Gary Griffith
Mary Sipe
Pamela VanCott
Susan Barton
Susan Zickel

2,000 hours

Jean Johnston

3,000 hours

Patricia Abraham

4,000 hours

David Banks

The Virginia Cooperative Extension is excited to present more than 700 milestone awards earned in 2024 to Virginia's Extension Master Gardeners throughout the state, along with many thanks for the amazing contribution they make to their communities every day.



Speaker's Bureau Seeks Co-chair

JAY TEMPLIN '19

With Angela Cingale stepping down, we need a new co-chair for the 2026 Speakers' Bureau. When I first stepped up, I was able to manage it alone for a while, but when Angela joined the team, she made my life so much easier. I need someone to assist with handling requests and forwarding them to the appropriate speaker for availability checks. If they are available, we connect them with the requester. It's simple, but having someone else who can do this when I can't is essential.

I've just returned from vacation and am now in the process of managing several requests that came in while I was away. Ideally, the co-chair would also be willing to give presentations, but that's not a strict requirement. I usually spend only a couple of hours a month on this, so it's not too much of a burden, but it's important to have a backup in case I get caught up in other things or decide to build a Hobbit hole in the mountains after winning the lottery. Occasionally, I receive requests for programs we don't offer, and I've created and delivered a few of those myself. However, I wouldn't expect anyone else to do the same.

On that note, I'm also calling out for new people interested in joining the Speaker's Bureau. I am always looking for new speakers, and it would be great to pair newcomers with experienced speakers to learn some of the presentations we already have. With Angela stepping down, we've lost several presentations that she was the only one who did. The point is that if someone wants to create their own programs, that's fantastic, or if they want to learn existing ones, that's equally good. However, the important part is that if someone enjoys research and writing but prefers not to do the talking, I want them to be part of the Speaker's Bureau too.

The last talk I wrote took around 12 hours of research, writing, editing, and creating a PowerPoint presentation. I simply don't have the time to develop more than two or three new talks a year—though I could do one almost every month if someone else were writing them. As the kids say, I just don't have enough spoons. Interested? I hope so. Contact me, jay.templin@jyf.virginia.gov.

Become a Project Leader at Water Wise!

ELVIN & KAY CLAPP '18

We already have a strong core group of dedicated master gardener volunteers, but we need project leaders to replace Elvin and Kay Clapp, who are retiring. This is a great way to serve the local community and have a fantastic time learning and working in a popular garden. Find out more by contacting Kay or Elvin Clapp (kaykclapp75@hotmail.com), or Gary Griffith, our VP of Projects (vp-prejects@jccwmg.org).

A typical workday at Water Wise includes one in late July with eight Master Gardeners and two volunteers. Recent rains made it ideal for weeding, deadheading, and pruning shrubs. Our team made 43 contacts, including 12 children, who participated in arts and crafts activities. We also installed an insect watering dish using stones as landing spots for butterflies and other insects that needed a safe place to drink.

Building an insect watering station is a great summer activity that is welcomed by insects and small birds alike, especially during prolonged dry spells when moisture can be harder to find. They are easy to make and provide a secure place for insects to hydrate or gather water. They also offer a way for us to show parents and kids why caring for our insects is so key to protecting our environment.

The Water-Wise Demonstration Project is located in front of the Human Services Center at 5249 Olde Towne Road. Over 15,000 people walk through this garden each year. They are generally families, often bilingual, seeking social services and affordable health services. Our water-wise garden provides a peaceful setting for them, showcasing a variety of drought-tolerant perennial plants in a low-maintenance, low-water setting. For more information about the Water Wise garden, see <https://jccwmg.org/wordpress/learning-gardens/waterwise/?highlight=waterwise>. Consider volunteering as a project leader by contacting Kay or Elvin Clapp (kaykclapp75@hotmail.com).

Don't miss:

Making a Resilient Drought-Tolerant Garden Part II: Techniques and Strategies, <https://jccwmg.org/wordpress/making-a-resilient-drought-tolerant-garden-part-ii-techniques-and-strategies/>



Fostering a Balanced Eco-System in Your Garden

JANET ROCHESTER '24

You grow your vegetables so that they will be tasty to eat. Many other creatures, 2-, 4-, 6-, and 8-legged, all agree and want a share of your harvest, so we have developed countermeasures to prevent this theft. We start with prevention to minimize access or attractiveness of our plants. When this fails, we turn to treatment.

Prevention

Healthy plants are less susceptible to some pests, so having optimum growing conditions is the first step. The healthiest plants result from the right soil conditions, pH, and mulch, which prevent weeds and maintain an even moisture level in the soil. Companion planting, growing aromatic plants with your vegetables, can deter some pests. Plants such as onions, garlic, and celery are not only useful vegetables in their own right but also discourage some insect and caterpillar pests. Herbs and aromatic flowers have similar benefits and provide pollen for bees and other beneficial insects.

Physical barriers, like the one shown in the photo, can serve as a prevention or treatment. Fences will keep rabbits out of your garden, as well as deer, if the fence is tall enough. Keep birds out of fruits by covering plants or small tree parts with netting. Mole tunnels can undermine plant roots and be taken over by voles, which eat the roots of carrots, beets, onions, and other root vegetables. They can be excluded from your garden by using fine-mesh wire or other physical barriers, such as underground barriers around the edge of your garden, or by using a raised bed for root vegetables. Mesh screening and row covers will keep insect pests off your vegetables.

Treatment

First, identify the pest! Unless you know what is causing the damage, taking action is unlikely to succeed and may harm your plants or beneficial insects. Insects and caterpillars are the most common garden pests. Some are pests only on specific types of vegetables. Others are generalists who eat whatever is available. For example, spider mites cause severe leaf damage that can harm the plant. Wireworms eat plant roots, damaging them sufficiently to cause wilting or death of the plant if untreated.

Once you have identified the pest, you can take action. Mechanical measures are often effective. Pick off and discard the invading insect or caterpillar, place traps for slugs or other pests, and install physical barriers around your plants. If chemical controls are considered necessary, opt for those that are least disruptive to the environment and beneficial species. Always follow instructions carefully and apply treatments selectively. Dispose of excess and the container as directed.

Don't forget that encouraging natural predators should also be part of your pest control strategy. Many insects are insect predators, such as praying mantises, ladybugs, and parasitic wasps. Toads, birds, and bats eat flying insects. We need all the collaborators we can recruit!



In a Colonial Garden

KATHY LYKINS '08

Monday, August 18, with the arrival of some much-needed rain, there was no need to water the gardens, hooray! Lots of deadheading, pruning of gomphrena, and trimming out bad sections of lantana and New England asters. Also, pulling those pesky weeds that blend seamlessly into the ground. Pat's photos highlight the many branches of the blue lobelia, which was a big success this year. We also like the addition of the cut leaf against the white fence. All the garden beds look gorgeous, so there are no standout winners. Not too shabby for the end of August! Now, fingers crossed, we get through hurricane season without a visit. A big thanks to Charlene, Pat A., Barb, Liz, and Janet for all their hard work this morning.



Shield's Planning for 2026

KATHY LYKINS '08

Monday, August 25, was another productive morning in the Shield's garden. We deadheaded, weeded, pruned, watered, and cleaned the bricks. New vegetable seedlings were watered, and flowers received a light sprinkle. We discussed ideas for 2026, including red spider zinnia and adding marigolds to the L garden, which have performed well this year after previous issues. The replanted phlox, purple, and cutleaf coneflowers have increased color and texture. Barb identified lantana's plague as being caused by crowding and moisture. Despite challenges such as last winter's cold snap and heavy rain, the garden has thrived

thanks to the efforts of our dedicated volunteers and high-quality nursery plants. Thanks to Pat A., Barb, Liz, Janet F., Tom, and Charlene for their efforts. Photos show the woodpile garden and Beagle Gap, highlighting activity atop the thistle.



Transition to a Fall Garden

PAT ABRAHAM '10

Friday, August 22, was a productive day in Shields' vegetable garden. Our team transitioned to a fall setup by removing old plants, planting mustard and turnip seeds, and tidying up. We also cleared beans and radish plants to prepare for new additions. Thanks to Lorraine, Janet F, Janet S, and Rick for their dedication. It was an enjoyable and successful session.



Stilt Grass!

ELIZABETH MCCOY, Nature Writer & Photographer

Your window to destroy any Japanese stilt grass on your property closes when its seeds emerge in late August through October. Asian stilt grass is an aggressive, fast-growing invasive plant that quickly becomes weedy, providing very few ecological benefits while crowding out native plants and altering the balance of local ecosystems. Here is more information on this invasive: <https://jccwmg.org/wordpress/eliminate-stilt-grass-now/>.





Ecology Corner

Installing a Dry Riverbed Swale

JUDY KINSHAW-ELLIS, '15

They probably don't want you to know this, but some of the interns from the latest training class are becoming experts on installing dry riverbed swales. The swales required some digging and the laborious task of hauling three different sizes of rocks to the site, but these interns provided quite a bit of help, and the process is straightforward if you want to install a swale at your home.

If you have a low-lying area where water stands after a rainstorm, or even if you have an eroding area, a swale might be a practical and attractive option. In general, the swale should be half as deep as it is wide. As a point of reference, the Brickyard swales are all three feet wide and 18 inches deep.

To begin, take a shovel and draw a line in the shape you want your swale to be. Remember that a curve is often more interesting than a straight line. You can then use a board or yardstick to help you dig to the desired width. You will not

need to dig the entire width the same depth, but slope the sides down to the deepest point in the middle of your swale.

After digging out the swale, roll out the geotextile fabric. The fabric acts as a weed block, and it is permeable. After you get the fabric in the swale, line the bottom with about two inches of the smallest rock. Next, place the largest rocks at the bottom and along the sides of the swale. Move the rocks around until the riverbed looks the way you like.

Be sure to keep the geotextile up over the top edge of the swale—mulch over the top of the landscaping fabric, adding rocks to keep it in place. Now you can enjoy the next stormwater event knowing that your swale will prevent erosion and hold that surplus rainwater until it can soak into the ground.

Your Swale Checklist includes:

- Shovel
- Friends to help dig
- Tape measure, yardstick
- Mulch
- Geotextile landscaping fabric, 6-foot width for a 3-foot wide swale, in the length you need
- Small stones
- Medium-sized stone (3” to 6” or whatever size you can find)
- Large stones to add interest (optional)
- Search “how much rock is needed for a dry riverbed” for a formula to determine how much rock to buy





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.

Office: 3127 Forge Rd., Toano, VA 23168
Mailing: P.O. Box 1951, Williamsburg, VA 23187
jccwmg1@gmail.com | (757) 564-2175