

In Season with MGPW

the quarterly of the
Master Gardeners
Prince William

Summer 2021

bee balm (*Monarda didyma*)
photo by Jason Alexander

Summer

PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

Master Gardener Volunteers (MGs) have a lot of activities that help our community. I would like to highlight one that I have seen in action for many years and believe is one of the most important things we do in our world.

Plant a Row for the Hungry, in Dale City and Manassas, involves only 2 hours on Sundays at the Dale City Farmers Market and Thursdays at the Manassas Farmers Market, and is very rewarding. Volunteers pack vegetables donated by vendors and farmers into crates and stack on pallets. All produce gets distributed to Prince William families in need. This is often the only fresh food these families get.

If you have never been involved with this activity, please think about coming out. Please let me know if you have questions or contact the MGs who are coordinating these efforts. The donations are getting bigger each week. Coordinators for Dale City: Pamela Forshay pkforshay@comcast.net and Robin Stroud robinleastroud@gmail.com. The Manassas Plant A Row coordinator is Pam Rockx at pam.rockx@gmail.com.

If you are an intern, Plant a Row is something you should certainly try. As interns you need to experience all the different things we do. This is an important one without a large time commitment, but with great rewards. Interns can also consider volunteering at the Farmers Markets, work out at the Teaching Garden, or answer questions clients have sent us in the office. (*continued p. 5*)

ACTION ALERT: BIRD MORTALITY EVENT, TAKE DOWN FEEDERS

[Interagency Statement: USGS and Partners Investigating DC Area Bird Mortality Event:](#)
release date June 9, 2021

In late May, wildlife managers in Washington D.C., Virginia, Maryland and West Virginia began receiving reports of sick and dying birds with eye swelling and crusty discharge, as well as neurological signs. No definitive cause of death is identified at this time. (*continued p. 6*)



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TOPICS OF INTEREST

- Lawn
- Prized Plants
- Garden to Table
- Out and About
- Book Nook
- Compost
- In the Community
- Site Visits
- Bee Festival
- Courtesy of Plant NOVA Natives
- Conservation at Home
- Critter Neighbors
- Free Classes

LAWN CARE FOR PWC

Virginia is part of a transition zone between areas where cool and warm season grasses thrive. This can make lawn care in our area challenging. If you're a first time homeowner, new to Prince William County or just looking to better manage your lawn, [Virginia Cooperative Extension can help](#).

We offer help with interpreting soil test results, information on cultural practices, pest identification and pest control recommendations.

For more assistance with lawn care, contact the Virginia Cooperative Extension Environmental Educator at 703-792-4037 or BESTlawns@pwcgov.org.

The [BEST Lawn](#) Program can sample and measure your lawn for you and provide you with a fertilizer schedule that will help promote a healthy lawn.

LAWN: WHAT'S GOING ON WITH MY LAWN? BROWN PATCH DISEASE IN TURF



article and photos by Robin Finehout, Master Gardener Volunteer

Does your turf get brown spots like this in the summer? You were pleased with how lush and green your lawn looked in April and May, and suddenly you woke up one morning with brown circles of what looks like dead grass? Homeowners just like you are seeing these symptoms in their lawn this summer. What causes these brown patches and is your turf grass dying?

A common fungal disease called Brown Patch, caused by the fungus *Rhizoctoria solani*, is a common problem in turf during the summer months. Brown Patch affects all turf species, especially tall fescue (*Festuca arundinacea*) and perennial rye grass (*Lolium perenne*). Brown Patch can be severe in urban and commercial landscapes if the weather conditions favor the growth of the fungus.

Brown patch is a foliar disease that does not kill the roots of the turf plant. Symptoms include circular or elongated straw-colored foliar lesions with a dark brown edge around them. Grass leaves die back and form yellow brown circular patches. This fungus is more active during hot, humid days and nights, with high relative humidity. Night-time watering encourages growth of the fungus, as well as excessive late spring and summer nitrogen fertilization with water soluble nitrogen such as UREA, nitrate, or ammonium. The most vulnerable lawns have lush grass that has been highly fertilized with high nitrogen and are watered at night. The worst cases occur during rainy

(Continued on page 14)



miniature rose
photo by Jason Alexander

PRIZED PLANTS: ROSES

excerpts from Clemson Cooperative Extension

- ◇ Roses range in size from tiny miniatures of 8 inches tall to tree climbing giants that will reach 50 feet or more.
- ◇ Most roses grow fairly rapidly. Many of the modern roses will only live six to 10 years unless given exceptional care. Some species and climbing roses will live 50 years or more.
- ◇ Unfortunately most roses are susceptible to many pests and diseases.
- ◇ Roses prefer a full day of sun. Give roses at least six to eight hours of direct sun a day. Morning sun is especially important because it dries the leaves, which helps prevent disease.
- ◇ The area should have good air circulation.
- ◇ Roses need loose, well-drained, well-aerated soil that contains plenty of organic matter. A raised bed can provide roses with ideal soil conditions. ◇◇



Let's start a conversation
EVERYONE EATS!

[A presentation funded by the Virginia Foundation for Healthy Youth and co-hosted by the Fairfax Food Council Urban Ag Work Group and the Virginia Cooperative Extension](#)

GARDEN TO TABLE: EDIBLE PLANTS FOR YOUR LANDSCAPE AND FRONT YARD, BRIE ARTHUR, AKA THE PLANT LADY

by Maria Stewart, Master Gardener Volunteer

In April, Fairfax County Food Council's Urban Agriculture Work Group sponsored a live virtual presentation with Brie Arthur. Thanks to Virginia Cooperative Extension, the recording of her presentation, [Edible Plants for Your Landscape and Front Yard](#), is available online. Watch this presentation!

Brie Arthur is a bestselling author (*The Foodscape Revolution* and *Gardening with Grains*), PBS contributor, horticulturist, and a speaker not to be missed. She studied landscape design and horticulture at Purdue University and currently serves as President of the International Plant Propagator's Society Southern Region.

In her presentation, she offers practical, easy-to-follow advice for making our landscapes more productive and the environment more balanced.

Living with a Homeowners Association? Brie shares her experiences educating her HOA, showing them how vegetables in the front yard can be delicious—and beautiful. She also shares lists of plants that are easy to grow, look great, and that critters tend to leave alone.



One, of many, astonishing take-aways - Brie suggests planting garlic close together on the edge of a garden bed. Once the garlic grows in, it will create a wall of vegetation that voles will not want to cross. She further explained that, as of 2012, China is the largest producer of garlic, and that 90% of garlic sold in grocery stores is being shipped from 7,000 miles away. So grow some garlic in your landscape. Nothing is more local than your front yard. ♦♦

learn more about Brie Arthur: <https://www.briegrows.com/>

RECIPE:

Garlic Scape Pesto

Ingredients

- ¼ lb. garlic scapes (about 2/3 cup, chopped)
- ¼ cup pine nuts, toasted and finely chopped (optional)
- 1 cup grated Parmesan cheese
- 3 Tbsp fresh lime or lemon juice
- ½ cup olive oil
- Salt to taste

Directions

Puree scapes and olive oil in a food processor until smooth. Stir in pine nuts, Parmesan cheese and lime or lemon juice, and season to taste. Serve on bread, crackers or pasta.

source: [Penn State Extension, growing and using garlic](#)



sprouting garlic cloves from the pantry, ready for planting; photo by Jason Alexander

OUT AND ABOUT:

GLEN BURNIE GARDENS, WINCHESTER, VA

by Jamie Nick, Master Gardener Volunteer



[click here to learn more](#)

Glen Burnie Gardens, located in Winchester VA is an intimate gem of a garden yet at the same time impressive and not to be missed.

The seven acre gardens surround the Glen Burnie House and is just one part of the Museum of the Shenandoah Valley.

In the 1730's Winchester founder James Wood chose this site for his home. The gardens you see today were laid out for the most part by Julian Wood Glass Jr., the last Wood family descendant to own Glen Burnie, and his then partner, R. Lee Taylor, beginning around 1956.

Some of the many gardens are the Herb garden, Water garden, Vegetable garden and greenhouse, and Spring garden. A most popular feature is the Pink Pavilion and sunken garden. Close to home and worth the visit in my opinion. ♦♦

MASTER GARDENERS PRINCE WILLIAM TEACHING GARDEN

The Teaching Garden is a project of the Master Gardener Volunteers. It began as a garden to grow fresh produce for the Plant a Row for the Hungry project and a place where Master Gardeners could teach homeowners how to grow vegetables. The Teaching Garden displays low maintenance gardening techniques that homeowners can implement in their own gardens. It also features plant material that grows well locally.

View the [Teaching Garden Brochure](#) which contains a map of the teaching garden bed layout. View the upcoming events at the Garden [here](#) as well as other horticulture classes offered by the Master Gardeners.

Stay Up-to-Date on the latest from VCE Master Gardeners Prince William!

The Teaching Garden blog



photo by Lynne Lanier Master Gardener Volunteer

“...trees are ‘social creatures’ that communicate with each other in cooperative ways that hold lessons for humans.”

BOOK NOOK: *FINDING THE MOTHER TREE* BY SUZANNE SIMARD



by Paul Douglas Michnewicz, Director of Arts and Events, Reston Community Center

originally appearing in [RCeNews](#) May 21, 2021, reprinted with permission

I have about 20 tall trees in my yard. When I stand by one of them, I like to put my hand on the bark and realize that hundreds of gallons of water and nutrients are flowing from the soil to the leaves and that it is absorbing carbon dioxide (the cause of global warming).

Suzanne Simard, author of the new book entitled *Finding The Mother Tree* says that trees are "social creatures" that communicate with each other in cooperative ways that hold lessons for humans.

Trees are linked to neighboring trees by an underground network of fungi that resembles the neural networks in the brain, she explains. In one study, Simard watched as a Douglas fir that had been injured by insects appeared to send chemical warning signals to a Ponderosa pine growing nearby. The pine tree then produced defense enzymes to protect against the insect. "This was a breakthrough," Simard says. The trees were sharing "information that actually is important to the health of the whole forest." In addition to warning each other of danger, Simard says that trees have been known to share nutrients at critical times to keep each other healthy.

The habit of "knocking on wood" comes from the belief that every tree is inhabited by a spirit known as Hamadryad or Dryad. The action of knocking was practiced by ancient priests to immediately summon this spirit to aid the Priest or Priestess to ward off evil or fulfill a wish. So, the next time you knock on wood, remember that you are summoning the Spirits of the Tree.

What is old becomes new again. ♦♦



A mated pair of Tree Swallows

TREE SWALLOWS: GUESTS ON THE TRAIL

Story & Photos courtesy of Kelly Gough, Master Gardener Intern
originally appearing in 'Bluebird,' a publication of [North American Bluebird Society](#), and reprinted here with permission

When I volunteered to take over management of the Virginia Bluebird Society trail at the Benedictine Monastery in Bristow, I had no idea how much pleasure it would give me. I believe I had only seen a bluebird twice in my life, and now I would get to see them almost daily on a large, beautiful piece of property featuring a monastery, grotto, labyrinth, and a Master Gardener Teaching Garden! This preserved patch of Earth has been lovingly cared for by the Sisters for over 125 years. It is a haven from modern development with open grasslands, many mature trees, and an astonishing variety of wildlife. After two and a half years on the job however, I find I have become fascinated with a less assuming bird that makes use of our bluebird nesting boxes: The Tree Swallow.



Female Bluebird

patch of land again.

Nesting is a long process, and our future Mother Swallow orchestrates its path. Construction will not even begin for several weeks following the Swallows' return. After a long and tiring journey back North, I can only imagine how much rest and replenishment they need to physically prepare for raising and defending a family. Arriving back in their breeding territory around the end of March to mid-April, they are often at the mercy of the weather. A prolonged cold or wet spell at the start of Spring can spell disaster, affecting their ability to find adequate food.

Much consideration goes into inspecting a prospective nest box before deciding it is acceptable for use. As they scout the neighborhood for just the right home, you'll see the

PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

(continued from p. 1)

We are getting back to face-to-face interactions with the public and each other to the extent folks are comfortable. We have started back with clinics at both Manassas and Dale City Farmers Markets, and Saturday in the Garden. As we get back to the new "normal," we will have to incorporate some of the learnings during our pandemic times. One example is the very successful use of Zoom presentations. Some sessions had hundreds of clients participating. These numbers far exceed anything we have done in person and at a very low cost. It also opens us to speakers that we could not possibly afford in person. We will have to find the right mix of our traditional ways of doing business and the new technologies we were forced to adopt. I am now a fairly able Zoom user, something I never even considered before.

I want to thank everybody for the contributions you have made in the past, the present, and future to the Master Gardener program. It makes our community a better place and helping is a great way to live.

Happy gardening! Everybody stay safe and stay healthy. Get a COVID shot for yourself and everybody else in your world! Please feel free to reach out with any questions or concerns: Drobison208@gmail.com

Take care,

David Robison, President,
MGPW, President@MGPW.org

ACTION ALERT: BIRD MORTALITY EVENT

(continued from p. 1)

The District of Columbia Department of Energy and Environment, Maryland Department of Natural Resources, West Virginia Division of Natural Resources, Virginia Department of Wildlife Resources and National Park Service are continuing to work with diagnostic laboratories to investigate the cause of mortality. Those laboratories include the [USGS National Wildlife Health Center](#), the University of Georgia Southeastern Cooperative Wildlife Disease Study and the University of Pennsylvania Wildlife Futures Program.

Birds congregating at feeders and baths can transmit disease to one another. Therefore, the state and District agencies recommend that the public in the outbreak area:

- Cease feeding birds until this wildlife mortality event has concluded;
- Clean feeders and bird baths with a 10% bleach solution;
- Avoid handling birds, but wear disposable gloves if handling is necessary; and
- Keep pets away from sick or dead birds as a standard precaution.

If you encounter sick or dead birds, please contact your state or District wildlife conservation agency. If you must remove dead birds, place them in a sealable plastic bag to dispose with household trash. Additional information will be shared as diagnostic results are received.♦♦♦

Tree Swallows acrobatically swooping through the skies, the sun bouncing off their surprisingly iridescent feathers. They look like they are playing, but in fact these birds are rarely at rest. Most daily activities are done on the wing whether that be grabbing a snack, or bathing. Much of what looks like wind surfing to us is in fact life sustaining activity. Flying insects are the Swallows' main food source and they are gracefully plucked straight out of the sky. No ground foraging here.

With strength regained, it is time to start building the nest and Mom trusts no one but herself to create the perfect nursery for her future chicks. Grass, and occasionally pine needles which are abundant on the trail, are carefully chosen over the next 2 to 4 weeks. Construction is tediously slow. Mom may bring just one piece of material to the nest box at a time weaving it into a solid, almost-flat foundation. Once the foundation is complete feathers will be added to finish off the nest. Whether the feathers are for Mom's roosting comfort, warmth, or camouflaging the eggs they are both functional and luxurious. Who would ever want to leave such a cozy feather bed? Imagine being born into such comfortable surroundings.

Our Mother Tree Swallow will lay between 4 and 7 eggs over a week to 10-day period. Five eggs tends to be the average clutch size on our Monastery trail, though I have seen as few as three in a bad year, and as many as six in a good one. The eggs are all white and slightly pointed on one end. I have heard that occasionally a Tree Swallow will lay pale pink eggs – that would be neat to



Mother Tree Swallow building a nest



The base of the nest is primarily grasses

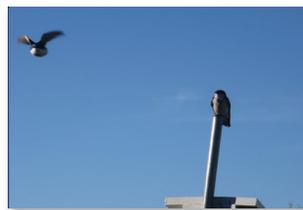


Feathers provide insulation and camouflage

see! Mom begins to incubate once the next-to-last egg is laid. She can delay the start of incubation if her nesting grounds experience an early-Spring recurrence of Winter weather. Though Dad may occasionally roost, this is also something Mom tends to do herself.

Monitoring the boxes after egg laying can expose a volunteer to aggressive behavior from the fiercely protective parents. Personally, I have never heard of a monitor being injured. There are distinct signs that will tell you if a parent is roosting, or if they are perhaps out hunting for a meal. These signs can forewarn you of what to expect when approaching the box. Where there are no Swallows sitting on top of the nest box or flying nearby, I have learned this indicates the parents are not at home. If one of them spies me near the box, it will send up the alarm and both parents will soon be divebombing me! I am careful to make no sudden movements. They have never struck me – I am sure it would hurt them more than it would hurt me – they are just warning me. By moving quickly, I could cause an unintended collision. I do a brief inspection of the box, shut it, and back away slowly.

Other times, I arrive to see Dad sitting right on top of the nesting box. He is faithfully standing guard, ready to protect Mom from any threat or interruption. In these cases, Dad will take flight as I open the box. He will not be aggressive, but he will fly very close



Tree Swallows fiercely guard and protect their nests

To learn more about bluebirds, and other cavity nesting birds, visit:



The North American Bluebird Society is a non-profit education, conservation and research organization that promotes the recovery of bluebirds and other native cavity-nesting bird species in North America.



The Virginia Bluebird Society (VBS) was founded in 1996 to promote bluebirds and other native cavity nesters.

VBS is affiliated with The North American Bluebird Society (NABS) and is a Chapter of the Virginia Society of Ornithology (VSO).

and very slowly keeping an eye on my activity. Sure enough, Mom is there and does not budge from her roosting duty. Satisfied that all is well, I close the box and leave. Dad resumes his position on top of the box watching for any signs of danger. Only very rarely can I check the box unmolested. Tree swallows are very attentive parents. Where Swallow-occupied nest boxes are in close proximity to each other, neighboring parents rush to help defend each other's boxes creating quite an adventure for the monitor as two pair or more of Swallows divebomb, generating enough wind turbulence to stir your hair.

About two weeks later our babies will arrive, all viable eggs hatching within one or two days of each other. Over the next three weeks both our new parents will be busy bringing insects to their young ones and removing fecal sacs. At around 14 days after hatching, the



Tree Swallows may remain in their box during monitoring

parents stop removing the fecal sacs and our luxurious nursery quickly becomes a sticky mess. The chicks will be seen poking their heads out of the nest entrance, almost as if they are seeking a breath of fresh air. What a way to encourage the kids to

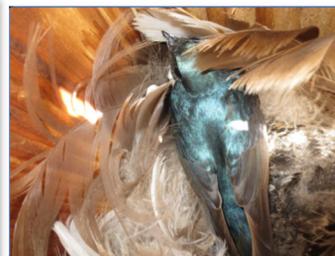
leave home!

As the time of fledging arrives you may be lucky to witness a Tree Swallow version of a neighborhood block party. To entice the fledglings to leave the nest the parents, along with other community adults and juvenile Tree Swallows will assemble in the air around the nest box – almost as if to say, 'Look how much fun you can have if you only come outside.' While our parents may be doting and protective, they also practice tough love. Once their first chick fledges, they will stop delivering food to the nest box. You want breakfast or not, kid? Time to get out of bed!

Our parents may repeat this process with a second brood if conditions are favorable. Once child rearing is complete, the family will disperse within a few-mile radius of the nest box until their long Southerly flight begins in July or August. ◇◇◇



Five day old chicks disguised by feathers



Mom remains on chicks during monitoring



Fifteen day old chicks, growing fast



International Master Gardener College

REGISTRATION INFORMATION:

When: September 12-17, 2021

Where: Our easy-to-use virtual conference platform, EventMobi

Who: Members of the public, Master Gardeners, and Extension specialists

Schedule: Check the [schedule](#) and our [speakers page](#)

Cost: Registration costs \$150, with small additional fees for add-on workshops or T-shirts

Registration information: To go directly to the registration portal, [click here](#). For detailed instructions on [how to register](#), [click here](#). If you encounter any issues during your registration, please contact the Virginia Tech Continuing and Professional Education (CPE) office at cpeinfo@vt.edu or (540) 231-5182.



[click to view program](#)



Maria Wells with her bounty

COMPOST: GROW, EAT... COMPOST...REPEAT

by Maria Wells, Master Gardener Volunteer Intern (*originally printed in Prince William Living, April 16, 2021 to promote Compost Awareness Day*)

While Maria Wells of Prince William County made her first flower garden as a young girl out of an old, repurposed dresser drawer, she only rediscovered this hobby in 2017. "One day, I just wanted to see if I could grow something. I grabbed a whole bunch of kale, and because my family wouldn't eat any of it—they didn't think I knew what I was doing—I ended up eating lots of kale myself."

Her friend recommended that she try using some compost in her garden and, shortly thereafter, she found herself at a local Compost Awareness event. "Something just clicked. I have always been a person to repurpose things so when I first heard about composting, it just made sense to me. Here's a way that I can recycle, have a better garden, and contribute to a healthier environment."

It's stories like Maria's that bring this year's International Compost Awareness Week theme to life: "Grow, Eat...COMPOST...Repeat." Composting is a circular process that takes leftover food and turns it into a compost, which can then be used in soil to grow even better fruits, vegetables and plants. While Maria does this whole loop herself, individuals are able to contribute to any portion of the process and, by doing so, help their local community be more sustainable.

The average American wastes almost one pound of food each day, according to one 2018 U.S. Food and Drug Association study. When placed in a landfill, food and yard waste not only takes up valuable space but it contributes to the release of methane, a greenhouse gas that is at least 25x more powerful than carbon dioxide. Composting this food and yard waste prevents these greenhouse gas emissions and also returns their nutrients to the soil.

Excitingly, there are a number of ways that individuals can recycle their food scraps and yard waste. "I started composting with an above ground bin that I bought from the county but, today, I also compost using a tumbler, an in-ground crab bucket, and a worm farm--this is in my kitchen and is my favorite. I even make a leaf compost in black trash bags. It's compost 5 ways!"

There are also an increasing number of companies in the area that will compost food scraps. Companies like Apex Organix and Compost Crew will collect (*continued p. 9*)



Prince William Master Gardeners, The Nomis Group, and Holy Trinity's youth group team up to make a difference for others

IN THE COMMUNITY: CTFT PROJECT

reported by Nancy Berlin, Natural Resource Specialist/Master Gardener Coordinator

On May 22, Master Gardener Volunteer Jimmie Jones and Master Gardener Intern Christine Mark, worked with [The Nomis Group](#), and the youth group from Holy Trinity/St. Joseph's Catholic Church to refurbish garden beds at [Carried to Full Term](#) (CTFT) in Haymarket.

2021 is the 5th year Master Gardener Volunteers, and volunteers from The Nomis Group have helped prepare gardens for the moms to tend. The youth group, new volunteers this year, joined the efforts to plant the gardens with vegetables and native flowers.

CTFT is a nonprofit organization whose goal is to "equip pregnant and homeless women with the tools to become independent and self-sufficient." The Nomis Group, real estate professionals serving Virginia, Maryland, DC, and Texas, have long supported the gardening projects at CTFT with eager volunteers.

The gardening projects not only help the women CTFT serves grow their own food and prepare nutritious meals for themselves and their children, but the projects also provide a learning and training opportunity for the volunteers.

Frannie Robin, director of CTFT, joined volunteers in the garden, and shared this message:

"This weekend was filled with miraculous moments working and celebrating with people who do the work so that others can have the most basic needs, a home, love, support and safety! Thank you to The Nomis Group for hosting a great golfing fundraiser in support of the women and babies at Carried To Full Term.

Thank you to Nancy Berlin and Christine, a master gardener for planting fruits, flowers and veggies to help moms and babies practice nutritious habits. We appreciate the Nomis G. Int'l for making the job easier by prepping the soil in advance. Thank you to Holy Trinity's youth for putting in the hard work to get the garden started.



Christine Mark, Nancy Berlin, making a difference photos provided by Nancy Berlin

When you see the lives that are being transformed at [carriedtofullterm.org](#), understand that it is not the effort of one but of many. Thank you to Brett J and his brothers, for your continuous support and for putting words to action to create the change and to happily participate in the miracles this work produces." ♦♦♦

GROW, EAT...COMPOST...REPEAT (continued from p. 8)

your weekly food scraps for ~\$15-30 per month, and many towns are offering drop-off locations. Prince William County residents can bring their food and yard waste to the compost facility on Balls Ford Road in Manassas for free.

All of these options will lead to the food being recycled and turned into a nutrient-rich compost. When used in your soil, compost provides organic matter and microorganisms that produce immediate and long-term soil health. And, as plants pull carbon dioxide out of the air, compost will store the carbon in the soil and help to slow global warming.

To help celebrate this year's Compost Awareness Day, Prince William County Solid Waste Division, Freestate Farms and the Virginia Cooperative Extension Prince William Master Gardeners will host a socially distant event on May 8 from 10am to 1pm (masks required). Volunteers from the Master Gardeners will share materials on how and why to use compost as well as how to compost at home. Freestate Farms will provide a free compost sample in your own bucket. Compost bins and buckets will also be available for purchase.

Today, Maria continues her passion for gardening and is in the final stages of completing her Master Gardener's course work. The Master Gardener program provides intensive horticultural training to individuals who then volunteer in the local community.

"I use compost in my vegetable garden, on my flower beds, and around my berry bushes," said Maria. "I get much larger flowers than before and more frequent blooming, and my veggies are more vibrant in color and taste. I also save money now too because I am making enough compost that I don't have to buy any. I win, the environment wins, we all win!" .♦♦♦



AUDUBON AT HOME: WE NEED YOU!

by Leslie Paulson, Master Gardener Volunteer, Audubon at Home Coordinator

Our Audubon at Home Program is for helping our Prince William residents establish a Wildlife Habitat that supports our native wildlife. This has become so important in protecting and providing the correct food and shelter for so many species. There are over 40 species that are on the Wildlife Sanctuary Species list. If you go to this website: <https://www.audubonva.org/audubon-at-home>, you will find the species list and important information on how to start the certification process at your home.

The Audubon at Home program was created to make a difference by supporting the efforts of property owners and managers to become better stewards of nature in their own outdoor spaces. It embraces the principles of the National Audubon Society's Bird-Friendly Communities and promotes citizen participation in conserving and restoring local natural habitat and biodiversity.

Prince William County has over 20 Ambassadors but welcome others to join us. If you are interested in becoming an Ambassador, please get in touch with me, Leslie Paulson, at ljp6651@comcast.net. You can come along on visits to see how it is done. Then in the fall we will have an in-person training that will cover all the paperwork and resources for this program. I am hoping to recruit more Ambassadors, and also find more clients.

In preparation for becoming a fully trained Audubon at Home Ambassador, I recommend you read Doug Tallamy's first book, *Bringing Nature Home*. Tallamy was among the first to bring everyone's attention to the need to change what we plant in our yards. He has 2 other books as well: *Nature's Best Hope* and *The Nature of Oaks*. All will move you to get involved and join this cause for saving our native species for our grandchildren.

If you would like to come join us, just let me know. We can start with some of your yards while we train you to be an Ambassador for wildlife.

"For the first time in history, gardening has taken on a role that transcends the needs of the gardener. Like it or not, gardeners have become important players in the management of our nation's wildlife. It is now within the power of individual gardeners to do something that we all dream of doing: to make a difference. In this case, the 'difference' will be to the future of biodiversity, to the native plants and animals of North America and the ecosystems that sustain them." ~ Douglas W. Tallamy, *Bringing Nature Home*.



site of proposed outdoor classroom at Gainesville Middle School; photos provided by Nancy Berlin

SITE VISITS: A QUARTERLY REPORT

by Grant West, Master Gardener Volunteer

The Virginia Cooperative Extension (VCE) is an outreach arm of Virginia Tech and Virginia State Universities. Nancy Berlin is the coordinator of the Prince William County agency Master Gardener Volunteer program which is funded through the Watershed Branch. We provide research based information and education to citizens of Prince William County, Manassas City, and Manassas Park. We are involved in planning, establishing, and maintaining school garden programs in cooperation with Prince William County Schools throughout that area.

Master Gardeners and VCE staff conducted ten site visits this quarter (April- June 2021) to provide information and written recommendations for community gardens and storm water issues.

Master Gardener Volunteers Maria Wells, Marcy Griffo, Terrence Steele, and Sherrie Bishop went to a home in Montclair to help with erosion issues impacting Lake Montclair, and made recommendations regarding plants that could help to curb the erosion.



On 6 April 2021, VCE staff Natali Walker, Education and Outreach Specialist, Thomas Bolles, Extension Agent, and Nancy Berlin, Education and Outreach Instructor and Master Gardener Coordinator, met with teacher Andrew McIntyre, and principal Cathy Porter-Lucas at Gainesville Middle School to discuss establishing a new outdoor classroom area. A ten-year plan for improving the outdoor areas was discussed, although no specific timeline was indicated. Mr. McIntyre expressed interest in creating arboretum style cohesive plantings and hardscapes that would incorporate arts as well as natural science components.

The area in front of the soccer fields could be considered for a no-mow meadow-type planting area. Also discussed was the addition of several raised vegetable beds by the tennis courts, with sunflowers planted along the right fence line that would bloom in the fall when students return (pictured left).

E.A.G.L.E.S. RESTORATION PROJECT

by Kelly Gough, Master Gardener Intern

April and May were busy months for Virginia Cooperative Extension (VCE) Master Gardener Volunteers. On April 24 and May 8 these environmental educators planted 1,280 native ecotype (local to our county) plants at the [E.A.G.L.E.S](#) (Eastern Area Grounds for Learning Environmental Science) Center, a facility for science programming with Prince William County Schools near Belmont Bay.

Design and plant selections were completed in 2019 before the arrival of Covid-19 and rescheduled when it became safe for the work to take place. The plants were obtained through an [Earth Sangha Plant Matching Grant](#) which supports responsible, small-scale, citizen-led restoration efforts with local native plants across Northern Virginia. Funds were also obtained through the Prince William County Schools Sustainability Office. Educators in Prince William who complete an energy audit at their school may be eligible for these funds for school gardens.

Virginia Cooperative Extension Natural Resource Specialist and Coordinator of the Master Gardener Volunteer program, Nancy Berlin noted, "The collaboration involved in this project between VCE Prince William, Prince William County Schools and Earth Sangha, a non-profit organization, has been a model for future restoration efforts. Master Gardener Volunteers promote the use of native plants in landscapes and public facilities and partner with other community groups in those efforts."

These native plants will draw many beneficial insects, including pollinators and provide a real-life laboratory for students attending programs at the E.A.G.L.E.S. Center. Because the Center hosts programs on water quality for students, this meadowscape will also demonstrate a practical, beautiful stormwater management technique for slowing down, soaking in and filtering stormwater.

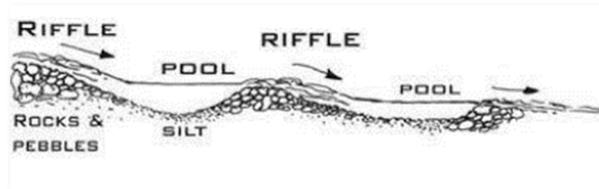
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On 3 May 2021, Master Gardener Volunteers met at Unity Reed High School to discuss options for a Beautification Project. Back in June of 2020, Ritvik Thakur, a student at Unity Reed High School, started a GoFundMe page for the school. He was able to raise \$3,165 for his school with plans to fund the landscaping of an outside space. Discussions included an area for future gardens and installing a rain barrel to capture the water from the downspout during rain events.

On 17 May 2021, VCE Prince William Master Gardener Volunteers Linda Arvin, Fred Rash, and VCE staff Nancy Berlin, Natali Walker, and Thomas Bolles attended a site visit to assist the Montclair Property Association with plant and best practice recommendations for severe flooding and erosion issues.



Recommendations included a combination approach using coir matting to help with weed control, and retention of seeds, soil, and moisture, while shrubs are established. Bio-logs impregnated with rushes and shade tolerant grasses were added to help with stream bank protection. Also recommended were planting native, rhizomatous shrubs to avoid a monoculture and provide strong soil retention with their roots. The native plantings will also provide habitat and food for wildlife. Lastly, it was recommended to reconnect the stream to its floodplain and add a class 1 stone riffle area to the straight section of the stream channel (see picture below).



On 21 May 2021, VCE staff Nancy Berlin and Natali Walker visited Patriot High School in Nokesville, VA to meet with Cassandra Weathersbee (Oceanography teacher), Melinda Landry (Environmental Science teacher) and Sara Gellios (Geometry teacher) to determine the feasibility of installing a rain garden on the school property. The areas of the property under consideration are adjacent to a pond, which was established for the outdoor study. Rainwater was reportedly handled adequately with the existing site plan. Therefore, altering the landscape with a rain garden was not recommended in this area.

Some alternative projects considered for students to install in this area included container and/or accessible gardens in the preschool area and installation of a rain barrel next to the pond. Grow bags similar to the one pictured below were recommended for specific vegetables. This project could introduce some real-world problem solving for geometry classes and discussion of storm water best practices. Friends of the Occoquan (FOTO) have assisted schools and community groups in the past and provided a rain barrel and helped with installation.

On 24 May 2021, Master Gardener volunteers Linda Gulden and Greg Evans talked with a staff member, Rachel Schumacher, at Westridge Elementary School about the possibility of renovating and adding some gardens to their school grounds. Recommendations included a native Virginia plant pollinator garden and a sensory garden for the area pictured below. The VCE Master Gardener Volunteers are able to help with a plan and work with school volunteers to install the garden. Although we cannot help with ongoing maintenance, we can provide technical assistance to support the future of the project.

On 27 May 2021, Master Gardener Volunteers Christina Hastings, Gloria Miller, and Wendy MacDonald met with fourth grade classes at Crossroads Elementary School on Quantico to talk about soil erosion. They talked about different elements that cause soil to erode, why it's bad, the effects soil erosion has on the environment, and what we can do to reduce or prevent it. We also demonstrated the effects rain has on bare soil and turf grass. Additionally, Mrs. Johnson indicated that she would like to have a Master Gardener Mentor for their school garden.

On 28 May 2021, VCE staff Nancy Berlin, Thomas Bolles, and Natali Walker visited Washington Reid Elementary School in Dumfries, VA. They met with preschool teacher Sheila Lueking and VPI teacher Emily Macina to discuss adding a sensory, native plant, and herb garden to the area pictured on the next page in the left photo. Some alternative projects for preschool students to participate in were a container and/or accessible gardens in the preschool area and installation of a rain barrel.

Some options for a garden area included use of "grow bags" for easy to grow vegetables and flowers. Pictured below are Grow Bags successfully used at The HOUSE Student Leadership Center (Woodbridge, VA)

Stay Cool With a Movie:

The Gardener

A documentary about influential gardener Frank Cabot and the astounding gardens he created. A surprise and delight at every turn, the film showcases Cabot's unique vision. I actually caught my breath more than once as the gardens were shown, and his creations described. Not to be missed!

[Available on Amazon Prime, and other platforms.](#)



On 28 May 2021, VCE staff Nancy Berlin, Natali Walker, Thomas Bolles, and Unity Braxton Middle School (UBMS) teacher Suzi Besecker conducted a site visit at UBMS in Manassas. The purpose was to evaluate the two school courtyards with amphitheatres (pictured below). Historically, these courtyards were covered largely in turf, but currently each courtyard contains a concrete pathway leading to a concrete amphitheater. River rock fills the remaining space and is becoming increasingly infested with a variety of weeds. Recommendations included weed control by hand pulling, replacing the areas of river rock with a wildflower meadow or turf, which would help reduce the amount of heat absorbed in the courtyards.

On 15 June 2021, Nancy Berlin and Master Gardener Volunteer Angela Ahaz met with math teacher Sarah Buffington, and life science teacher Scott Deane to discuss establishing a new outdoor classroom area (pictured below). While both teachers were open to ideas for this area, a pond, container gardens, pollinator gardens, sensory gardens, rain barrels, and a vegetable garden were favorably mentioned. ♦♦♦



GREETINGS NATIVE PLANTERS!

Although we won't be back in Cullowhee this Summer, we are excited that the 2021 Cullowhee Native Plant Conference will be held virtually on July 16 and 17, 2021.

[See the current program](#)

A few pieces are still being put into place,
but registration is NOW OPEN!



learning about and celebrating bees with a parade; photo by Jason Alexander

The Bee Festival also included a family spelling bee challenge, games, arts, crafts, activity workshops, porch talks, a native plant display, beehive demonstrations, butterfly houses, and local vendors.

BEE FESTIVAL: POLLINATORS, PLANTS, PLENTY OF FUN!

by Harriet Carter, Master Gardener Volunteer

Our first Bee/Pollinator Festival on June 26th (program created by the Manassas Beautification Committee spearheaded by City Councilwoman Theresa Coates Ellis) was a huge success thanks to wonderful speakers like Master Naturalist Tom Ligon and Master Gardener Volunteer Janene Cullen, and support from Master Gardener Volunteers Jason Alexander,



Harriet Carter ready at the Master Gardener booth to answer questions and provide information; photo by Jason Alexander

Leslie Paulson, Jeanne Lamzcyk, Wendy McDonald, and Master Gardener Interns Joye Blanscett and Terrence Steele. ♦♦♦



Terrence Steele in conversation with Jason Alexander; photo by Harriet Carter



Janene Cullen holding up pictures of vital native trees for early emerging native bees - Eastern redbud (*Cercis canadensis*) and Serviceberry (*Amelanchier arborea*); photo by Harriet Carter

For more information on the native plants that support pollinators and the environment visit

The Virginia Native Plant Society

<https://vnps.org/>



The Virginia Native Plant Society (VNPS), founded in 1982 as the Virginia Wildflower Preservation Society, is a nonprofit organization of individuals who share an interest in Virginia's native plants and habitats. The Society and its chapters seek to further the appreciation and conservation of this priceless heritage.



bee on native plant *Heliopsis helianthoides* (Smooth Oxeye); photo by Jason Alexander



Fescue leaves showing lesions and unsharpened mower blade damage

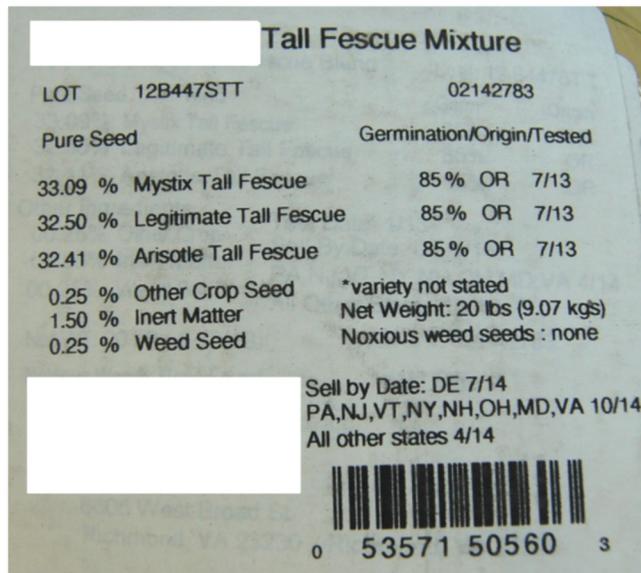
LAWN: What's Going On With My Lawn? Brown Patch Disease in Turf (Continued from page 2)

summers with daytime temps above 85 °F and nighttime temps above 68 °F, with high relative humidity.

Controlling Brown Patch turf disease involves cultural practices which decrease susceptibility of turf to the fungus.

1. Avoid applying fertilizers to tall fescue in May, June and July. It is best to fertilize your lawn during the fall months of September, October, and November. If fertilizing in the spring, always use a slow-release fertilizer. Remember, using "Weed and Feed" brands is also a source of nitrogen fertilizer. **Applications of any fertilizers and lime should always be based on a recent soil test.**

- Since nighttime irrigation favors fungal growth, water your lawn infrequently and between the hours of 5 and 7 am. This allows for water droplet evaporation from the leaves. Tall fescue lawns do not need to be watered and can be allowed to go dormant during the hottest part of summer. **Brown fescue lawns will come out of dormancy in the fall, so watering is unnecessary.**
- When selecting seed for fall over-seeding and planting, select a blend of fescue that contains Brown Patch resistant varieties. If using a blend, select one that is no more than 5-10% perennial rye grass. The seed composition label can be found on the back of the package.



Typical Seed Label

- Sharpen lawn mower blades often. Dull mower blades cause torn leaves which creates an entry point into plant. **Rule of Thumb:** Sharpen mower blades after 10 hours of service.

- Homeowner fungicides are not that effective in controlling Brown Patch fungus. If using a fungicide, applications are used only as a preventive throughout the disease season and should begin prior to favorable fungal growth weather conditions. It is recommended that the homeowner

use a licensed professional turf company, licensed in pesticide and fungicide applications.

Practicing the best cultural practices, selecting the correct seed blend, and waiting for fall to reseed and fertilize will help your lawn recover from this common summer nuisance. Contact your local Cooperative Extension office for a soil test. If you are a resident of Prince William County, you can enroll in our Best Lawns Program. The cost includes a soil test which will be sent to Virginia Tech, and a nutrient plan. ♦♦

Brown Patch References

<https://extension.umd.edu/resource/brown-patch-lawns>

<https://extension.umd.edu/resource/brown-patch-lawns>



Plant NOVA Natives is the joint marketing campaign of a grand coalition of non-profit, governmental, and private groups, all working to reverse the decline of native plants and wildlife in Northern Virginia.

Our strategy is to encourage residents as well as public and commercial entities to install native plants as the first step toward creating wildlife habitat and functioning ecosystems on their own properties.

All are welcome to participate in this collective action movement!



COURTESY OF PLANT NOVA NATIVES: PLANTING FOR THE PICKY EATERS

reprinted with encouragement from [PLANTNOVANATIVES, June 18, 2021](#); thanks to Leslie Paulson, Master Gardener Volunteer

Many insects are picky eaters, only able to eat the plants with which they evolved, meaning the plants that are native to their region. Butterflies are a good example, since although the adults can sip nectar from non-native flowers, their caterpillars depend on specific native plants. The majority of bees are more flexible than that, able to eat the pollen and nectar from a variety of species. They are known as generalist species, although even in their case they have their own favorites. The European Honeybee for example, is a generalist but chooses certain flowers in preference to others.

Of the approximately 400 native bee species in Virginia, about a fifth are plant specialists. Examples include the Spring Beauty Bee and the Blueberry Bee, which (unsurprisingly) depend on the flowers of Spring Beauties and Blueberries. These bees are short lived as adults, emerging when the plants they depend upon are in bloom and quickly gathering the pollen they need to store in their nests for their larvae, thus pollinating the plants while they are at it.

Our local ecosystem requires the full spectrum of plant/animal interactions to flourish. It is easily knocked out of balance when too many native plants are displaced by introduced species, something that has happened in many of our yards. We can restore that balance by planting a lot of native plants. One strategy could be to start with flowers that feed various specialist bees from early spring to late fall, because they will also supply food for the generalist bees. Since many of these flowers attract butterflies and hummingbirds as well, they make a winning combination. A list of popular native garden plants that feed specialist bees can be found on the [Plant NOVA Natives website](#). It feels good to help the bees, whose numbers are in decline.

One of the many charms of native bee species is that they are highly unlikely to sting you, assuming you don't try to grab one or otherwise threaten it. While they are foraging on a flower, you can get your face (and your camera) right up to them, and they will almost certainly ignore you. Gazing at bees brings surprises, as they come in many sizes and colors, including metallic blues and greens. It is particularly mesmerizing to watch bees on plants such as White Turtlehead, where they pry open the flowers and crawl inside, then back themselves out again, butt first. You can get a peek at those and other cute native bees on this [two minute video](#), filmed in Fairfax County. ♦♦♦

CONSERVATION AT HOME: TRYING TO IDENTIFY SOME OF MOTHER NATURE'S CREATURES (PLANTS INCLUDED)

by Leslie Paulson, Master Gardener Volunteer, Audubon at Home Coordinator

So, you are taking a hike, working in the garden, or just out and about and then you see something that draws your eye. If you are like me, you want to know what it is now, not later.

"There is an app for that." HortiBiz Daily says these are the top plant identification apps, and they're also free:

1. [PlantNet](#)
2. [iNaturalist](#)
3. [PlantSnap](#)

Although I am not up to speed on PlantNet or PlantSnap, I have been using iNaturalist for almost 3 years now. I have identified small caterpillars, birds, trees, butterflies and more with iNaturalist. I challenge you to give it a try.

With a bit of patience, you too can become a nature detective.

When I get stumped, I get creative. Years of working the Extension Horticulture Help Desk (Master_gardener@pwcgov.org, 703-792-7747) has taught me how to describe what I am looking at. For instance, a Master Gardener friend sent me this picture I've seen similar ones that are green. Could not find an exact one in David L. Wagner's Caterpillars of Eastern North America. So, I Googled "yellow caterpillar with black eye." It came up as a Spicebush caterpillar. When I read Wagner's description of this caterpillar, I found that the pupa can be yellow or orange. This guy is in Rappahannock County but I have seen the green ones at the Master Gardener Teaching Garden, in Bristow.

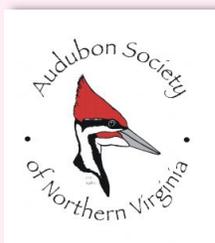
With a bit of patience, you too can become a nature detective. It can be as easy as taking a picture with your cell phone. iNaturalist allows you to use pictures archived already on your phone as well. And don't forget to delete the photos you do not want as they do take up space you will need to continue your searches. Give it a try because the more you use it, the better you get at it and soon you will recognize more of what you see in Nature wherever you are. If I can figure it out, so can you.

If you are one of our Audubon at Home Ambassadors, this can become a great tool to help our clients identify what is living and growing in their backyard habitats.

Enjoy! ♦♦♦



photo courtesy of Leslie Paulson



Prince William has a core group of trained Master Gardeners in the Audubon at Home program who have certified over 100 homes. To make more land in Prince William County wildlife-friendly, start to certify your property today. If you are ready to make your backyard or community space more environmentally friendly give us a call at 703-792-7747 or email master_gardener@pwcgov.org.

CRITTER NEIGHBORS:

CLEARWING HUMMINGBIRD MOTH (*HEMARIS THYSBE*)

by Jason Alexander, Master Gardener Volunteer

The first time seeing one of these intriguing critters you may believe you've discovered a new hummingbird species or spotted a flying shrimp. Part of the Sphynx family of moths, the clearwing hummingbird moth is the adult stage of a hornworm caterpillar related to the less popular tomato hornworm. Hornworms are characterized by a small horn-like protrusion at the tail end of their bodies.

The adult clearwing moth lays small eggs on the underside of one of several host plants, including honeysuckle and plum. Upon hatching, the small green hornworm feeds until full grown then drops to the ground, forms a cocoon, and overwinters in leaf litter. The adults emerge as early as spring, but are most visible when the bee balm start blooming. Missing the scales that would color its wings allows one to see right through them like clear glass outlined in red. ♦♦♦



clearwing hummingbird moth enjoying bee balm
(*Monarda didyma*); photo by Jason Alexander

Sources:

[MassAudubon. Hummingbird Moth \(Clearwing Moth\)](#)

[US Forest Service. Hummingbird Moth \(Hemaris spp.\), by Beatriz Moisset](#)

WHAT IS A MASTER GARDENER? JOIN US!



Virginia Cooperative Extension

Virginia Tech • Virginia State University

Interested in learning research-based gardening information and sharing that knowledge with your community?

You could be a member of the 2021 class of Extension Master Gardeners! The Virginia Cooperative Extension – Prince William Master Gardener Program will begin a training class mid-September.

This year's training class will be a blended program with COVID-19 safety protocols in place. Online modules, and Zoom sessions, as well as some small group face to face programs and lab homework are being planned.

- Classes will be held on Tuesday and Thursday evenings and a few Saturday sessions.
 - A computer or tablet with good internet service and consistent email monitoring are required tools for your success in this program.
 - Classes include water quality, botany, vegetables, woody ornamentals, pathology, pruning, vegetables, herbaceous plants for a total of about 24 classes.
 - If you are interested in applying to the program, there are fees for supplies, an application, a background check, and interview are required.
 - Scholarships are available.
 - Class size is limited. Candidates will be selected from the application and interview
-
- Tuesday, August 24 – 6:30 pm at Development Services Bldg., 5 County Complex, Room 107A-B, Woodbridge, VA. Please register at:
https://vce.az1.qualtrics.com/ife/form/SV_06PFCgdEYzkf15k
 - Thursday, August 26 – 6:30 pm at Sudley North Complex, Jean McCoy Conference Room, 7987 Ashton Ave., Manassas, VA 20109. Please register at:
https://vce.az1.qualtrics.com/ife/form/SV_9sQogBt506j10pg
 - Tuesday, August 31, 6:30 pm Zoom Session, please register at:
https://vce.az1.qualtrics.com/ife/form/SV_1KMSfJb8wiyxMHA

If you are a person with a disability and desire any assistive devices, services, services, or other accommodations to participate in this activity, please contact Virginia Cooperative Extension at 703-752-6225 during the business hours of 8 am and 5 pm to discuss accommodations 5 days prior to the event.

Virginia Cooperative Extension 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, veteran status, or any other basis protected by law. An equal opportunity/affirmative action employer. Issued in furtherance of Cooperative Extension work, Virginia Polytechnic Institute and State University, Virginia State University, and the U.S. Department of Agriculture cooperating. Edwin J. Jones, Director, Virginia Cooperative Extension, Virginia Tech, Blacksburg; M. Ray McKinzie, Administrator, 1890 Extension Program, Virginia State University, Petersburg.

Master Gardeners Prince William

Master Gardeners of Prince William (MGPW) is the supportive organization for active Master Gardener Volunteers in Prince William County, Manassas City and Manassas Park. There are approximately 200 active volunteer environmental educators serving in various capacities.

Volunteers and volunteerism are central to the MGPW mission as we strive to make our community a more sustainable, healthy and beautiful place to live and to educate residents about the many benefits of gardening, including the opportunity to grow nutritious, healthy food, environmentally friendly landscapes, all with the ultimate goal of protecting water quality in local waterways and the Chesapeake Bay.

FREE CLASSES

Virginia Cooperative Extension (VCE) is hosting classes via zoom Wednesdays, 11:00 a.m. to Noon, and at The Teaching Garden. For a schedule of classes, click here: [Prince William County Cooperative Extension Horticulture Classes](#).

Please register for classes by contacting the [Horticulture Help Desk](#) at mastergardener@pwcgov.org or call 703-792-7747.

All classes as well as [Teaching Garden](#) tour videos can be found on our [YouTube channel](#).

Although Prince William County Buildings are closed to the public, VCE staff and Master Gardener Volunteers are working remotely to answer your lawn and garden questions. Please contact us by emailing mastergardener@pwcgov.org or call 703-792-7747.

Help Support Master Gardeners Prince William, while you shop with:



Master Gardeners Prince William

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PLEASE
PLACE
STAMP
HERE

-Send submissions, questions, or comments to MGPWnewsletter@gmail.com
The Editors,
Jason Alexander & Maria Stewart, Master Gardener Volunteers