needlepoint holly (*Ilex cornuta 'Needlepoint'*)
photo by Jason Alexander

Winter

PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

COVID-19 continues to be the major impactor on our lives in both large and small ways. I have not seen my son (an ER doctor in NYC) in over a year, and it looks like it will be months before that kind of visiting becomes normal again. I am 5,086 on the waiting list for a vaccination, and the county has said they will not even start to schedule appointments until after Febuary 15th – so we will see how that works. The county said it could be weeks or even months before an appointment is available.

As master gardeners we have been limited to zoom and other social distanced events. We have started a book club and have held 2 great sessions. Many thanks to all the folks who have been involved in the effort - in particular Tina Chappell (Social Committee), and Vernelle Boykin and her library bulletin board group.

We will be revising our by-laws through a special voting process on email soon that will allow us to hold meetings and elections online and through email given the special times we live in. Look for more details on how the by-law changes and elections will work in the pandemic era.

We continue to look for folks who would be interested in serving on the board. If you have any interest please reach out to any board member.

Also, please reach out to any board member if you have any comments or questions.

Everybody stay a safe distance and stay healthy.

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

VMGA REPRESENTATIVE'S UPDATE

by Jeanne Lamczyk, VMGA Representative for MGPW

Hi Everyone,

Since I last wrote, I have had the opportunity to participate in a Leadership Training Seminar presented by VA Tech and VMGA (Virginia Master Gardener Association). The program ran the entire month of October, each Thursday from 1 p.m. till about 3 p.m. via Zoom. The courses offered were *Volunteer Engagement in a Virtual World*, *Racial Understanding Dialogues*, *Programming Pivots: New Program Development During the Pandemic*, *Creating Engaging Presentations*, and *People Problems: Managing Conflict Locally*.

You could choose one or all five programs. The presenters were great, some from the West Coast, Virginia

(*continued p. 5*)

INSIDE THIS ISSUE

TOPICS OF INTEREST

- Turf
- Prized Plants
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- Free Online 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: WINTER CONCERNS

Nimblewill and Bermudagrass Identification, Virginia Tech

excerpts from I Think My Lawn Has Died This Winter, Virginia Cooperative Extension podcast:

◊ "This podcast discusses how two perennial warm-season weeds in cool-season lawns (nimblewill and bermudagrass) can lead one to think that portions of their lawn has died over the winter months. These warm-season grasses go dormant at first killing frost, and while nothing can be done to control them during the winter, plans can be made for chemical control strategies for the coming season."

◊ "Many homeowners around the state tell me that their lawn has died sometime between November and mid-January. When asked to describe the symptoms, they typically describe large patches of completely brown grass, with some partially green grass growing amongst these areas."

◊ "It is quite possible that in some of these lawns there actually has been death of grass. If a lawn was infested with summer annual weedy grasses such as crabgrass, goosegrass, and foxtail, then those grasses all died at the first killing frost."

◊ "It is important to know how to distinguish between the two [nimblewill and bermudagrass] if you wish to combat them in your cool-season lawns in the coming year."

◊ "Nimblewill only produces very slow growing stolons (above ground stems) that are very thin in diameter, and do not creep more than a few inches from the mother plant."

◊ "Bermudagrass can make its share of circular patches as well, but it produces adventurous creeping stolons that are larger in diameter and may creep two or more feet away from the parent plant." ◊◊◊

catmint (*Nepeta*)
photo by Nancy Burns

PRIZED PLANTS: GET YOUR CATMINT (*NEPETA*) READY FOR NEW GROWTH

by Nancy Burns, former Master Gardener from Fairfax/Arlington

For those of us who love to roll in the dirt, our gardens provide calm and sanity. Here is a garden idea for when the weather gets warmer.

The top white-ish growth on your catmint is dead and dry after winter. Cut these dead stalks to the ground and toss.

Also, after catmint is finished with its first flush of lovely lavender blooms (around July), trim the top of the green stems back 4 inches and wait for the second act!

Easy Reminder to guarantee flowers on your shrubs next year: "If you prune within 4 weeks after a shrub blooms, you will never cut off next year's blossoms."◊◊◊

Microgreens grown on a kitchen windowsill. Photo: Francesco Di Gioia, Penn State Extension

GARDEN TO TABLE: MICROGREENS

by Maria Stewart, Master Gardener Volunteer

Too cold to garden outside in the winter? Too hot in the summer? Short on space? Try microgreens for an easy way to have a wide variety of delicious and nutritious greens anytime.

Microgreens are different than sprouts. Most simply, sprouts are produced by germinating seeds soaked in water, while microgreens are grown in a growing medium such as soil or a growing mat.

Chefs commonly use microgreens for garnish, but to stop there would certainly underutilize these tiny but mighty plants. Microgreens have earned the title of "superfood" because they are nutrient dense. They are a wonderful source of fiber, vitamins, minerals, and antioxidants. They also offer an array of flavors, from mild to spicy, and earthy to fresh.

I got my first taste of microgreens at the Manassas Farmers Market. The original vendor I used to visit is no longer there, but I soon discovered Pennington Market Farm of Nokesville. They always have a tempting variety of microgreens to try, which may help inspire you to try growing them yourself.

Popular microgreens to grow include broccoli, radish, cauliflower, arugula, kale, mustard, pea, Swiss chard amaranth, cilantro, basil—the list is almost limitless. And what do they taste like? They taste just like the full grown plant. In some cases, even better.

My personal favorites are pea and arugula. The pea microgreens, to me, have a more robust pea flavor, and the arugula is just as peppery as the full grown plant. I also find it easier to keep fresh herbs on hand as microgreens rather than the mature plant. As an example, I have a hard time keeping cilantro alive, but cilantro microgreens offer the same, if not fuller, taste as the full grown plant with a higher likelihood to end up on my plate rather than the compost bin.

If you have a window sill, or a space close to a windowsill, give microgreens a try. PennState Extension has easy-to-follow, step-by-step instructions and additional information at: *A Step-By-Step Guide for Growing Microgreens at Home*. ◇◇◇

RECIPE: MICROGREENS

Microgreen Smoothie

Place a generous handful of microgreens in a blender or Nutri Bullet.

Add one cup of pineapple chunks, 1 Tbs. of honey and 1 cup of almond, coconut or rice milk.

Blend until all ingredients are smooth.

This is a lovely, pale green drink that gives a boost of nutrition to your day.

Wheatgrass is a good microgreen for this drink and is rich in vitamins, minerals, amino acids and protein. Other microgreens that would be good in this smoothie are kale, beets and herbs like mint or parsley.

source:
NC Cooperative Extension

Also Try Microgreens

* on sandwiches
* in salads, or as a salad
* in omelets or egg scrambles
* on crackers with cream cheese
* any dish needing a boost of flavor
* Experiment!

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 the Teaching Garden!

The Teaching Garden blog

photo by Lynne Lanier Master Gardener Volunteer

OUT AND ABOUT:

DUMBARTON OAKS, WASHINGTON, DC

by Jamie Nick, Master Gardener Volunteer

Take a stroll through a Washington, DC favorite. Centennial Garden Club President, Arlene Stewart, introduces a personal tour with Austin Ankers through Dumbarton Oaks...

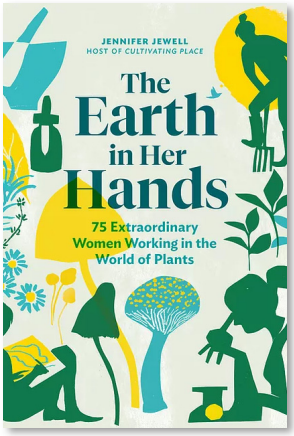
click here and enjoy

"75 Extraordinary Women Working in the World of Plants"

BOOK NOOK: *THE EARTH IN HER HANDS*

BY JENNIFER JEWELL

by Jamie Nick, Master Gardener Volunteer



The Earth in Her Hands, by Jennifer Jewell, is presented in an easy-to-read way, featuring some familiar plantswomen along with many new names. In her book, Jewell introduces influential women working in wide-ranging fields including botany, floral design, landscape architecture, farming, herbalism, and food justice.

Lucky for us, one of the women highlighted in Jewell's book, Ira Wallace, will be presenting a free zoom program, sponsored by the Master Gardeners Prince William (MGPW) on **February 27th** —thanks to the efforts of Laurie Redfearn, MGPW Education Committee! (*details below and on p. 15*)◇◇◇

Ira Wallace, of Southern Exposure Seed Exchange, will be presenting:

Grow Great Vegetables in Virginia: Great Varieties and Effective Techniques

February 27th, 10:00 a.m. on zoom

register with Virginia Cooperative Extension

adult brown marmorated stink bug, *Halyomorpha halys*
University of Florida; http://entnemdept.ufl.edu/creatures/veg/bean/brown_marmorated_stink_bug.htm

INSIGHTS: STINKBUGS REVISITED

by Abbie & Vincent Panettiere, Master Gardener Volunteers

Late in 2020, when we were discussing potential topics for *In Season,* one subject that seemed to be appropriate for the year itself was the much despised and lowly stink bug. It could easily be voted 2020's mascot. We first approached the subject of the brown marmorated stink bug (*Halyomorpha halys*), from the family Pentatomidae, in April of 2011. Like many others, our association with them seemed to be centered on their strong desire and their ability to become our house guests during the cold months of the year. I can remember seeing an unusual number of bugs indoors. A cousin of ours said that the side of his house had been covered with them in fall; not an unusual event. I read that a contributor from the University of Florida conducted a study in 2012 which "…collected 26,205 adult brown marmorated stinkbugs in a single home over a 181-day period."

Now, strangely enough, we personally don't find as many of them inside but can attest that they are major pests in our gardens and we have learned that is also the case with commercial farmers in areas where they have made themselves at home. A researcher at the University of Minnesota stated that other states' experience with the pests "…suggest that household nuisance problems generally precede agricultural pest problems," and that may be what is happening.

Brown marmorated stink bugs – or BMSB if you want to speed your conversation along - arose in the Order Hemiptera in the Pennsylvanian epoch some 320 to 286 million years ago. Hemiptera are the true bugs and have piercing and sucking mouth parts rather than teeth. Should you encounter a stink bug in your house, it may help to know that it will not bite or sting you nor will it start a family. It's an adult in "diapause" (Diapause means a period of suspended development in an insect, other invertebrate, or mammal embryo, especially during unfavorable environmental conditions) and all it really wants to do is hang out in your nice warm home until spring. As an invasive species native to tropical ecosystems, stink bugs are very temperature sensitive.

VMGA REPRESENTATIVE'S UPDATE

(*continued from p. 1)*

State, and VA Tech, as well as a few local agents. We were able to discuss with other state EMGs (Extension Master Gardeners) about how other units were dealing with the restriction of the coronavirus. We talked about how to deal with difficult clients and when to pass them on to staff members, how to plan an online program/presentation, recruitment, and keeping veterans engaged with the program. We also talked some about working with and encouraging involvement in the Black and Latino communities. We all agreed that it was important to do outreach to these communities for better understanding of the needs for information and training. I found it helpful and informative as an EMG and a way to improve how I work in our community. This was open to all EMGs. If you are interested in upcoming events like this, please go to mastergardener.ext.vt.edu/biweeklyupdate/ and register for the newsletter.

The VMGA December meeting was held on the 12th. We voted to change the by-laws dealing with virtual meetings, which passed.

International Master Gardener College is coming in 2021. Registration opens on April 5th, and right now will be limited to the first 2,500 people. It will be all online and recorded for later viewing. Presentations and times to be announced at a later date. VMGA will be offering scholarships in the amount of $150 to about 20 VMGA members. The application must be signed by Nancy Berlin so keep this great event in mind.

I would encourage all of you to think about joining VMGA. Dues are $12 per year or $120 for a lifetime membership.

Take care, see you all in the garden.

-Jeanne Lamczyk,
VMGA Representative for MGPW
jeanne.lamczyk@yahoo.com,
cell # 703-623-1110

Insights: Stinkbugs Revisited

Sources & For More Information

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Home & Garden
Stink Bugs Are Creeping Into NoVA, DC Homes Brown marmorated stink bugs, which threaten crops in DC, VA and 45 other states, are about to crawl into your house for the winter.: Here's What To Do, by Deb Belt, Sept. 5, 2020

http://entnemdept.ufl.edu/creatures/veg/bean/brown_marmorated_stink_bug.htm
UF/IFAS University of Florida
common name: brown marmorated stink bug, scientific name: *Halyomorpha halys* (Stål) (Insecta: Hemiptera: Pentatomidae)

https://www.pestworld.org/news-hub/pest-articles/stink-bug-control-10-tips-to-keep-this-smelly-pest-at-bay/
PestWorld.org. *Stink Bug Prevention: 10 Tips to Keep This Smelly Pest at Bay*

https://www.mda.state.mn.us/plants-insects/brown-marmorated-stink-bug
Minnesota Department of Agriculture
Brown Marmorated Stink Bug

The date given tentatively for their arrival in this country from their native Asia was slightly different in several sites but they seem to have been introduced accidentally into the U.S. in Allentown, Pennsylvania sometime around 1996.

Stink bugs are quite able to survive in new and unknown territory because, for one, they aren't fussy eaters and will eat a variety of food (e.g. several different families of plants). This survival trait is termed polyphagy and also they have the trait of rusticity (i.e., their ability to endure unfavorable environmental conditions such as lack of food, low temperatures, prolonged exposure to sunlight, or even poor handling when kept in laboratory colonies). Thus, when they enter new habitats and find plants they are not used to, they can adapt and find enough food to keep them until more suitable foods are found.

A female stinkbug, in most of the United States, will lay one clutch of eggs per season. One source said a clutch might have 50 to 100 eggs; another source said that clutches generally consisted of approximately 28 eggs. In southern climates they may produce two clutches per year. I was unable to find any estimate of their climate range. As tropical creatures they can be expected to be more numerous in warmer climates but the University of Minnesota said they were present in cities and on farms there. The Concord, NH Monitor mentioned them as being present in New Hampshire. With their survival abilities, they are becoming a pest to be dealt with in all states.

What drew us to the subject of stink bugs this time is the damage they did to my tomato crop this year. Generally, my husband and I expect to enjoy home-grown tomatoes from early July until sometime late in September. This year, the beefsteak tomatoes, which were coming along nicely and which were supposed, when they reached maturity, to provide slices that could cover an entire slice of bread, instead began showing corky depressions when they were of medium size, where the bugs had pierced the skin to suck out the juice. The tomatoes were just beginning to turn color but we had to pick them early and let them ripen indoors to avoid further damage. The tomatoes were still edible but the BMSB are thought possibly to carry viruses which they could spread to the plants. They're also apt to leave frass on both fruit and foliage.

They are a nuisance to the home gardener but to farmers and orchardists, whose livelihoods depend on their crops, they have become a serious problem. BMSB prefer plants with fruiting structures, will attack seeds, nuts and fruits; they are known to be in forty-four states in this country and are an especial nuisance in the Mid-Atlantic Region, the Ohio valley and the eastern seaboard. Their fruiting crops may include apple, pear, peach, grape, blueberry, soybeans, tomatoes, and corn. The damage done may include bruises and blemishes and aborted sweet corn kernels. They can change the sugar levels in some fruits. They also attack ornamental and landscape trees: black locust, maple, ash, catalpa trees, and princess tree (*Paulownia*) as examples. They're able to pierce through the bark of some trees to feed. If fruit or their regular food is not available they will feed on nearly all plant parts.

The accounts of damage are impressive as well as widespread: in 2010, orchardists in the mid-Atlantic region suffered a loss of $37,000,000 from BMSB. According to the Fruit Growers News of Aug. 19, 2019, "…an almond grower in Turlock, CA, noticed nearly all the nuts on a row of trees in his orchard had fallen to the ground." The BMSB was determined to have been the cause of his loss. Multiply that by the number of almond growers in California and you can see that there are real losses.

The Weather Channel, in a science and environment news account of April 7th, 2020, mentioned that the BMSB were discovered in Turkey's northern region, where about 70% of the world's hazelnut supply grows, in 2017. The stinkbugs multiplied over the next several years to the point that 30% of Turkey's hazelnut crop may be destroyed, which would mean losing one fifth of the world's hazelnut supply.

Serious attempts to stop or lessen the harm that BMSB do to professional and home growers have been going on since the pests were first discovered. The United States Department of Agriculture's (USDA's) Agricultural Research Service (ARS) in Newark, Delaware, has been searching for natural stinkbug enemies that would attack the bugs but leave harmless insects and pollinators alone. Their efforts have led to trips to Asia to find natural enemies

Insights: Stinkbugs Revisited

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Stop BMSB
Scientific Publications
A list of new articles published by our team of scientists and extension specialists through 2020

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Concord Monitor - 10/09/2020
As weather gets cold and days shorten, pungent bugs appear, but not all are stinkbugs
Insect Invaders by David Brooks

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A Stinkbug Invasion In Turkey Threatens Your Nutella. Here's How. by Rachel Delia Benaim, April 07, 2020

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Invasion of the Cane Toad in Australia

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Virginia Tech Daily, Virginia Tech entomology expert available to discuss stink bug infestations throughout the Mid-Atlantic

that could be imported into this country for the purpose.

A very hard-learned lesson on the subject of plants and animals brought into this country has been a large part of the history of bringing in foreign flora or fauna to get rid of pests – with the best of intentions – that turn out to become more of a problem than the original pest. Just two examples: mongooses were released in Hawaii in 1883 to control the population of rats. The mongooses found native birds and turtles to their liking and destroyed whole populations of them. Cane toads from Hawaii were introduced into Australia in 1935 to help sugar cane farmers fight cane beetles. One hundred one cane toads were introduced and, without predators and finding a diet of native animals to their liking, by 1980 well over five million cane toads had spread throughout Northeastern Australia with disastrous results. Besides competing for resources, the toads produced a poison fatal to many species.

During a trip in 2005, a team from the US. Agricultural Research Service (ARS) discovered a small parasitoid wasp, stingerless and smaller than a sesame seed, which looked promising. The wasps inject their own eggs into the stinkbugs' eggs and the larvae grow and survive by eating the developing BMSB then chewing their way out of the husk that's left. The candidate for introduction into this country was the Japanese samurai wasp (*Trissolcus japonicus*).

Entomologist Kim Hoelmer of the ARS spent years studying the wasps in the lab to try to make sure that they would kill BMSB without developing a taste for native species. The requirements have, understandably, become very strict for this study in light of the disasters which have happened. In 2014, after years of careful research, he received a call from a taxonomist on a different ARS search saying that in the group's search he, an expert on the samurai wasp species, had identified some of them in Maryland. Somehow, they had managed to immigrate into this country on their own. Several populations of these wasps, all of which seem to have entered this country accidentally, have been found on the east and west coasts.

It may seem funny to be taking such extreme measures to keep a foreign species from getting loose before it's been thoroughly examined and then to find that there are populations of the species breeding and spreading by themselves. As it stands now, if there is an accidentally introduced colony of samurai wasps in an area, researchers may, with state permission, experiment in breeding and releasing those wasps that are in that area but intentionally imported samurai wasps must be quarantined until federal inspectors are convinced they are safe.

From a practical standpoint, protecting your plants with the methods currently available is most important. For the commercial farmer, insecticides are used on the crops that BMSB feed on.

For the homeowner, row covers help with crops such as peas and beans. Hand-picking, if your garden is not enormous, is of help. You could also dedicate a small cordless hand vacuum to suck them up. I mention dedicating a vacuum to this purpose because stinkbugs got their name because they emit a very strongly unpleasant-smelling odor when alarmed or annoyed and being sucked into a dark bag along with others of their species will definitely set them off. It's recommended that you quickly put the bag into a thick disposable trash bag and get rid of it far from your house.

This came as a surprise to me, but it's recommended that you not plant sunflowers near your gardens because stinkbugs love them.

BMSB are good hitchhikers. They may be brought into your area by car, RV, cargo container or other vehicles. If you hang your laundry outdoors in the sunlight, as I do, check carefully in all of the folds of cloth. Stinkbugs will happily cling inside a sleeve or somewhere on a sheet to enjoy the warmth of the sun on the drying laundry.

There are many good suggestions for keeping down the number of stinkbugs that attempt to make your home their home for the winter. The usual cautions, from PestWorld.org:

"1. Seal off entry points.

For proper stink bug control, spend some time inspecting the outside of your home for easy access points. Pay close attention to areas including around siding and utility pipes, behind chimneys, and underneath the wood fascia or other openings. Seal any cracks and holes that are found using a good quality silicone or silicone-latex caulk.

2. Replace and repair.

Stink bugs can enter the home through the smallest openings, so it's important to repair or replace damaged screens on windows or doors. Don't forget to check for torn weather stripping and loose mortar. You can also install door sweeps if necessary.

3. Turn off the lights.

Stink bugs are attracted to light, so it's recommended to keep outdoor lighting to a minimum. During the evenings, turn off porch lights and pull down window blinds to prevent light from spilling outside.

4. Reduce moisture sites.

Eliminating all moisture build up around your home can go a long way to help prevent many pest infestations. Check for leaking pipes and clogged drains.

5. Eliminate food sources.

Another method for getting rid of stink bugs is to remove their access to food. Store food in airtight containers and dispose of garbage regularly in sealed receptacles. Also, make sure you wipe down counters and sweep floors to eliminate crumbs and residue from spills.

6. Ventilate.

Properly ventilate basements, attics, garages and crawl spaces to eliminate harborage points. Consider using a dehumidifier in these areas. Also, make sure to install screens over your chimney and attic vents.

7. Check your belongings.

Inspect items such as boxes containing holiday decorations and grocery bags before bring-ing them indoors. Stink bugs can travel on these items and make themselves cozy once inside the home.

8. Properly landscape.

Keep branches and shrubbery well-trimmed. In addition, make sure to store firewood at least 20 feet away from the house and five inches off the ground.

9. Think before squishing.

When many people find a stink bug, their first instinct is to squish them. However, as mentioned before, when disturbed or crushed, stink bugs have a tendency to release a bad-smelling, bad-tasting odor from pores on the sides of their bodies. This is how the pest earned its name."

Researchers from Virginia Tech have developed a trap for stink bugs in the home that is said to be more effective than commercial traps costing a great deal more money. To prepare this trap, you will need a disposable aluminum roasting tray, ½ to one gallon water, some dish detergent and a bright light – a desk lamp would be ideal. You may have all the components at home already but if you don't, the cost should not exceed $15.

Set up the trap in the evening. Put about ½ gallon or more of water into the baking tray, add a few drops of dish detergent and slush it all about with your fingers. Set up the desk lamp so that the light shines on the water. Stink bugs love the bright light. When you check in the morning, you should have captured a good number of them.

With the new year, it will be nice to discard all the bad from the old. Stink Bugs, in our mind, were emblems of the dark side of 2020. They call to mind other nasty creatures, the Nazgul in the Lord of the Rings, the Flying Monkeys of the Wizard of Oz, and the Death Eaters of Harry Potter. Be gone with them all. ◇◇◇

Master Gardeners, Tired of Zoom Classes?

Get Up to 3 Master Gardener Continuing Education hours by reading a book from:

REFERENCE AND READING RECOMMENDATIONS FOR A MASTER GARDENER BOOKSHELF

Prepared by George Graine, Emeritus Fairfax Master Gardener

Check it out at here

Monarda didyma seed heads, photo by Jason Alexander

CREATIVE CORNER:

THE DAY BEFORE CHRISTMAS

(WINTER IN THE GARDEN)

by Tom Ligon

'Twas the day before Christmas, and out in the yard
It already looked like the winter was hard.
The leaves were all brown and the stems mostly bare,
And nary a gardener seen anywhere.
It looked rather weedy, the neighbors complained,
And thought that the gardener's back must be sprained
To leave these poor stems, mostly broken and bent,
All gone to seed, their flowers long spent.

But down in the clutter of leaves and of stems
And seed heads and seed pods and small dogwood limbs,
Life was asleep but still surely alive,
Just waiting for spring and a new chance to thrive.
A chrysalis slumbered in butterfly dreams
Of being the subject of gardening memes.
The mason bee pupae were down in a straw
Awaiting the spring and the warmth of a thaw.

The birds were enjoying a wintertime meal,
The thrill of exploiting each seed they could steal
From nature's bird feeder, the seed heads and pods,
Left by the gardener, knowing their odds.
For some of those seeds surely fall to the ground
Where just enough space for a seed could be found
To put down some roots and rise the next year
As beautiful flowers, unless there are deer.

And down underground was a riot of soul,
Roots and rhizomes and a vole in a hole.
Nestled among them were ground nesting bees,
Bumbles and miners all hoping to please.
With tireless efforts they'll pollinate blooms
To further the cycle and brighten our rooms.
If you listen closely to what's not in sight
You'll leave them alone, and sleep well tonight.

International Master Gardener College

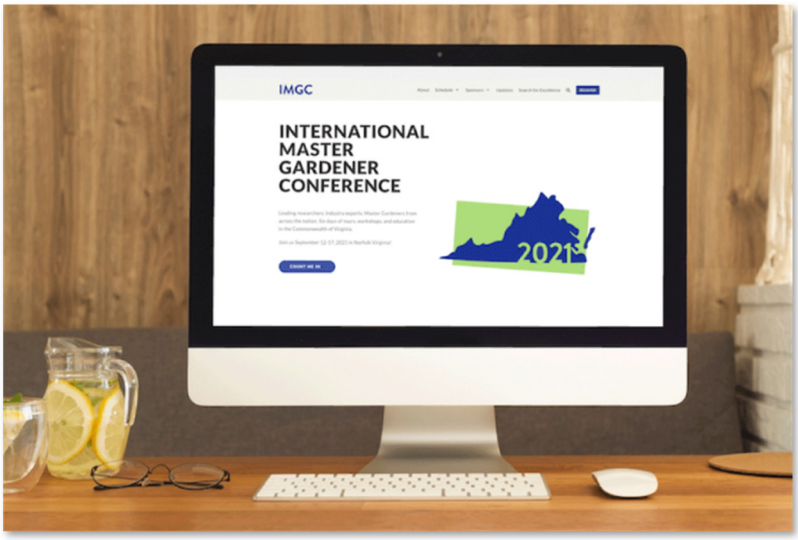
QUICK INFO

- When: September 12-17, 2021
- Where: Our easy-to-use virtual conference platform
- Who: Members of the public, Master Gardeners, and Extension specialists
- Schedule: Check our preliminary schedule and our speakers page
- Cost: Greatly reduced from the cost of in-person attendance. More details released early 2021!
- Registration: opens Monday, April 5, 2021.

After much deliberation over the past few months, we have made the difficult decision that the 2021 International Master Gardener Conference will be a virtual event. We conferred with others in weighing our options and concluded this was our only feasible option with all things considered. We understand that this likely will be disappointing to many of you.

Though a virtual conference was not our original plan, we are excited for this new opportunity to bring our speakers, workshops, and networking opportunities to even more Master Gardeners at a greatly-reduced cost from attending the in-person event.

Based on our experience planning and executing an extremely successful virtual state conference in June, we believe we can create a virtual event that will be truly unique. We are hard at work planning opportunities for the networking and socializing usually absent from virtual events, and we have some exciting ideas for other sessions that take advantage of our online format. (*continued p. 11)*



INTERNATIONAL MASTER GARDENER COLLEGE: AN UPDATE FROM VIRGINIA MASTER GARDENER PRESIDENT

by Leslie Paulson, Master Gardener Volunteer, VMGA President

As many of you know, I'm President of our state organization, VMGA (Virginia Master Gardeners Association). I want to be sure you all have information about the International Master Gardener College (IMGC) for 2021. IMGC will be available in Zoom classes as was Master Gardener College this year. The dates are as stated by Kathleen Reed, our State Coordinator, September 12th – 17th, 2021. It begins on a Sunday and goes through Friday. The classes start at 2:30 p.m. with some special breakout events starting a bit earlier and ending at 7:30 p.m. The times are geared to a schedule for 5 different time zones. All classes and Keynote Speakers will be recorded. Registration opens Monday, April 5th.

There will be some virtual tours available from around the state as well. If you have watched some good ones online, and think others would enjoy them, please let us know. Additional details and virtual tours submission can be found here: https://forms.gle/NnSjPskPhGuXXhL49.

Our preliminary virtual schedule includes two sessions per day with a few special evening events. We are taking great care to prevent "Zoom fatigue" and are limiting total daily conference time to no more than a few hours!

Our schedule contains:

- 5 keynote speakers
- 30+ concurrent speakers, divided into five sessions. You can choose the session you'd like to attend live and go back and watch other sessions' recordings later
- 3 opportunities for small group networking sessions
- Two special panel events
- Opening and closing sessions
- Optional workshops on Sunday, September 12
- Opportunities to explore gardening in the Commonwealth of Virginia at your own pace, and
- A variety of optional conference challenges & extras, including an iNaturalist project and recipes highlighting Virginia agricultural products

Do be sure to register early so you won't be scrambling in June. Registration will be limited to only 2,500 Master Gardeners from across the U.S., South Korea, England, Puerto Rico, and Canada. That is why you shouldn't be pokey!

Our full conference program will be released in March 2021.

If you have questions just let me know. Thank you.
-Leslie Paulson ljp6651@comcast.net.◇◇◇

(*continued from p. 10*)

The transition to virtual also allows us the chance to

feature speakers for whom travel to the in-person event would not have been practical.

All sessions to be recorded and available for viewing later, which means you will have the opportunity to go back and view every session, rather than having to choose among our concurrent sessions.

We anticipate releasing our full schedule of sessions in March 2021.

We know you might have questions about our switch to digital, and I want to take the opportunity to address a few here:

Keynote and concurrent sessions will be recorded and available for viewing later. The session recording library will only be available to those registered.

In order to prevent webinar fatigue, each day will only feature a few hours of virtual sessions (instead of filling the entire day, as with our in person event)

There will be opportunities for socializing and networking with Master Gardeners from around the country and further abroad

Registration cost will be substantially lower than the cost of attending the in person event

Full schedule will be released in March 2021 and registration will open April 5, 2021.

Registration will be first-come-first-served and capped at 2,500. Workshops offered during IMGC will have lower capacity limits.

Thank you all for your support of our conference! Now that we have officially made the switch to virtual, expect to see more regular updates from us! If you do not receive IMGC emails, please subscribe here.

We hope you'll join us next September!

-Kathleen Reed and the Virginia EMG program

Prince William Master Gardeners and Master Naturalists team up
photo by Nancy Berlin

IN THE COMMUNITY:
WINTER MAINTENANCE HELP AT REFORESTATION SITE

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

Prince William Master Gardeners and Master Naturalists volunteered with Julia Flanagan (Arborist, Prince William County Watershed Management Branch) to remove old tree tubes and free up several trees from the invasive Japanese honeysuckle (*Lonicera japonica*).

On January 13, 2001, the team made the most of the mild weather, and removed a couple hundred plastic tubes from trees planted at a reforestation site in Woodbridge. While most tubes were damaged, they can be recycled. Some tubes were in good condition, and were collected to be reused. ◇◇◇

tubes removed from trees
photo by Nancy Berlin

damaged tubes for recycling
photo by Nancy Berlin

"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:
A NEW TAKE ON "CURB APPEAL"

reprinted with encouragement from PLANTNOVANATIVES, September 23, 2020; thanks to Leslie Paulson, Master Gardener Volunteer

A strip of lawn is the default landscaping choice for the area right next to a street. But is that the only option? Not necessarily, as gardeners are discovering. In many situations, boring lawn can be replaced with pizzazz.

Lawn has its advantages and disadvantages next to a road. It can be walked on, and short plants help preserve important sight lines. However, turf grass (which is from Europe) does nothing to support the local ecosystem which depends on native plants, and compacted lawn does a mediocre job at absorbing stormwater runoff.

Replacing lawn with native plants is an increasingly popular choice. The results can add a lot of character to a property. Certain native plants are particularly suited to the harsh conditions found next to roads, which often include compaction, salt and reflected heat. Deeper roots soak up and purify water before it ends up in our streams.

There are a number of considerations to take into account before planting. Do you actually own the strip of land next to the street? Does your neighborhood or jurisdiction dictate which plants can be used, or their height? If people park next to the curb, where will the passengers step when getting out of the car? Are underground or overhead utilities in the way? Do you know how to design the plantings so they don't flop over the walkways? Check out the Plant NOVA Natives page on streetside gardens for details and for examples of how several residents have handled these challenges. Their practical solutions have turned ecological dead zones into an asset for the birds and butterflies as well as for the humans who get to appreciate them.

CONGRATULATIONS MASTER GARDENER CLASS OF 2020!

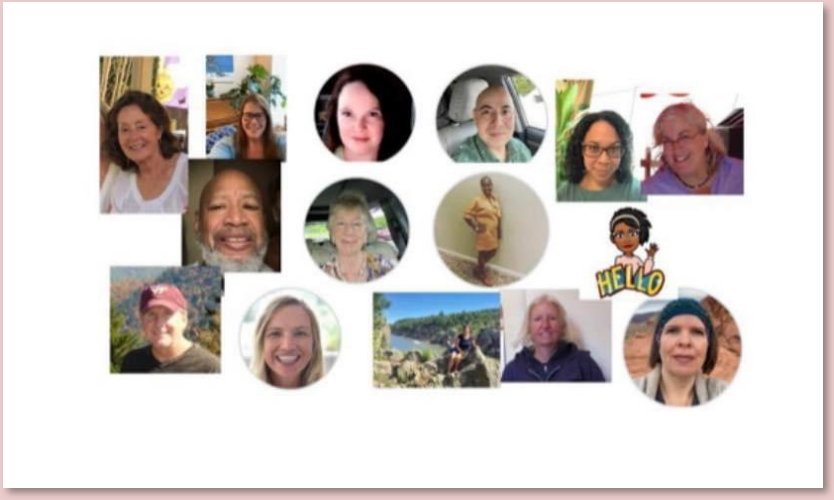


photo by Nancy Berlin

CONSERVATION AT HOME: THE FALL PROJECT

by Joye Blanscett, Master Gardener Volunteer

photo by Joye Blanscett

"The leaves have fallen, and the garden has gone to bed and yet, I spent an entire day in the yard weeding in early December. How is that possible? Is that not the purview for the summer? Are those nine bags of yard waste piled on the drive not leaves you ask?

They are not, and the explanation is simple: invasive plants. I love my wooded lot. The trees make for a beautiful park-like place to spend time outside, but during the summer they obscure the English Ivy (*Hedera helix*), Wineberry brambles (*Rubus phoenicolasius*), and burning bush (*Euonymus alatus*) hiding in their understory. New to the mix of things lurking in plain sight is Chinese wisteria (*Wisteria sinensis*). But fall puts a whole new "light" on the situation; the ivy pops against the now brown landscape, the burning bushes' red fall foliage becomes a beacon for where it has taken hold even in its smallest form and the wisteria penchant for holding on to its foliage well past anything else in the yard makes it easily identifiable.

"I look forward to nature returning some balance to the area."

And so the fun began in October, continued into November, and even into the first part of December as I worked little by little against the plants that have invaded my yard. With the help of a friend on what proved to be the last real opportunity of 2020, I pulled ivy off the ground, cutting it at the base of the trees, yanked wineberry vines, and dug up wisteria and burning bush too all to make room for native plants in the wooded understory. As the temperatures turned colder, I made a quick trip around the yard to mark the wisteria bushes as I do not know how long their foliage will last or if I will be able to identify them easily when spring allows me to again work on this project, before the temperatures truly permit the classic normal garden activities to begin again.

photo by Joye Blanscett

I look forward to nature returning some balance to the area. Although, I admit to throwing out some woodland native seeds to hopefully help with the repopulation of the areas I have cleared. If you, like me, have an invasive plant problem, I invite you to embrace the opportunity that fall provides in not only locating and identifying the problem plant but finding time freed up from other garden tasks to devote to this very satisfying project. ◇◇◇

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:

VIRGINIA OPOSSUM (*DIDELPHIS VIRGINIANA VIRGINIANA*)

by Jason Alexander, Master Gardener Volunteer

- ◊ Weighing in between 9-13 pounds, this native marsupial is about the size of an average housecat.
- ◊ White faced with black eyes, pink nose, naked ears, black tipped fur, and 50 teeth (the most of any Virginia mammal), the opossum can appear rather ferocious.
- ◊ Although much maligned for their appearance, hard-working opossums kill almost 95% of ticks they encounter. A single opossum can eat approximately 5,000 ticks.
- ◊ Among the various species in our yards, opossums have one of the lowest risks for developing and spreading rabies.
- ◊ Their preference for scavenging generally enables them to help prevent the spread of disease. Opossums also eat disease-carrying pests such as cockroaches, rats, and mice, as well as garden foes such as snails and slugs.
- ◊ And that's not all! Opossums are resistant to snake venom, which keeps the venomous snake population in check.
- ◊ True to its name, when threatened they will "play possum."
- ◊ They typically have 2 litters of 6-13 young each year between January and October.
- ◊ Opossums do well in a variety of habitats, but prefer wooded areas close to water, building its leaf nest in hollowed out trees or other small cavities including repurposing a skunk or woodchuck burrow.

Virginia opossum

photo by Jason Alexander

Sources:

Virginia DWR

The Helpful Opossum, by Mary Kate Feldner, University of Illinois College of Veterinary Medicine

HORTICULTURE CLASSES OF SPECIAL NOTE:

Save the Date: Saturday, February 6, 2021
9 a.m. to 12 p.m.

Stop Mowing, Start Growing!

3rd Annual, Native Plant Symposium for Beginners

A virtual conference on Zoom

Create a Beautiful Yard, save time & money, improve water quality, build habitat for pollinators and birds.

Keynote Speaker: **Alonso Abugattas,** The Capital Naturalist on social media and the Natural Resources Manager for Arlington County.

To register go to: https://nps2021.eventbrite.com

Registration Fee: $5.00

Call 703-792-7070 for more details.

Sponsored by

Prince William Soil and Water Conservation District · Plant NOVA Natives Naturally Beautiful! · Virginia Cooperative Extension · Virginia Native Plant Society · Prince William Public Works · NOVA Northern Virginia Community College · Prince William Conservation Alliance

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 703-792-6285 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 McKinnie, Administrator, 1890 Extension Program, Virginia State University, Petersburg.

Virginia Cooperative Extension

Virginia Tech • Virginia State University

Calling all Gardeners!

Virginia Master Gardeners Association Presents

Grow Your Own Food

A series of four virtual webinars on the principals of growing and preserving your own food. This series is designed for and available to beginning gardeners and Extension Master Gardeners wishing to improve their confidence in advising gardeners in their community.

Saturday, February 27, 2021 - Grow Great Vegetables in Virginia: *Great Varieties and Effective Techniques with Ira Wallace*

Ira Wallace is a worker/owner of the cooperative Southern Exposure Seed Exchange where she coordinates outreach, education, and new seed grower contracts. Southern Exposure helps people keep control of their food supply thru seed saving and sustainable gardening. Ira is a Central Virginia Master Gardener who serves on the boards of the Organic Seed Alliance, Open Source Seed Initiative, and the Virginia Association for Biological Farming. Ira is an organizer of the Heritage Harvest Festival at Monticello, *[www.HeritageHarvestFestival.com]*. Her book, *The Timber Press Guide to Vegetable Gardening in the Southeast*, and her new state specific gardening book ***Grow Great Vegetables in Virginia*** are available online and at booksellers everywhere. To register click on the following link: https://virginiatech.zoom.us/meeting/register/tZ0vc-yrqTsuHdVHdNYS--599AmVV53ImGI7

SAVE THE DATE and watch for additional information for the next three sessions of **Grow Your Own Food**

Tuesday, May 11 at 6 pm, ***Diseases in the Vegetable Garden*** with Dr. Timothy Durham, Associate Professor at Ferrum College VA. Dr. Durham will discuss common diseases and their biology and sustainable management.

Tuesday, June 29 at 6 pm, ***Insect Pests in the Home Garden*** with Jon Traunfeld, University of Maryland. M.S. Agricultural Extension Education, University of Tennessee. Jon's program will focus on organic control of some of the most common pests in the vegetable garden, and he will have samples photos and scenarios for diagnosis.

Tuesday, September 21 at 6 pm, ***Preserving Your Bounty*** with Becky Gartner, B.S. Home Economics Education/ Extension, Virginia Tech; M.S. Human Nutrition and Foods, Virginia Tech. Becky will provide an overview of food preservation methods, from drying to pressure cooking, including the plusses and minuses of each.

If you are a person with a disability and desire any assistive devices, services, or other accommodation to participate in this activity, please contact Virginia Cooperative Extension at 703-792-6285 during business hours, 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 McKinnie, Administrator, 1890 Extension Program, Virginia State University, Petersburg.

To Register and For More Information, visit
Virginia Cooperative Extension
Horticulture Classes at

https://www.pwcgov.org/government/dept/vce/Pages/Horticulture-Classes.aspx

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 ONLINE CLASSES

Virginia Cooperative Extension (VCE) is hosting classes via zoom Wednesdays, 11:00 a.m. to Noon. 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.

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Master Gardeners Prince William

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