

NORTHERN SHENANDOAH VALLEY MASTER GARDENER ASSOCIATION NEWS

UPCOMING MONTHLY MEETING

- **Sunday, February 26, 2pm, Warren County Government Center**, Front Royal. 220 North Commerce Avenue, Front Royal. Warren County Master Gardeners will be hosting this meeting. Remember that we will have a potluck after the meeting, so bring something yummy to share. Janet Davis of Hill House Farm & Nursery will be our guest speaker. She received her Bachelor's Degree in Horticulture from Virginia Tech and has spent the last 28 years working in various horticultural pursuits—from apple orchards to greenhouses—all the while spending as much time as possible hiking in the beautiful Blue Ridge Mountains. Her time spent in “the woods” fostered her passion for our native flora and plant communities, and spurred her desire to learn more about native plants. Janet has operated a landscape design-install-care business for the past 18 years, and focuses on incorporating native plants into garden settings and “managed” areas while employing sustainable garden techniques. After starting a family and desiring to be at home more, Janet started her greenhouse/nursery business, Hill House Farm & Nursery, which grows and sells only native plants, primarily natives and select cultivars that occur naturally in the Mid-Atlantic region. Janet has been a long time native plant vendor at GardenFest and you will see her there again at GardenFest 2017. Her website is <http://hillhousenativeplants.com>



Directions: From the north end of Front Royal (I-66 exit 6 or Virginia Route 55 from Strasburg), take US Route 522 south. After you cross the second bridge (South Fork of The Shenandoah River), turn left at the stop light. Follow until you come to the next stop light and turn left onto Commerce Avenue. Proceed through the 6th Street light and come three more blocks (Post Office sign will be at the corner of 3rd & Commerce Avenue). Turn right onto 3rd Street, and the County Government Building is on the left. From the south end of Front Royal, take US 340 north through town. Turn right onto 2nd Street at Auto Zone. Go 2 blocks and turn left after you pass Warren Avenue into the Government Center parking lot (just before you get to the stop sign at Commerce Street).

UPCOMING EVENTS

- **Sunday, February 12, 1-3pm, Notes from Nature—Plants of Virginia Workshop, Smithsonian Conservation Biology Institute, Front Royal.** George Mason professor of botany Andrea Weeks will train people how to enter label data for the herbaria images that have been digitized. This is part of community outreach for National Science Foundation-funded research. The goals of the workshop include an introduction the rationale for digitization of natural history specimens and the goals of herbarium digitization in the southeastern US, which is the focus of the NSF-funded research. Before the program Kyle Richards and Erika Gonzales will lead a walk to the demonstration gardens on Racetrack Hill, starting time and location TBA. Limit 24 participants. Register with Catherine Mayes, MayesCD@aol.com.
- **Monday, February 20, 7–8pm, Fort Valley Series—Enhancing Yards for Birds**, Fort Valley Nursery, 1175 Hisey Ave Woodstock VA
- **Monday, March 6, 7–8pm, Fort Valley Series—Plants for Problem Areas**, Fort Valley Nursery, 1175 Hisey Ave Woodstock VA
- **Saturday, April 1, Gardening in the Valley Symposium 2017, Lord Fairfax Community College** (see article below)

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MASTER GARDENER CLASS OF 2017 SCHEDULE by Sharon Bradshaw Shenandoah County, VCE Classroom

- Feb 14:** Introduction to VCE Master Gardener program: Mark Sutphin, NSVMGA Board,
County Coordinators
Class administration/policies discussion
- Feb 16:** Botany I: Dr. Steve Carroll
- Feb 21:** Botany II; Dr. Steve Carroll
- Feb 23:** Entomology – Terry Fogle
- Feb 28:** Plant Pathology: Dr. Mizuho Nita
- Mar 2:** Plant ID: Randy Fogle
Rain Garden Project: Elena Lycas
- Mar 7:** Animal Damage Control: Fred Frenzel
VMS: NSVMGA Volunteer Coordinator and Time Keeper, Bob Carlton and Ann Levi
- Mar 9:** Lawns: Dr. Mike Goatley
- Mar 14:** Soils, Nutrient Management: Bobby Clark
- Mar 16:** Composting: Michael Neese
Public Speaking: Anne Dewey Balzhimer
- Mar 21:** Annuals & Houseplants: Chris Schmidt
- Mar 23:** Perennials: Chris Schmidt
- Mar 28:** Berries: Lee Draper
Fruit Trees: Ed Clark
- Mar 30:** Water Quality: Francis Reilly
- April 4:** Pruning: Lynne Phillips
- April 6:** Trees: Bart McDowell
- April 11:** Vegetables: Dr. Allen Straw
- April 13:** Propagation: Seeds: Lynn Hoffman
Division: Stacey Smith
- April 15:** Propagation and Pruning Workshop, TBA
- April 18:** Landscaping: Dr. Robert McDuffie
- April 20:** Green Help Line Demo and Green Help Line Practicum
- April 25:** PMG: Mark Sutphin
- April 27:** Plant –Insect ID Apps; Internet research: Stacey Smith
Physical Tools for Plant-Insect ID: Sharon Bradshaw
Green Help Line Practicum
- May 2:** Pesticide Safety: Mark Sutphin
Green Help Line Practicum
- May 4:** Habitat Gardening for Wildlife, Carol Heiser webinar
Pollinator Habitat Gardening: Marie Marajov
- May 9:** Volunteerism: NSVMGA Committee leads and Unit project leads
Youth in Horticulture, Carol Nansel, Helen Lake and Lynn Hoffman – Junior MGs
- May 11:** Green Help Line Practicum
- May 16:** Green Help Line Practicum
Distribute Exams
- May 18:** Grade Exam: Management Team
- June 3:** Garden Fest and Graduation



MG TRAINEE CLASS OF 2017 by Sharon Bradshaw

Registration was a success, with 16 candidates selected and three on a waiting list. We are very pleased to have representation from four of our five counties, Frederick, Page, Shenandoah and

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Warren. The first class is scheduled for February 14, in the VCE Classroom in the Shenandoah County Government Building, beginning at 6:00 PM.

The classes are on the VCE calendar, but we realized that, since all are listed under the same heading, signing up to audit one class automatically puts you in all classes; therefore, if you wish to audit a class, please contact Bob Carlton, Rich Howell, Stacey Smith or Sharon Bradshaw with your request. Seating in the classroom is limited, so if you are interested, let us know soon. The class syllabus is included in this newsletter.

WINCHESTER JUNIOR MASTER GARDENER SCHEDULE by Lynn Hoffman

Date	Topic	Teacher
March 7	Introduction/Propagation	Lynn Hoffmann
March 14	Water	Tricia Boyd
March 21	Botany Student Talks	Rodney Dowty Helen Lake
March 28	Soil Student Talks	Angie Hutchinson Helen Lake
April 4	Planning Your Vegetable Garden	Theresa Krause
April 11	Pollinators and Insects Student Talks	Russ Watkins Helen Lake
April 18	Trees The Forest Floor	Tammy Epperson Larry Haun
April 25	Alternative Gardening	Shan Kilby
May 2	No Class Apple Blossom week	
May 16	Herbs Student Talks	Ginny Smith Helen Lake
Week of May 22	plan on planting at the C-CAP garden. Date depends on the weather.	
May 23	Native Plants and Nature Walk at Westminster Canterbury	Frank Baxter
May 30	Submission and Review of Science Journals and Garden Talks	Lynn Hoffmann, Ginny Smith
June 3	Gardenfest and Jr. MG Display table Journals and Garden Talk Displays	

FROM THE PRESIDENT by Cy Haley

We're barely into the New Year and already we're jumping into action. The Seed Exchange headed by Elaine Specht was a big hit and I hear Stacey Morgan created edible works of art for those attending. We have the Symposium headed by Sandy Ward and Bob Gail coming up in March and it sounds like a fabulous event so be sure to sign up soon. The Education Committee headed by Sari Carp has been working hard to put together programs for the public as well as for MGs. I think they've scheduled a lot of events that will appeal to everyone so check out the events list and see what appeals to you and get signed up. The March 22nd Third Grade Initiative headed by Lynn Hoffmann and Joey Waters will be a real treat for the 3rd graders at Hilda J Barbour elementary school in Front Royal and a good design to carry forward into other elementary schools around our five county area. Of course Garden Fest will be coming up in June and we already have a lot of MGs working on preparations. All five County Coordinators are planning their kick off meetings and lots of projects and events are getting ready to start. Even though the gardens are resting comfortably during the winter Master Gardeners are already working hard in preparation of spring and the many, many events in the making. If you are getting a little restless for spring to start get in touch with one of the project heads or your County Coordinator to see where your talents are needed. It truly is never too early to start volunteering!

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SHENANDOAH COUNTY REPORT by Sharon Bradshaw

Our county planning meeting is scheduled for March 20 at 6:00 PM in the VCE classroom. Project applications are continuing to come in and we'll be discussing volunteer needs and opportunities at the meeting. Our Shenandoah County 2017 Trainees will be invited to join us. Many of our projects are tied to the growing season and we'll have more information on those in the next couple of months.

JUNIOR MG HOMESCHOOL PROGRAM by Lynn Hoffmann

The 2017 Jr MG Homeschool program will start in March with 21 students. We meet on Tuesday mornings in Winchester at the Wesleyan Methodist Church from 10 to 11:30. The schedule is posted on our website and the instructors would love if anyone would like to help.

The programs include hands on activities for each class and we are starting to look for donations of materials for the kids. We have one class that will be making terrariums so we need large clear plastic containers with lids. Anything similar to pretzel containers or big bulk food containers would be appreciated. We also need 21 paper/cardboard egg cartons for the propagation class. If you have any of those items, please bring them to the Feb. MG meeting or email me so I can pick them up.

In 2016 we grew 1,000 pounds of food that was donated to C-CAP.

March 22 from 8 to 3 will be a full day with 100 third graders! We will teach Soils, Water, Propagation and Pollinators. The instructors will need assistance throughout the day. If you would like to help please email Lynn Hoffmann at gwendydog@gmail.com and she will pair you up with the classes. There will be lots of hands on activity so we will keep you busy.

THE BARN SERIES AT BELLE GROVE by Lynn Hoffmann

The season will begin again at Belle Grove, and we are setting up our topics and classes for the public. If you are interested in assisting or even teaching please email Lynn Hoffmann at gwendydog@gmail.com. The schedule will be posted on the web site. Each class includes a lecture/instruction and a workshop. The classes count toward MG education hours. If you want to attend and have fun, there is a registration and fee for the class and supplies.

GARDENING IN THE VALLEY SYMPOSIUM by Sandy Ward



Spring is just around the corner, and so is our annual NSVMGA "Gardening in the Valley" Symposium. The Symposium will be held 1 April at the Carl and Emily Thompson Conference Center at Lord Fairfax Community College in Middletown, Virginia. Doors open at 8:00 am and the program will end at 4:00 pm after drawings for Door Prizes. For our Master Gardeners, this is a great way to earn education hours and exchange ideas and conversation with other gardeners.

After opening remarks, the program will kick off with a presentation by Alex Hessler, Sustainable Food Systems Director and Instructor, Virginia Tech. An expert in organic vegetable production and sustainable food systems, Alex will speak on **Organic Soils and Enriching the Garden**. Some members who heard him speak last summer at Master Gardeners College found that Alex makes a "dirty" subject very interesting.

After a brief mid-morning break, you'll have a choice of one of two sessions:

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- **Organic Gardening**, by Jim Douglas, a retired county extension agent who has worked in three states, including Alaska. Jim will take an interactive approach to his workshop, tailoring his presentation around your questions. Please bring questions on organic gardening for him to address!
- **Green Infrastructure for Water Quality**, by John Eckman, Executive Director, Friends of the North Fork of the Shenandoah River. John will speak on water quality and the valuable role played by many Master Gardener projects, such as rain gardens.

Lunch will be catered by Shaffers Catering and Deli. This will be a wonderful opportunity to chat with other gardeners and with our speakers! As always, we will have a Used Book Sale.

The afternoon break-out sessions offer a choice of **Invasive Pests**, or **Gardening with Native Plants**:

- Chris Schmidt, Arboretum specialist at Blandy Experimental Farm and State Arboretum will speak on the new invasive pests that gardeners and homeowners should watch for.
- Julie Borneman, owner of Watermark Woods, a small nursery in Hamilton, VA will talk about using native plants in the garden. At her nursery, she grows native plants in a pesticide-free environment.

The Magic of Monarchs is the topic of our closing speaker, Nicole Hamilton. Nicole is a Monarch Watch Specialist with the Loudon Wildlife Conservancy. Fostering Monarch habitat and educating communities about the life cycle of Monarchs is Nicole's passion.

This year, you can register online at <http://nsvmgga.org>, where you can indicate your preference of break-out sessions and pay electronically using PayPal. The Fee is \$55 for members and \$60 for non-NSVMGA members (lunch included). Please register by March 17, 2017!

If you have gardening books or magazines to donate to the Used Book Sale, we'd like to have them before the day of Symposium. Please bring them to the February monthly meeting.

FOSA/NSVMGA SEED EXCHANGE: A HUGE SUCCESS by Elaine Specht

Thanks to everyone who made the 2017 Seed Exchange@Blandy the biggest and best ever.



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We had a 25% jump in attendance this year, and—in true “exchange” style—I believe more attendees brought in their own seeds than in years past.

We had many NSVMGA members both volunteering to support the event and attending. Can you find volunteers Kris Behrends, Rich Howell, and Sari Carp as well as attendee Paula Brownlee in the picture above? At least one member of our Class of 2017 is also in this picture.

Stacey Smith baked and decorated an impressive tray of cookies to make our guests feel welcome. Virginia Hisghman got plenty of exercise running newly arriving seeds to their proper tables. Look at all those seed packets!



Janet Keithley helped keep things organized at the book exchange table (left), while Anne Dewey-Balzhiser and Pat Legeer tried to keep ahead of the crowds coming through the door.

Pam Hough and Diane Costello stayed very busy at our seed check-in table.



SEED EXCHANGE HISTORY by Helen Lake

Many of us Master Gardeners look forward to breaking up a cold wintry day by going to the Seed Exchange at Blandy. Handling and perusing the seeds, enjoying conversations with fellow MG'ers and the general public gets our juices flowing for what's ahead—spring!

It all began in 2011. The Seed Exchange was hosted by the Blandy Gift shop and Arboretum staff members were the ones who gathered and cleaned the seeds and packets for the event. In the fall of 2011 Donna Downing (MG Class of 2008) invited fellow Master Gardener's to her home to bring seeds, clean and package them into neat envelopes starting an annual tradition of gathering Master Gardener's together in the fall while building comradery in a mutual effort. At that first event in 2011, about twenty five people came.

In 2012 Donna's neighbor, friend, and ardent gardener Pam DeBergh joined her in hosting the seed exchange in the library at Blandy. Pam added a new feature, a large floral arrangement using all the existing flora and greens surviving outdoors in our gardens in January. To make it interesting, Pam challenged attendees to guess all of the plants in the arrangement. The one to name all correctly would get a 'prize'. In addition to that prize, Donna added garden oriented door prizes provided by the Blandy Gift Shop, local vendors and private donations. She also began 'easy teaching moments' during the event such as teaching the public the difference between 'stratification' versus 'scarification'. That year, there were a few more attendees at the Seed Exchange as word began to spread.



In 2014, Donna added outside vendors to join Master Gardener tables of seeds and book/magazine exchange to the event. By this time, attendance had really grown and become part of Master Gardener's annual calendar, right behind our first NSVMGA meeting at Ft. Valley Nursery!

In 2015 Donna passed the baton of the Seed Exchange Program to Elaine Specht who for the past two years has made impressive additions to an already successful program with many happy and helping hands from fellow Master Gardeners.

Donna Downing's strategic vision in 2011, as a member of the Board of Directors at Blandy, was to create an alliance between our two organizations. The seed exchange, from Donna's viewpoint could be the beginning of other efforts that both organizations could collaborate on. Donna's vision has come to pass as NSVMGA has expanded its collaborative efforts beyond Seed Exchange into a successful presence at the Blandy Community Garden and with potentially other opportunities in our future at Blandy and with their talented staff.

MEMBERSHIP by Mary Craig

As we start a new year, I look forward to all the upcoming workshops, the Symposium, the monthly meetings and the various projects that will be starting up soon. Getting out in the garden is always a joy after being cooped up for the winter. Although we have had some mild days, it hasn't exactly been prime gardening weather, though now is a good time to prune broken tree limbs. If you're not sure the best way to prune, remember, a Pruning Tune-up workshop is scheduled for March 4th in Front Royal.

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Just a brief reminder to all, the first step in getting ready for a new year of Master Gardener projects is to get your VCE Recertification form completed and sent to Mark Sutphin. If you have not done so, please take a minute to fill it out. There is a link to the form as soon as you log into VMS.

The second step is to be sure you have recorded all your hours for last year in VMS. You need to complete 20 hours of project work and 8 hours of continuing education each year to remain active. One of the best ways to get a good start on your education hours each year is to attend the Symposium. The symposium team works very hard each year to put this together, and they always do a great job.

Then try to attend the monthly meetings. They are a great way to earn one project hour and one education hour. We always have great topics and speakers. Not to mention, it's a good time to catch up with MGs from other counties that you may not get to see very often. If you make it to 8 meetings during the year, you will complete your education hours.

There are also lots of online workshops and courses you can take that count for education, as well. You should receive emails about upcoming events and courses. If you have any question about whether a course or workshop you wish to take will count, please contact the Volunteer Coordinator, Bob Carlton. He will be happy to verify if you can count the hours.

The third step is to pay your annual NSVMGA membership dues. Dues are just \$20.00 for individuals and \$25.00 for couples. I'm happy to say that almost all of our active members have already paid their dues. If you have not, please bring a check to the February meeting or send it to Bob Gail, our treasurer.

I'm looking forward to another great year of sharing my passion for gardening with my fellow Master Gardeners and members of the public. I hope you are too.

HISTORIAN by Mary Craig

If you write an article about an upcoming event or someone writes an article about a MG project, please save a copy of the paper or journal for me. I will add it to our archives. Thank you.

GARDEN FEST BUZZZZZZZZZZ by Cy Haley

Have you heard the buzz? Garden Fest is coming and the theme this year is **pollinators**. Joey Waters, Sharon Bradshaw, and Lynn Hoffmann are heading up the Kid's Events and they are using pollinators as the theme. The kick off meeting at Belle Grove Plantation February 5th reviewed the changes we came up with at the wrap up meeting last August and started working on the many items to be accomplished before June 3rd. If you are interested in volunteering we'll be sending out the sign-up sheet soon and you can also sign up in VMS. Be sure to list which area you want to work and any time restrictions you have. Remember, this is our big fund raiser for the year and it takes a lot of volunteers to pull it off so don't be shy, volunteer!

Also, as you begin cleaning out your garden sheds, basements, and garages in preparation for spring remember to set aside any items you want to donate to Second Hand Rose. You can bring your items to Association Meetings and we'll collect them.

And don't forget to read Stacey Smith's tips on what to do each month with getting plants ready for the sale. It's about time to start some seeds if you want to donate annuals or vegetable plants and want them big enough in time for Garden Fest.

If you know of any vendors that you think might be a good fit for Garden Fest be sure to give Suzanne Boag their contact information. We have certain requirements for vendors so they have to be vetted but we're always looking for new ones that fit in with our needs.

WINTER BLOOMERS, AND NOT YOUR GRANDMOTHER'S KIND by Lesley Mack

There are real and practical pay-offs to encouraging a more biologically diverse yard. Healthy, balanced ecosystems clean our water and our air. Pollinators are vital to food production.

Aesthetically and spiritually, native plants enhance our sense of place. Native plants are one of the most visible elements in the local landscape. They are part of what makes a region unique. Learning and growing native plants promotes a deeper understanding and respect for the land.—The Native Plant Society of Eastern Ohio

AGREED!

A number of websites offer lists of plants that are native in the area, some are listed below, and there are many others. I appreciate the sites with photos.

<http://www.plantnative.org/rpl-mdvawv.htm>

<https://www.novaregion.org/DocumentCenter/View/10615>

http://www.virginia.edu/blandy/blandy_web/arboretum/virginia_natives_for_birds.pdf

<http://www.dcr.virginia.gov/natural-heritage/np>

But sometimes, just sometimes, we enjoy something for ourselves even if it is not native, as long as it isn't invasive. Especially, if there is a plant that blooms in the winter, and there are a few. Here are two that are blooming in our garden.

Chimonanthus praecox is a medium-sized, easily grown, winter-flowering deciduous shrub that will thrive in any soil. The pale waxy-yellow, purple-centered flowers are sweetly fragrant. Also known as Wintersweet, introduced in 1766 from China.

Jasmine nudiflorum or Winter Jasmine is a winter-flowering shrub with bright yellow flowers on the bare green branches. It makes strong, angular stems up to 13 feet long and is excellent for covering walls and banks. It can be cut back after flowering. Introduced in 1844 from China.



EDITORS CORNER by Richard Stromberg

With no flowers to look at when I am hiking in the winter, I look for other things: oak leaves on the ground (hence my Oak articles the last couple of months), berries, mosses, fungi, and lichens. Here are some pictures of things I've seen this winter.

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