

February, 2011 Newsletter

- **Sunday, February 13, 2pm, Bull Run Mountain Walk**, Fauquier County. For the Virginia Native Plant Society Piedmont Chapter Second Sunday Walk in February, Bull Run Mountains Conservancy Director Michael Kieffer will lead us along the trails of the 800 acres of the Conservancy. It is located where Broad Run, I66, VA55 and the railroad split the mountain at Thorofare Gap along the border of Fauquier and Prince William Counties. An indoor program will be offered in case of bad weather. Contact Carrie Blair for information or check the Conservancy website:
- **February 1 to May 5, 2011 MG Intern Class**
- **March 10, 2010, 11:30am-12:30pm, Handley Library, Benham Room, We're Being Invaded: Invasive Insects and Plants in Frederick County.** Laura Shifflett, Frederick County Extension-ANR Assistant will help landowners learn to identify invasive insects and plants. Eradication techniques and organic/ natural alternatives will also be discussed
- **March 17, 2010, 11:30am-12:30pm, Handley Library, Benham Room, Is Your Garden a Water Hog?** Lynn Hoffmann discusses proper watering techniques and water quantity for a healthy garden. She will also explore alternatives to large lawn areas and how to exchange your garden plants for native plants that tolerate drought conditions (xeriscapes) and how to use succulents, yucca and agave types of plant.

NEW COUNTY COORDINATORS

by Randy Langford

Please welcome Teri Merrill as the new Frederick County Coordinator, Mary Craig as the Clarke County Coordinator, and Susan Garrett as the Clarke County Co-Coordinator. Luann Laundry is joining in as Shenandoah County Co-Coordinator.

BEYOND THE GARDEN GATE--CAROLYN WILSON, CLASS OF 1997

by Teri S. Merrill

It's often the little things that make the biggest difference. For the Northern Shenandoah Valley Master Gardeners Association, members who regularly take time to send in their timesheets may think their efforts are small, but they are making a huge difference for the entire organization. That's how longtime member and volunteer, Carolyn Wilson, views that perennially pesky issue of timesheets.

"I used to think sending in my timesheet was a bother. Then I became volunteer coordinator for the Association, and I realized how important they really are," Carolyn says. She has also served as county coordinator for Shenandoah County, as class leader for the 2010 class, and has worked on a variety of projects over the years. The NSVMGA may be comprised of volunteers, but timesheets represent real hours that the Commonwealth of Virginia and Virginia Cooperative Extension would have paid staff members to perform the same jobs, she notes. Each year, that adds up to thousands of hours that benefit the cities, counties and rural communities throughout this beautiful state. In 2008, Carolyn was the first NSVMGA member to earn the 3,000 hours award and by the end of this year expects to have completed a total of 4,000 hours.

Total hours by members are considered by the state and many private foundations and companies to when determining where they will award grants each year. Last year, NSVMGA "donated" almost 6,000 project hours to the state and completed almost 1,700 education hours. Showing that the organization has a committed volunteer component raises the interest level among potential donors, she notes. Many members of the Association assume that a few hours volunteered each quarter don't matter, but it's critical that every single hour is reported, Carolyn says. Even active members occasionally forget to send in their hours, so that's why the volunteer coordinator and county coordinators constantly stress this issue to the membership.

For Carolyn, what has been most rewarding over the years is the friendship and camaraderie that comes from being in a group of people with shared interests. And volunteering in the organization--from getting involved in projects to taking on leadership roles--has meant meeting people from all over the five-counties. "I've made

such incredible friendships over the years through this group, including people I would never have otherwise met,” she says. The NSVMGA offers a variety of projects that can suit just about any member of the organization. To interns, new members and those who have been inactive, Carolyn notes that every county has a need, so she recommends they find something and get involved. “You get out of this organization what you put into it,” she adds.

Carolyn has 10 acres in Shenandoah County on which she grows a variety of perennials, flowering shrubs, and vegetables. Even when she’s at home, Carolyn is still volunteering: she recently expanded her vegetable garden so she could share the surplus with a home in the area that serves the mentally challenged.

EDITORS CORNER by Richard Stromberg

Have you ever had an allergic reaction to a plant you bought? Here’s my tale. While waiting in line at the cashier in Southern States to pay for some bird seed, I looked through the items on sale and picked out some Hyacinth bulbs. I have three vases designed to start Hyacinth over water. When I got home I felt some tingly-itching on my neck, but it went away, so I thought nothing of it. The next day I got the bulbs out and went looking for the vases. My neck and face started to itch terribly, so I took some Benadryl and sat down on the couch. I tried to think of what I had eaten that might cause this reaction, but couldn’t point to anything. The itching subsided, and a couple hours later I started to fill the vases with water and put the bulbs on the rim designed to hold them. The itching came back worse than ever, and we decided to go to the emergency room, not happily because it was dark and the roads not completely clear. As we exited our development the itching started to subside, and it hit me—it must be the bulbs. I felt much better, so we turned around. My wife went in and disposed of the bulbs, and I have been fine since.

Meanwhile other flowers have been flourishing in my house despite the weather. I cut some Forsythia branches a couple weeks ago, split the stems and stuck them in water. Now they are in full bloom. Martins had a dwarf pink rose I couldn’t resist. The Fuchsia I wrote about last March (see [March, 2010 Newsletter](#)) is still going strong. My Bougainville has one flower left, and one of the Geraniums I am nursing through the winter is flowering. So gardening doesn’t stop in the winter, but without Hyacinths.

