

March 2011 Newsletter

February 1 to May 5, 2011 MG Intern Class

Thursday, March 10, 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

Saturday, March 12, 1pm, The American Chestnut Foundation's Chestnut Reintroduction Program. Samuels Public Library, 330 East Criser Road, Front Royal. Presenter Catherine D. Mayes, Chairman of the Virginia Chapter of The American Chestnut Foundation

Sunday, March 13, 1pm, Sky Meadows State Park Walk. Master Naturalist Chris Lewis will lead a walk on the winding trails through meadows and woodlands while enjoying spectacular views of the Piedmont. For more details, please contact Carrie Blair

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 (xerisapes) and how to use succulents, yucca and agave types of plant.

Sunday, March 27, 10am-2pm. Garlic Mustard Pull. Help eliminate invasive Garlic Mustard at Thompson Wildlife Management Area Meet at the Trillium Trail Parking Lot on Freezeland Road (VA 638) north of Linden. If you plan to spend the day, pack a lunch. First 15 participants to sign up will receive a complimentary wine tasting voucher from Fox Meadow Winery next to the WMA. Contact Richard Stromberg

FREDERICK COUNTY REPORT by Teri Merrill

We are having a county meeting on Monday, March 14, at 5 pm on the grounds of the Museum of the Shenandoah Valley Orientation Building. At the MSV, take a left into the first parking lot.

The purpose of the meeting is to see what projects we are currently involved in and how they are progressing; what projects are coming up and what we need to do to prepare; and what future projects have been identified and how will we proceed.

For each project, I'd like to talk about sustainability--that is, how the current project will be maintained; succession planning, that is, who is a co-coordinator or can take over a project should personal issues take precedence; and mission, that is, does this project provide education to the public and support the Extension office. Interns, current members--and especially members who have let their involvement lapse--are all welcome and encouraged to join this meeting.

CLARKE COUNTY REPORT by Mary Craig

Our first Clarke meeting for 2011 was not to be. The weather did not cooperate for us Tuesday morning so we rescheduled for Friday morning, but had a poor turnout. We will reschedule for early March.

I can report that we will be setting up our table at the Farmers' Market in Berryville, answering greenline question, and have our usual booth at Blandy, both spring and fall. We will continue to keep up the xeriscape garden at the park and be involved in the rain barrel workshops and sales in some capacity. I will have a more in depth report next month.

I do want to say a huge thank you to Marilyn Thuss for her many years of service in this position. She left me some very big shoes to fill and set a very good example for all of us in Clarke County. She deserves some time off to spend with family and I'm sure she will make the most of it.

I also want to thank Janet Keithley for letting us hold our meeting at her beautiful B & B, the Berryville Inn. She treated us to some wonderful food, some of which I'm hoping you will see the recipe for in this newsletter.

It's that time of year, I have daffodils and resurrection lilies popping up and big buds on the lilacs and flowering quince; spring is just around the corner. I'm sure we all can't wait.

EDITORS CORNER by Richard Stromberg

Happiness is Skunk Cabbage (*Symplocarpus foetidus*)—after this cold winter! I was delighted to see it blooming on February 19th. We saw them in a moist area beside Gooney Manor Loop south of Browntown in Warren County.

We soon left the road and climbed up Sterdley Run to see waterfalls. The climb was difficult, but we were happy not to have snow and ice underfoot. Plenty of ice still encased the falls.

Another botanical treat appeared on the meta-basalt around the falls, Walking Fern (*Asplenium rhizophyllum*). Most people think of a fern as feathery. Walking Fern does not fit that picture. It's leaf is entire—no divisions—just a long, smooth leaf narrowing to a long point. When the point of the arching leaf touches the ground, it roots and starts another leaf, so the plant seems to walk along the surface.

When I caught up to the hike leader at Skyline Drive, he was talking to a Park Ranger. A fire was blazing into the Park on this very windy day. The ranger did not want us to go back into the woods, so she took four of our drivers in her car to where we had parked near Browntown. The rest of us walked south on Skyline Drive, away from the fire until they came to pick us up.



When I had looked back down the valley from the falls, I had seen smoke, but didn't think anything of it. Many of you probably saw the smoke too. It took a week to put the fire out and 2,000 acres burned. The Drive and trails were opened by March 1st. My wife and I hiked the area and saw the blackened ground and scorched Mountain Laurel. Unlike the massive fires out west, our forest fires pretty much stay on the ground: dead leaves, logs. Bark of live trees is blackened for a couple of feet, but they live on. As I have seen after other fires, the Mountain Laurel will re-sprout. Fire is a rejuvenation process.

