

NORTHERN SHENANDOAH VALLEY MASTER GARDENER ASSOCIATION NEWS

November, 2013

UPCOMING MEETINGS

- **November 17, 4:00 pm** Annual Election to be held at the Warren County Government Center located in Front Royal.

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).

- **December**, no meeting

UPCOMING EVENTS

- **November 10, 1pm Virginia Native Plant Society Piedmont Chapter Second Sunday Walk** Shenandoah University Professor Woodward Bousquet will lead a walk around the University's recently acquired Cool Springs Battlefield conservation property in Clarke County. Contact piedmontvnps@gmail.com for details.
- Christmas Decorating at Belle Grove: The MG will decorate Sally's Room and the reception area this year at Belle Grove. If you are interested please let Lynn Hoffmann know at gwendydog@gmail.com
- Seed collecting: Start saving your seeds and package some up for the Blandy Seed Exchange in January. Donna Downing will be the contact with Blandy. The exchange will be in January 2014.

PREPARING FOR THE JANUARY SEED EXCHANGE by Anne Dewey-Balhizer

Both Master Gardeners and Interns gathered at the lovely home of Donna Downing on October 30 to prepare seeds for the Blandy Seed Exchange in January. Donna had everything well in hand for us. She had spread out the samples on paper plates to dry and had small envelopes ready for sorting and labeling. We carefully picked out the seeds and packaged amaranth, lavender, nasturtium, and many others. And we were on hand to see Sally Hale, pictured next to Donna, put in her 50th hour of volunteering to qualify for Master Gardener status!

VOLUNTEER COORDINATOR'S REPORT by Susan Garrett

Recently we have been seeing lots of versions of the famous British World War II poster, the one that told the population of England, if an invasion should happen, to "Keep Calm and Carry On". Growing up in Connecticut, I have always loved fall, and so I was fascinated by the version of the historic poster I saw recently on Facebook. Not only did I love the colors, but I also had a good time puzzling out what it would mean to "autumn on".

For VCE Master Gardeners, I wonder if there is not some real wisdom in the advice of the poster. Autumn is the time when the frantic activity of spring and summer changes to a more focused activity. We transition to the peace of the garden in winter—but only after one last gorgeous burst of color. And one of the things I love most about fall colors is that some of the most glorious color comes in the wildest areas, not the most manicured and tended. What would fall be without bright red sumac along the roads and goldenrod in the wild places? And I appreciate that last pink flower on the straggly bedraggled rose bush so much more in October than I do when it is one of hundreds of buds earlier in the summer.

Autumn teaches us that we don't always have to be in charge. Autumn is a time of receiving, not creating, and basking in undeserved gifts. The word "grace" is most simply defined as "undeserved gift". So receive the grace—and "autumn on"!

PRESIDENT'S REPORT by Cy Haley

What fun it's been!

As I think about the last three years that I've served as president of NSVMGA, a lot of good times come to mind:

- Garden Fest (and all the work that went with it)
- Monthly meetings (and all the good food and camaraderie)
- The fun trips to the mill and Philadelphia Flower Show (and yes Carolyn, what happens at the Philadelphia Flower Show stays at the Philadelphia Flower Show)
- The trainings, educational events, symposiums, farmer's markets, fairs, clean up days at various locations
- MG College, and a lot of other events and trips that would take pages to fill

What made all of these events fun were the people. I have lived in the valley for almost 10 years, and, though I made many close friends before I became a Master Gardener, I now consider my friendship list to have grown exponentially since. The members who I was lucky enough to serve with are all now friends.

And the things I've learned! Each one of us has something to offer to the association and many have several talents to bring. Learning from my many mentors and advisors, from VCE Agent Mark Sutphin giving us leadership and direction, to the fantastic board members I've served with helped me get over the "bumps" along the way. This has not been a one person job and the best part is no one expected me to carry the load alone.

My first mentors were Bob Carlton and Carolyn Wilson. They were my class coordinators and have stuck by me with knowledgeable advice from day one. Suzanne Boag kept me straight on more than one occasion, since my memory is on overload, and she sacrificed her personal time to get me information I could not recall. Angie Hutchinson and Helen Lake both served as Vice President and did exceptional jobs setting up meetings and getting us fantastic speakers. Helen also helped me when I first started with her uncanny ability for understanding personalities. Our treasurers included Anita Harris, Luann Woodward-Laundry, and David Freese. Each one was on top of the finances at all times and kept us straight (and in the black). Lynn Hoffmann counseled me on more than one occasion and helped me get over some of those early rough spots. Mary Craig, Leslie and Tom Mack, Elke Thomas, George and Shelby Hadeler, Marsha Burd, Angie, and Carolyn have always been receptive and informative. They have grown and strengthened their county's participation in NSVMGA and have also served as leaders in the association. And I don't want to forget Elizabeth

Bevan and Susan Garrett who took on the very important job as Volunteer Coordinator. The list could go on and on of the many strong leaders we have. My hat is off to all of the above and to all of you who do so much to make this a strong organization and important educational tool for Virginia Cooperative Extension. I know VCE appreciates you and so do I. And I hope you all bring your enthusiasm and energy in welcoming your next president.

I'm a hugger (as I'm sure many of you have noticed) so consider this as a big virtual hug to each and every one of you!

Happy Volunteering, Educating, Learning, Growing, Planting, etc., etc., etc.

Oh, and I'll still be around...that reminds me, are you ready to get started on Garden Fest 2014?

VICE PRESIDENT'S REPORT by Helen Lake

It's November and my final month as Vice President of NSVMGA. The year has flown by and looking back, our organization has had a very full year of providing robust educational programs to our communities. I have truly enjoyed getting to know many more of our fellow Master Gardeners spread out over our five counties while traveling to meetings at new locations. I tried to add some new topics, locations and speakers to this year's educational programs during our monthly meetings, and, hopefully, you've enjoyed them.

At our October meeting, Master Gardener and member of the Native Plant Society, Richard Stromberg presented on the native species found in Virginia. Although he was hampered by lack of use of his wonderful photos via PowerPoint, Richard did a wonderful job of articulating and describing native plants that live amongst us. We will continue benefitting from Richard's vast knowledge of native plants not just in Virginia but neighboring states through his monthly submissions in our newsletter. Don't forget to scroll down to the very bottom of each month's newsletters for his treasures in the written word and photos.

The conference room at the Farm Credit Bureau in Winchester proved to be a very nice setting for presentations. We have been invited back to use the facility by a fellow Extension Leadership Council Member in Frederick County.

November's meeting will be hosted by Warren County at the Front Royal Government Building. As you know, November is an important month for the entire membership to make an effort to attend because we elect our Board officers for the coming year and a quorum of active Master Gardeners are needed to make that possible.

During October's meeting, I requested the county coordinators to select ONE project or program to highlight for their county to BRAG about. Revisiting the traditions of the past, Bragging has long been a part of the November meeting tradition (after elections). We do so much for our communities and never take the time out to recognize all of the wonderful achievements of the year. Take a bow, one and all! I'm very proud to be associated with NSVMGA and all of you and look forward to working and enjoying the fellowship and camaraderie for another year in 2014 as Education Chair.

PAGE COUNTY COORDINATOR'S REPORT by Lesley Mack

The Heritage Festival was almost like the Woodstock of the 60's: two days of rain, mud, and fun, but not that many visitors. We did get to answer some gardening questions for people that are local and others that traveled from Northern Virginia and points beyond. It was cold while the rain

poured down. The scandalous photo of Lesley shows her welcome, warm flannel drawers while discussing the layers of clothes the Civil War era ladies wore.

We hosted a Boy Scout Troop from the "flatlands of Delaware". Luckily, Shenandoah National Park reopened in time for their arrival. The troop discovered many different and similar trees and shrubs here in Page County, and in the park.

October's freeze—usually our ginko tree turns a lovely bright shade of yellow before all the leaves fall off. This year, the leaves went from being green to being on the ground. Anyone else finding something different about this season?

CLARKE COUNTY COORDINATOR'S REPORT by Mary Craig

We are still trying to finalize a time and date to schedule our Clarke wrap up meeting. It was a good year for Clarke. We had great spots at the Clarke County Fair and the Farmers' Market. We were able to answer a lot of questions for the public and give out some valuable information on everything from Thousand Cankers disease, how to grow better tomatoes and ways to use fresh grown herbs in your meals.

The demonstration xeriscape garden at Chet Hobert Park is looking good as the season comes to a close. We have the plants labeled and posters that identify drought tolerant plants. We have plans to make it even more of an educational spot next year.

The Millwood Community Garden continues to educate the local community about the proper planting and care of vegetables. It also helps provide fresh vegetables to the community. Our Greenline answers questions from the community.

The rain barrel project had a quiet year as we put together the remaining barrels last year. We continue to help Clarke County and The Interstate Commission on the Potomac River Basin sell them to the public.

Our members gave various garden talks and tours this year. And we provided set up for Blandy's Garden Fair in the spring. Since the 2013 Class was hosted in Clarke County, we have several new Master Gardeners in our county, now. They are a great addition to the group. Most have already earned their hours and have been an asset to Clarke County MGs.

JUNIOR MASTER GARDENER'S PROGRAM AT GREENWOOD MILL by Helen Lake, Coordinator

October was chock full of wonderful classes for our JrMG students!

As weather permitted (driving rain), instructors split their classes between the inside classroom and going outside to the raised garden beds to continue reinforcing the topic of the day either through activities or observation. From the photos, you can see for yourself the smiling faces and engagement in the program by the students!

We, as instructors, learned valuable lessons in time management and paying attention to ringing of the school bells to ensure the students would get back to their homerooms before final dismissal.

Stan Corneal, a new Master Gardener, was presented with his MG certificate and green polo shirt at a JrMG Class on October 24th in front of the students. Stan, who has a perfect attendance record at the JRMG Program at Greenwood Mill, was applauded and later congratulated by the students for his achievement.

For the class on Halloween, students turned the tables and presented on topics of their choosing during a "Garden Talk", better known as public speaking. The students could work in teams or solo and use visuals and props to support their topic that was based on what they had learned to date in the JrMG Program. As you can see in the photos, they exceeded all of our expectations with their commitment and interest in presenting.

In November, we still have 3 classes: Garden Assessment Day, Indoor Plants and Garden Feast, before the final Award ceremony on the 26th of November. At each of our classes, in addition to the instructors and their helpers, we have on hand extension 4-H staff and at least two MG'ers who are there to audit and provide support during the class. It's been a great team experience.

LOOKING BACK AT 2013 by Mary Craig, Historian

As we get closer to the end of another great year with the Northern Shenandoah Valley Master Gardener Association, I thought we should celebrate all that we've accomplished this year. From the fantastic Class of 2013 to Master Gardener College, it was a great year for us all. Ten of the new class have already completed their 50 hours to become full-fledged Master Gardeners. Congratulations to you all. We hope you will enjoy being a part of this wonderful group as much as we do.

The Junior Master Gardener program grew this year and is a wonderful program. If you get a chance to help, Lynn and Helen would welcome you. They do a wonderful job with the program.

The 2013 Symposium at Shenandoah University was very well attended. This event grows every year and is a wonderful way to bring the public information on a variety of topics. Lynn Hoffmann has put a lot of hard work into the Symposiums each year and has done a wonderful job. Helen Lake will be taking over as Education Chair and we look forward to another wonderful year of educational events.

Thanks to all who entered the 20 year logo contest. And thanks, again, to Sarah Kohrs for her winning entry. It's nice to have a patch to commemorate 20 years of NSVMGA. If you haven't received a patch, I have some. If you want one, send an email to mcorneliac@centurylink.net.

EDITORS CORNER by Richard Stromberg

The native Persimmon trees (*Diospyros virginiana*) in my yard did not have any fruit this year. They are tall and spindly because they have to compete with other trees. The tomato-sized persimmons you get in the grocery store are *Diospyros kaki*. They are not native and are not hardy, so they will not grow here. The native fruits are much smaller, up to 1½ inch in diameter, and have several large seeds so there is much less edible pulp than the Japanese species. The fruit of both species have high tannin content which makes the immature fruit astringent and bitter, so you want to be sure they are ripe, *i.e.*, soft, so the tannins are reduced and sugars increased. By the way, like tomatoes, *Diospyros* fruit are berries.

I want to tell you about a Persimmon tree I saw the last Saturday in October when I hiked with a group from the Northern Virginia Hiking Club along the east ridge of the Massanutten. We started at the boat landing parking lot at what used to be called Foster's Landing on the west bank of the South Fork of the Shenandoah. To get there, you have to drive west from Luray on Route 675 and, after crossing the Bixler Ferry bridge, turn right on Route 684 for 7½ miles. We crossed the road and hiked up the Hebron Gap Trail to the ridge and went out and back along the ridge on the Massanutten Trail, with lovely fall scenery: Fort Valley to west and the river, Page Valley and the Blue Ridge to the east.

In the parking lot was the biggest Persimmon tree I have ever seen. It had more fruit than I have ever seen. Most of the leaves had dropped so the fruit stood out clearly. (I ate one I found on the ground and brought three home.) The tree stood pretty much by itself with only some Redcedars a few feet away, so little competition. And the river was only a few feet away, so it has abundant water, though they do well in dry conditions as attested by a tree that yielded us some fruit up on the ridge. When we got back to the parking lot, one of the hikers whacked at the lowest branch with her hiking pole as though it was a piñata, but only a couple fruit came down. They just weren't ripe enough to drop.

On my drive home I thought, "That tree must have hundreds of fruit on it." Looking at my pictures, it must be thousands! I checked the state and national "Big Tree" lists, and this tree cannot match the 33 inch diameter and 120 feet height of those trees, but do the list leaders produce so many fruit?