

# NORTHERN SHENANDOAH VALLEY MASTER GARDENER ASSOCIATION NEWS

October, 2015

## UPCOMING MEETING

**Sunday, October 18, 4-6pm, Shenandoah Vineyards at 3659 South Ox Road in Edinburg.** The Shenandoah County MGs will host a celebration of fall and our local wine industry. Included in the program is the opportunity to participate in a fifteen-minute complimentary interactive presentation on sensory perceptions of wine (see, swirl, sniff, and sip). For this opportunity, please bring a clear wine glass to the meeting. For those who are interested, there is the opportunity to tour the winery cellars and participate in a tasting of Shenandoah Vineyard's classic wine selections. For NSVMGA, this activity has been discounted to \$5 per person. For persons who purchase a bottle of wine to share and enjoy during our social time, there is no additional tour fee. And, of course, a walk among the grapes is an option! Following our program and tour, we will gather under the tent for a business meeting and shared social time. To complement our wine or other beverage choices, please bring light fare--an appetizer or hors d'oeuvre--to share. Shenandoah County MGs will provide plates, plastic cups, napkins, and utensils. Beverage choices will include tea, lemonade, and water. Ice will also be provided to chill down our drinks. **Please bring a chair!**

**DIRECTIONS:** From I-81, exit 279, head northwest (away from Edinburg) on Stoney Creek Boulevard, State Route 675/VA-185 W (0.2 mile). Then turn right onto South Ox Road, State Route 686 (1.6 miles). Shenandoah Vineyard is on your left. You'll see the vineyards before you see the winery and other buildings.

## UPCOMING EVENTS

- **Sat-Sun, October 10-11, 9am-4:30pm Arborfest, State Arboretum at Blandy**
- **Sat-Sun, October 10-11, Page County Heritage Associations' 46<sup>th</sup> Annual Heritage Festival**, Page County Fairgrounds.
- **Monday, October 19, 6-9pm Seed Sorting and Pizza Evening**, Specht Residence, Woodstock,
- **Thursday, November 5, 2015**, Rebecca Davis, Extension Agent, Family and Consumer Sciences/Nutrition, will present a program on "fermentation" from 6 p.m. until 7 p.m. at the Mid-Atlantic Farm Credit Conference Room in the Kernstown Business Center located at 125 Prosperity Drive. The program counts for one hour of education credit.

## TIMEKEEPER'S REPORT by Kris Behrends

### TIME SHEETS ARE DUE!

Due to familial obligations, Sarah Kohrs is stepping down as timekeeper. Kris Behrends has taken over the timekeeper position and is looking forward to being a support and encourager in getting your hours entered on VMS. Her e-mail address is [dvrchic@shentel.net](mailto:dvrchic@shentel.net), and her address is 744 Spring Parkway, Woodstock, VA 22664.

The third quarter of 2015 has ended. Please log your third quarter hours for July through September by October 5th. This is a great time to also enter your first and second quarter hours if you have not done so already. There is only one more quarter to earn your project and education hours (20 project and 8 education for MGs; 50 project for Interns), so take time to enter your hours and see what you have left to complete.

Thanks, Sarah, for all your support and knowledge during this transition period!



## VOLUNTEER COORDINATOR'S REPORT by Mary Flagg

### How to make a pumpkin planter:

Pumpkin planters make great fall decorations. They are quick, easy and fun. Pumpkin planters look great by themselves or in groups. So, prepare the pumpkin by making a generous top opening, hollow it out, drill a drainage hole, and fill in halfway with potting mix. Add your favorite plant and water is thoroughly. Voila!!

## FROM THE PRESIDENT by Susan Garrett

Autumn is such a wonderful time of year! I love the colors of fall, the crisp mornings and mild afternoons, the apple harvest, football games, and the fall holidays of Halloween and Thanksgiving. It has been my favorite season ever since I was a child.



I am always surprised how fall comes so gradually. One morning you walk out the door, and, suddenly, a fresh chill is in the air and, here and there on the grass, the first leaves have fallen.

As the growing season comes to the end, the pace of the work that Extension Master Gardeners undertake is slowing down. Few requests about gardens any more, as most in our area are being put to bed and little need now for MG knowledge about (or research on) plant diseases or insect pests (excepting the now ubiquitous fall incursion of stinkbugs).

I always see this time of year as a time to reflect and evaluate and plan. We have time now to look at our MG programs and projects, goals and visions, and make them even better next year. I give thanks for the wonderful rhythms of life that allow us to do that!

### **PAGE COUNTY REPORT** by Lesley Mack

We are a little closer to getting signage for the 250+ year old Chinquapin Oak tree in Luray. It is the third largest Chinquapin Oak in Virginia's Big Tree Program. We are working with Rinker's in Mt. Jackson for a bench.



Here is skinny Tom Mack trying out the size of the smaller bench. We are thinking about what should go on a bronze plaque on the marble bench. Decisions, decisions...

We invite you to the Page County Heritage Associations' 46<sup>th</sup> Annual Heritage Festival, October 10 and 11, at the Page County Fairgrounds. If you have old timey clothes to wear, and like talk to people about plants, let me know. You would be welcome to have a table next to the Hill & Valley Garden Club. The website for the event is <https://sites.google.com/a/pagecountyheritage.com/pcha>.



### **SHENANDOAH COUNTY REPORT** by Sharon Bradshaw

We began the month with the ending of this year's Shenandoah County Fair. We had good representation for our information table and many contacts. In addition, several of our Master Gardeners won blue and red ribbons for their fair entries. Congratulations to them.

The ongoing projects of Green Help Line and Farmers' Markets, New Market Rain Garden, home consultations, etc. are being staffed by volunteers. One big disappointment came this past month when the Woodstock Farmers' Market closed the season early due to dwindling customer support. We were disappointed but not surprised by the decision. The Sam Moore Slave Cemetery, with project coordinator Sarah Kohrs, met for a walk-through of the cemetery and a planning session this month.

Several county MGs and their guests enjoyed dinner and a fun evening on September 25. Recognition of individual efforts and a drawing for door prizes ending the evening. Rich Howell and Carolyn Wilson brought plants from their personal collections as prizes. Delicious food, good friends, and plants – a perfect evening.

### **FREDERICK COUNTY REPORT** by John Kummer

The normal growing season is just about over and gardeners of the northern Shenandoah Valley are either setting in some fall crops or getting the soil ready for next year. Rain has finally arrived after a dry July and August. A little muddy for my tastes; need to start mowing the lawn again. At the of October hurricane Joaquin looms large and could start affecting northern Virginia. And that's the way it is with tillers of the soil: either too dry or too wet.

The Winchester Main Street Agriculture Day on the Loudoun walking mall was on September 19. NSVMGA had a booth, headed by Mark who was there most of the day. Thanks to all who staffed it. The weather was great, although a bit blustery. We met and talked to many citizen-strollers about our activities, among numerous other topics. The ground water flow working display is a real pleaser, especially for the younger crowd.

Activity at community gardens in Frederick is winding down. Plaudits to all those who have contributed to the gardens in our five counties, supplying much of the produce to local food banks.

The Frederick County Greenline has perhaps two or three Fridays left to staff before closing for the season by the end of October. If you need contact hours, this is how to occupy your Friday mornings. Thanks to Russ Watkins for coordinating the Greenline activities. Use the VMS calendar to volunteer.

The Blandy Arborfest is coming up October 10 and 11. See the VMS calendar to sign up, or contact me directly to volunteer. Plenty of shifts are still open both days.

## CLARKE COUNTY REPORT by Ginny Smith

On Friday, September 25, Rose Fairman and Suzanne Boag helped Alison Teetor, Clarke County Natural Resource Planner, with a Rain Barrel Building workshop. Suzanne is project leader for this.

A new project at Johnson Williams Middle School in Berryville is in progress. Students in the gifted program want to develop a native plant garden as well as herbs, bulbs or perennials. This will be tied in with the science program as well. Also a greenhouse is proposed as an Eagle Scout project for the school. Ginny is project leader for this.

The Berryville Farmer's market is starting to wind down. Pam Hough has done a great job of managing this project. Thanks to the volunteers who make this possible.

The Xeriscape garden will need a final cleanup before winter so watch for an email with the date.

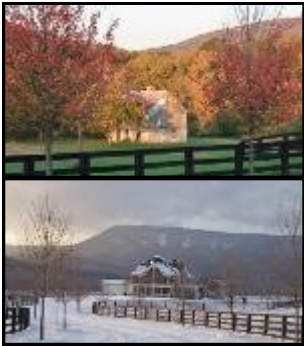
Congratulations to Cathy Dickey for accepting the Greenline Coordinator position!

## WARREN COUNTY REPORT by Katherine Rindt

Samuels Library is changing their Taste for Books fundraising event next year into a Taste for Mysteries based on the game of Clue. They are soliciting input from folks who previously had tables at a Taste for Books or anyone interested in participating in the new program. A meeting will be held, with light refreshments, on October 30 at 5:30 pm at the library to discuss the new format and collect feedback. Pat Casey represent us at the meeting. If anyone else is interested in attending, feel free to join her. The goal of attending the meeting is to understand how we can find a way to tie the event into educating the public about Master Gardeners and best practices in gardening.

The Warren County Master Gardeners had a table for the Taste for Books event the first two years. We selected a book with a gardening theme and prepared foods around that theme. We set up and manned a table at the event to serve the food, distribute various handouts, and answer questions for people who bought tickets to attend. The new format should follow a similar scheme. If we decided to have a table, we will need people to help provide the food and man the table. If you are interested, let Katherine Rindt know so she can contact you when we know the date and planning for it.

If you know of any other group, organization or business that might be interested in participating, please pass the word about the meeting on October 30 along to them. The even is a fun night and is a great way to support the library while getting the word out about the organization.



## NSVMGA SEPTEMBER MONTHLY MEETING by Lesley Mack

Thanks to all who came to the White House Farm for September's meeting and enjoyed the walk and tour given by Chris Anderson, Executive Director of the Farm. The day was perfect with great weather, mountain views, and wonderful 'hopeful' information from Chris. The Foundation's website is <http://whfarmfoundation.org/all-projects>. You can see all the projects they have started on the website. You can see a report of their activity at <http://purewaterforum.org/sites/default/files/WHFF%202014%20Summary%20Report.pdf>. I heard several folks say they wanted to come back over the mountain and see more, or come to another event given by the foundation.

## FIELD CRICKETS (*Gryllus pennsylvanicus*) by Lesley Mack

Guess you have been experiencing the annual growth and chirping of Field Crickets? Late summer and fall are when most cricket species mature, but some species come of age as early as May--lots of dead plants to eat!

Crickets and other so-called detritivores are the unsung heroes of nutrient cycling. Crickets consume large quantities of often highly resistant, cellulose rich plant materials and produce fecal pellets that are easily decomposed by bacteria and fungi. They accelerate the energy and nutrient flows in an ecosystem and provide plants with a much more abundant reservoir of essential growth factors.

Field crickets also consume the seeds of many significant 'weed' species thus reducing the potential of invasive plants, e.g. crabgrass in particular is a 'weed' that can be reduced by the cricket. A field cricket must eat its body weight or more in food every day. We should be so lucky.



Male crickets are able to make the loudest and most noticeable sounds. The chirping is generated by the movement of "scrapers" found on the edge of the left fore-wing across a row of teeth-like structures located on the underside of the right fore-wing. The male field cricket generates a three note, highly trilled song which is answered by a more simplified, two note female song. The rate of chirping is directly influenced by temperature. Counting the number of



chirps a male field cricket makes in 13 seconds, and then adding 40 to that number generates an approximate index of the environmental temperature in degrees F.

We can maintain crickets in our landscapes and the healthy soil ecosystems they help to create by leaving a layer of leaf litter as mulch in garden beds throughout the year.

### EDITORS CORNER by Richard Stromberg

This time of year, the Aster Family (*Asteraceae*) dominates the flowering landscapes. It's true in the garden with mums, asters, black-eyed susans, gaillardia, etc. and in natural landscapes. It is my annual challenge to try to distinguish the aster and goldenrod species.



I have several native *Asteraceae* volunteers in my yard. Tall Goldenrod (*Solidago altissima*) has shown up since we moved in. White Snakeroot (*Ageratina altissima*) has been showing up for several years. The two of them can be invasive, so I deadhead them and/or pull some up every year. This year for the first time Sweet Everlasting (*Pseudognaphalium obtusifolium*), also known as Rabbit Tobacco, appeared.



Several native asters grow in the yard, most of them volunteers. Calico Aster (*Symphyotrichum lateriflorum*) has appeared regularly. I can tell it from the other small-flowered asters by the spatulate bracts beneath the flower. Wavy-leaved Aster (*Symphyotrichum undulatum*) also appears in various places, sometimes surprising me. It is easily identified by the larger leaves, which narrow toward the petiole (leaf stalk) but then widen before attaching to the plant stem (*i.e.* the edges undulate).



I rescued a Blue Wood Aster (*Symphyotrichum cordifolium*) from a trail maintenance project several years ago, and it has been coming back every year. This year is its best showing, several stems with lots of flowers. The specific name means "heart-shaped leaves" which is useful for identifying it and also yields its other common name, Arrow-leaved Aster.



I got a Shale-barren Aster (*Symphyotrichum oblongifolium*) from a native plant vendor some years ago with the warning, "Give it room!" While less than two feet tall it has grown to over six feet wide. I think the best way to identify this species in the wild is where it grows—really dry. So it loves our dry summers and thrives next to the native Prickly Pear Cactus (*Opuntia humifusa*) I got from the same vendor. It has produced some offspring: two next to itself, one of which I transplanted to the Library in Front Royal, and another one 50 feet ahead.

