

NORTHERN SHENANDOAH VALLEY MASTER GARDENER ASSOCIATION NEWS

November, 2015

UPCOMING MEETING

- **Sun., Nov. 15, 2-4pm – Warren County Government Center**, 220 N. Commerce Ave., Front Royal, elect officers for 2016 and approve a 2016 budget, among other important business, and we will celebrate our successes this year. We would like to have a pizza and "pop" party for our last meeting of 2015. Before we make the final plans for the pizza party, we would like to know who will participate if we have the pizza party and social hour at 2pm prior to the business meeting. Reply to Karen Brill at keb_brill@yahoo.co to help us plan this part of our meeting.

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

- **Thursday, November 5**, Rebecca Davis, Extension Agent, Family and Consumer Sciences/Nutrition, will present a program on "fermentation" from 6-7pm 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.
- **Sunday, November 8, 1-3pm, Virginia Native Plant Society Page County Big Tree Auto Tour.** Starting with trees along Skyline Drive around Skyland Resort, we will drive to Luray for more and then continue on to the banks of the South Fork of the Shenandoah River. Trees we will look for include Blue Spruce, Chinkapin Oak and Persimmon. We will triangulate the height of some of these trees. Contact: piedmontvnps@gmail.co.
- **Friday, November 13, 2-4pm, Gourd Growing and Decorating Class, Belle Grove.** Contact Lynn Hoffmann at gwendydog@gmail.co to register for the class.
- **Saturday, March 12, 2016 Symposium.** Sandy Ward and Karen Brill are requesting gently used or like-new gardening-themed books and magazines for re-sale at the symposium on March 12, 2016. We would appreciate any children's books as well. You are welcome to bring these to the November 15 meeting.

VOLUNTEER COORDINATOR'S REPORT by Mary Flagg

Just a reminder that 8 CE hours and 20 volunteer hours are required in the calendar year for active membership. If you have any questions or concerns regarding your hours, please do not hesitate to contact anyone on the Membership Committee: Susan Garrett, Lee Demko, Mary Craig, Kris Behrends or myself.

If you need education/project hours, there are still lot's of possibilities. Please check the VMS calendar or contact me for details.

Thanks for all of the hours you have given to Master Gardeners this year!

FROM THE PRESIDENT by Susan Garrett

Both my sons and their families live in California. Like many young people, even though David and Josh were born and raised in Virginia, they have lived in many different places, from Burlington, Vermont to New York City to Sydney, Australia. The Southern California landscape where they both now live is very different from the Shenandoah Valley, but they have learned to appreciate the strange beauty of a Joshua

tree, enjoy the deep colors of a Mojave Desert sunset, or (as Josh and Ngoc are doing in this picture) admire a stand of giant agave and luxuriant prickly pear.

Virginia in the fall is very different from California, but equally interesting. I hope you are spending some time in the outdoors for no reason other than simply to appreciate our gorgeous fall landscapes. In the spring we plant, and in the summer we tend our plants, but in the fall we have the time as Master Gardeners just to look around and appreciate our part of the beautiful Shenandoah Valley. As the year winds down, the rush of fall color is a last gift before the winter comes. It is my favorite time of year.



FREDERICK COUNTY REPORT by John Kummer

Thanks to all the volunteers who staffed our NSVMGA booth at the Blandy Arborfest October 10 and 11. The weather was great for a change; often it has been rainy and cool at this event in past years I am told. Attendance was on the low side, but we did talk with interested gardeners and contacts for the 2016 MG class were made. Special thanks to Mary, Russ, and Mark for scheduling and setting up the booth.

As we enter the late fall and early winter season, work activity is slowing down in the county. Preparing the soil in planting areas for next year is probably a major undertaking at this time. A meeting to review 2015 activities in Frederick County and to plan for 2016 is being set up, possibly for November 22. Details will be forwarded to all Frederick MGers soon via e-mail. Keep up the good work and stay well.

SHENANDOAH COUNTY REPORT by Sharon Bradshaw

October saw the ending of our busy season with the Green Help Line finishing office hours and the two farmers' markets closing their seasons. Until spring of 2016 volunteers will monitor Green Help Line email and VCE requests from home.

Unfortunately, there are times when the Green Help Line calls do not have happy endings: one recent contact had questions about Emerald Ash Borer and described an Ash tree with serious damage. He then asked if the same insect attacked Leyland cypress. Not good news here.

Other county projects are either progressing in committee work or slowing down for the duration of cold weather. Carolyn Wilson had us preparing the New Market Rain Gardens for dormancy. Sarah Kohr's Sam Moore Slave Cemetery project is ready to move forward in early spring. Now that many gardeners are moving to inside activities, several of us are giving presentations to different groups on various aspects of gardens and gardening.

PUBLICITY AND COMMUNICATIONS COMMITTEE by Stacey Smith

The Communications and Publicity Committee held our fall meeting Saturday, October 31, at 9:00am at Fort Valley Nursery Cafe in Woodstock. We reviewed our purpose, which is to foster communication with the public, other MG groups, and with Association members, before going over our processes and materials.

We also reviewed each current project, including the Blandy Seed Exchange (publicity lead Elaine Specht), the Class of 2016 (publicity lead Sari Carp), The Symposium (publicity lead Joy Brunk), and GardenFest (publicity lead Sharon Bradshaw). If you are on a committee and interested in sending out a press release, please contact Stacey Smith to get access to our committee materials. We have a standard media process, a VCE approved press release template, and a format for creating website pages.

We also discussed old business and new business/ideas. With Sharon's help, we are putting together a process for distributing flyers and putting up posters. We wrapped up our meeting in a little over an hour and a half.

I have enjoyed being your committee chair this year. I plan to step down at the end of my term to give someone else the opportunity to take communications and publicity to the next level. We all look forward to work-

ing with the next chair in 2016. Because of how we've structured the committee, the chair's primary responsibilities are administrative: reporting to the board and Association at two monthly meetings, preparing a newsletter article, and sending a few monthly meeting notices to newspapers. If you are interested and have any questions, please send me a message or give me a call.

NEWS FROM BELLE GROVE CHRISTMAS by Lynn Hoffman



Twenty-five MGs met in October to paint large gourds in the resemblance of Russian Nesting dolls for the 2015 Christmas display at Belle Grove Plantation. The class included instruction on the growing and drying of gourds and what they can be used for. The pictures show only a small number of our dolls.

A second class will be held at Belle Grove November 13 from 2-5pm using mini-gourds to use as displays as gnomes, Nisser or Tomtens. These elves are from the Scandinavian countries and will be part of the Christmas display. Anyone interested contact Lynn Hoffmann at gwendy-

dog@gmail.com to register for the class. There will be education hour to discuss growing these types of gourds and how to preserve them.



WITCH HAZELS by Lesley Mack

OK. You have had enough of witches. How about Witch Hazels??

Right outside our eastern facing window is a stunning golden yellow Witch Hazel (*Hamamelis virginiana*) that is covered with bright yellow and somewhat fragrant, dainty, curiously arachnoid-looking flowers, which cluster up and down the length of the branches. Yes, flowers, which will last long enough for Thanksgiving decorating.

The genus *Hamamelis* belongs to a small but diverse family, *Hamamelidaceae*, which includes other familiar garden plants: *Corylopsis*, *Fothergilla*, and *Sweetgums*.

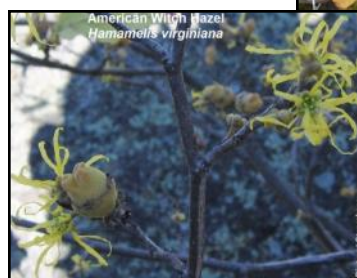
One of the amazing features of these small trees/shrubs is their habit of flowering during the cooler seasons. Flowering times range from mid fall to early April depending upon the species, hybrid or cultivar and the winter weather.

Nature and the horticulturists have created an interesting brew--witches' brew. Three Witch Hazels are native to North America. American Witch Hazel (*H. virginiana*) blooms in the fall. It is found throughout the eastern part of the continent and is the only species native to Virginia.

Ozark Witch Hazel (*H. vernalis*) blooms in late winter and is native to Missouri, Arkansas, Oklahoma, and Texas.

Recently (2004) discovered Leonard's Witch Hazel (*H. ovalis*) is native to Alabama and Mississippi.

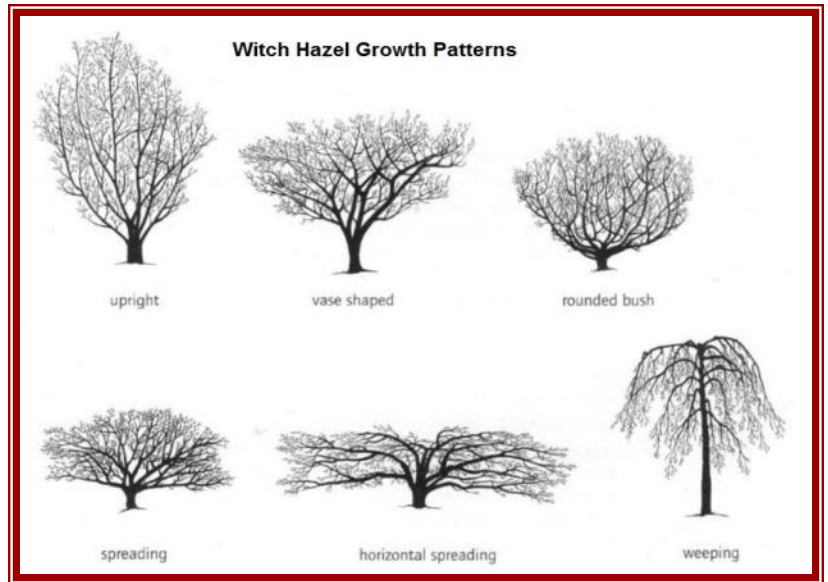
Two oriental species, Chinese Witch Hazel (*H.mollis*) and Japanese Witch Hazel (*H.japonica*), are the parents of the hybrid (*H. x intermedia*). It blooms from January to late March.



American Witch Hazel blooms in the fall mostly with all-yellow flowers though some may be reddish. The others bloom in late winter to early spring with varying hues from yellow to orange to red. The fruit take a year to ripen often persisting into the next flowering season. They burst explosively to disperse seeds.

Witch Hazels are manageably sized, topping out at 10-20 feet, with some spreading forms nearly as wide. They thrive in well-drained organic soils where they receive morning sun.

A background of dark colored conifers sets off the brilliant fall to early spring color of the flowers and leaves, or you could have them right outside your window.



EDITORS CORNER by Richard Stromberg

I was on a bus tour of southern England in September, not a garden tour, just a sight-seeing tour: Brighton, Chichester, Winchester, Salisbury, Stone Henge, Portsmouth, Exeter, Land's End, etc.

The Brits have a tremendous advantage over us as witnessed by the fantastic window boxes and lawns that I saw. They do not have to face the heat, droughts and insects we do.

We did see one spectacular garden at Arundel Castle, between Brighton and Chichester. The garden was divided into several "rooms". Each room had different focal points. Good designing, right? (My design method is to get a plant, find a space, and dig a hole.)



Maybe you can't build a reflecting pool with a Roman

temple at the end and giant urns along the side serving as fountains. Maybe you don't have a Gothic cathedral as a backdrop. One "room" in the Arundel gardens startled me. It was called a "stumpery". They turned extracted tree stumps upside down and grew plants around and over them. So there's a new feature to think about in your design efforts.

