

NORTHERN SHENANDOAH VALLEY MASTER GARDENER ASSOCIATION NEWS

UPCOMING MONTHLY MEETING

- **Sunday, February 21 2-4pm, Mid-Atlantic Farm Credit Conference Room.** Chris Schmidt will provide us with up-to-date information on new invasive bugs and other pests.

Directions: On Route 11 a half mile south of VA 37, diagonally across from the Alamo Drafthouse Theater and Outback Steak House shopping center, turn west onto Prosperity Drive. A Mid Atlantic Farm Credit is on your left.

UPCOMING EVENTS

- **Master Gardener 2016 Class**, Tuesdays and Thursdays from 1 to 4pm starting February 9 at Mid-Atlantic Farm Credit
- **Wednesday, February 17, 8am-5pm, Piedmont Landscape Association Annual Seminar**, The Paramount Theatre, Charlottesville: **Claudia West:** *Planting in a Post-Wild World-Creating Resilient and Thriving Landscapes*; **Dr. Dennis van Engelsdorp:** *To BEE or Not to BEE*; **Tony Avent:** *Surround Yourself with Shady Characters*; **Claudia West:** *Designing Plant Communities: The Art and Science of Successful Native Planting*. Details at <http://www.piedmontlandscape.org/seminar.html>.
- **Saturday, February 20, 10am, GardenFest Kickoff Meeting**, Belle Grove Mansion basement meeting room. If you haven't been in the lower level before come in the back door and follow the hallway to the gift shop. The meeting room is on the other side of the gift shop
- **Saturday, February 27, 10am, Seed Starting Class**, Hilda J. Barbour Elementary School, 290 Westminster Drive, Front Royal
- **Saturday, March 12, 9am-3pm, Gardening in the Shenandoah Valley Symposium, Shenandoah University.** Registration fee \$45 for NSVMGA members, \$55 for all others (includes lunch), to support our scholarship fund. Four interesting speakers; five wonderful door prizes. One of our speakers is bringing a special gift for all symposium attendees as well. Download the registration form on the NSVMGA website and send it with the event fee to NSVMGA treasurer Lee Demko by February 26. We are still accepting donations of gardening books, magazines, and catalogues for re-sale at the symposium. Thanks to all of you for your donations to date. We have very nice items to sell. Symposium topics and speakers are:
 - "There's a Native Plant for That!"--Kim Strader, Assistant Curator, Native Plant Trail, Blandy Experimental Farm and State Arboretum of Virginia
 - "Soil is Alive!"--Gail Rose, Owner/Manager, Deauville Farm, Basye, Virginia
 - "The Incredible Edible Apple"--Mary Stickley-Godinez, Owner/Manager, Countryside Farm and Nurseries, Crimora, Virginia
 - "Insect Friends and Foes: Identifying and Managing Them in the Shenandoah Valley"--Rob Morrison, Researcher, USDA-ARS Appalachian Fruit Research Station, Kearneysville, West Virginia.
- **Saturday, April 30, 1-4 pm, Hill and Valley Garden Club Anniversary Party and Small Standard Flower Show, "Celebrating 60 Years with Nature's Art"**, Warehouse Art Gallery, 15 Campbell St. Luray, Va. 22835

THE BARN SERIES AT BELLE GROVE PLANTATION by Lynn Hoffman Gardening Lectures & Workshops for the Shenandoah Valley Gardener



Belle Grove Plantation and the Northern Shenandoah Valley Master Gardeners have teamed up to host a series of monthly lectures & workshops from April to October 2016. The lecture topics will be focused on home gardening and the environment. The knowledgeable instructors are members of the Northern Shenandoah Valley Master Gardener Association (NSVMGA). Each session will include a lecture followed by a workshop where students will put to use new found ideas. Students will go home with creations: decorated bird houses, starter gardens, samples of herbed butters & vinegars (recipe cards too), good bug homes, miniature gardens, pressed flower art, Autumn wreaths or swags, etc. Each class fee will be \$25 to cover the cost of materials and workshops. Register for all seven classes and the cost will be reduced to **just \$125 per person. That's two free sessions!**

The classes are approved for MG education hours of 2 hours per class. A complete listing of classes can be found on the NSVMGA Facebook page, our website and registration should be done on the Belle Grove website of www.bellegrove.org.

If you have any questions you can email Lynn Hoffmann at gwendydog@gmail.com

FROM THE PRESIDENT by Susan Garrett

Before we get to the subject of my February article, I wanted to share a picture. Like many of us, I took lots of pictures during "Snowzilla" (otherwise known as the "Blizzard of 2016"). We got 33-34 inches of snow in Berryville; this picture shows the drifting around my house, under one of my front windows.



NORTHERN SHENANDOAH VALLEY MASTER GARDENER ASSOCIATION NEWS

But of course one of the good things about this storm is that the power stayed on and we had lots of notice. I had planned to work on compiling the members of the 2016 NSVMGA Committees "soon", and being shut in by the storm (coupled with Secretary Stacey Smith's encouragement) gave me a perfect opportunity. So without any further ado, the following is the listing as it presently exists.

Communications and Publicity **Co-Chairs:** Stacey Smith and Kris Behrends

Members: Elaine Specht, Joy Brunk, Sari Carp, Elena Lycas (design), Elaine Harshman (editing) Sharon Bradshaw (advice)

Education **Co-Chairs:** Karen Brill and Sandy Ward **Members:** Volunteer Coordinator Mary Flagg (ex officio) and 2016 Class Coordinators (ex officio): Janet Keithley, John Kummer, Susan Garrett, and Mark Sutphin

Finance **Chair/Treasurer:** Lee Demko **Members:** President Susan Garrett (ex officio), Frank Baxter, Mary Craig

Membership **Chair:** Mary Craig **Members:** Mary Flagg Volunteer Coordinator (ex officio), Kris Behrends Timekeeper (ex officio), Lee Demko Treasurer (ex officio)

Program **Chair/Vice President:** Karen Brill 2 Members: TBD

Volunteer Coordination **Chair/Volunteer Coordinator:** Mary Flagg and **Members/County Coordinators:** Ginny Smith (Clarke), John Kummer (Frederick), Tom and Lesley Mack (Page), Sharon Bradshaw (Shenandoah), Katherine Rindt (Warren)

Historian: Mary Craig and **Member of History Committee:** Cy Haley

Internet **Webmaster:** Donna Funk-Smith **Newsletter Editor:** Richard Stromberg

Facebook Administrator: Cy Haley Posting Editor: Suzanne Boag

Fund-Raising (as needed) Treasurer Lee Demko (ex officio)

Nominating (Minimum of 4 - 2 non-board members, 1 officer, the Volunteer Coordinator)

Chair: Suzanne Boag **Members:** Mary Flagg, Volunteer Coordinator (ex officio) and one Board Officer: Stacey Smith Member appointed by the Board: Barb Hallar

Guidelines Review **Chair:** Ann Levi **Members:** Susan Garrett, President (ex officio), Karen Brill, Vice President (ex officio), Bob Carlton, Terry Hanahan (plus all committee chairs are invited to attend and consult)

By-Laws Review **Chair:** Sharon Bradshaw **Members:** Susan Garrett, President (ex officio) and Bob Carlton, Lee Demko, Ann Levi

Audit Review (3 Non-Officer Members) **Chair:** Frank Baxter **Members:** TBA

Scholarship Committee **Chair:** Lynn Hoffmann **Members:** Stacey Smith, **Secretary,** and **Representatives from Each County:** Bob Carlton (Shenandoah), Frank Baxter (Warren), Charles Newton (Page), Suzanne Boag (Clarke), Helen Lake (Frederick)

COORDINATORS REPORT by Mary Flagg

Now is the time that your mailbox becomes overloaded with seed catalogs from companies you have purchased from in the past and from companies hoping that you might want to purchase from in the future. Before you shred them and use them for kitty litter, a little planning will help you to determine which ones to keep.

NORTHERN SHENANDOAH VALLEY MASTER GARDENER ASSOCIATION NEWS

You might have your garden favorites that you plant every year, and purchase from the same seller year in and year out. Experts claim these seed catalogs can open up a new world for your garden. You might see that there are some other varieties that you might like to try next year. Plus, there is the added bonus of getting to compare prices. Every seed company has their own pricing for very similar plants, and it might be cost-effective to shop around. Plus, these catalogs often come with coupons for early ordering or making a minimum purchase that can be worth your while to try out.

Personally, the more seed catalogs the better. I love to admire the beautiful covers and then pour over all the beautiful pictures and details inside. My favorite comes from the Baker Seed Company. It is filled with beauty, and it is one of the prettiest catalogs I have ever seen. My first order goes to them for heirloom seeds. I love the catalogs with detailed drawings from seedlings to full grown plants, helpful when I am pulling weeds. Pictures from these catalogs can be used for your planograms, for your seed packets to store seeds, as well as for garden stakes to mark your garden.



No matter what you end up doing with your multiple seed catalogs, you know that their arrival means that a new gardening season will be coming. Be as creative as possible with them while you spend the rest of your winter waiting for spring warmth and the sun to come for another season.

PAGE COUNTY REPORT by Lesley Mack

February, already? Goodness! Well, actually, the snow is melting from the winter storm Jonas; our pathways to the birdfeeders have bits of grass peeking through; and the Earth's revolution is getting us into more of the sun's light.

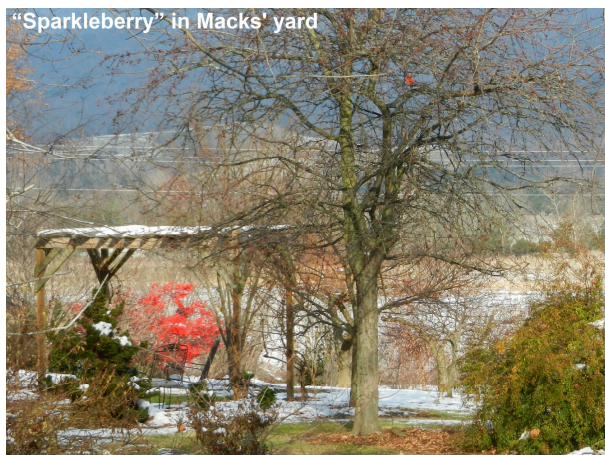
Winterberries (*Ilex verticillata*), even the botanical name is fun to say, and easy to remember. These deciduous hollies are among winter's brightest lights.

We have had our *Ilex verticillatas*, and other *Ilex* species and cultivars for more than ten years, and every year they have produced a vibrant, long-lasting red color, almost like a stop-light-red. Many species of songbirds, waterfowl, and game birds certainly heed the stop-light-red when the berries are all that is left after the higher fat content food sources have been exhausted in the cold days of winter.

While Winterberry flowers are small and not particularly showy, they are very popular with honeybees and other pollinators. Fall leaf color runs from reds to a brief yellow to non-existent, but the display of fruit more than makes up for that shortcoming. Winterberries prefer a site with moist, well-drained, acidic soil in sun, with lots of mulch to retain the moisture.

NORTHERN SHENANDOAH VALLEY MASTER GARDENER ASSOCIATION NEWS

These hollies are dioecious, with male and female flowers on separate plants. One male plant can pollinate five to ten female plants or more depending on the species and should be planted in reasonable proximity to the females. Choose the male pollinizer that blooms at the same time as the female winterberries you are planting.



"Sparkleberry" in Macks' yard



Fall color starting



Peach colored
Ilex Verticillata
"Aurantiaca"



Ilex Verticillata flowers

As usual with plant species, *Ilex verticillatas* have also been hybridized for color and size. Typically a large shrub at 8 to 15 feet in height and width, there are now dwarf cultivars or varieties that produce persistent and abundant larger berries than the natives. Berries now come in yellows, light yellow, creamy white, and oranges with hints of pinks.

Set off against a background of fresh snow, winterberries are a dazzling reflection of the sun's light. Well, even one of the cultivar's name tells it all, "Sparkleberry". Something new for your garden's landscape.

FREDERICK COUNTY REPORT by John Kummer

Now that the 30 to 35 inch blizzard of January 2016 is history, and while we wait for the piles of snow to melt away, it's a good time to begin thinking about our gardening projects for this spring and summer. A planning meeting for Frederick/Winchester MGs will be coming up in mid March, with specifics to be e-mailed soon.

We'll review ongoing projects and explore new ventures. Several new members from the 2016 MG class are expected to help with our volunteer force as the year progresses.

NORTHERN SHENANDOAH VALLEY MASTER GARDENER ASSOCIATION NEWS

SHENANDOAH COUNTY REPORT by Sharon Bradshaw

We are looking forward to our in-county project planning meeting on March 14. We will meet in the VCE classroom at 6:30 to review the accomplishments of 2015 and look forward to 2016.

Many of you may not know that the Volunteer Farm in Shenandoah County has closed. In the 11 years that the Farm was in production, 382 tons of fresh food was donated to food efforts in 25 countries and nine cities across Virginia, with over 20,000 volunteers working to make this possible. We might, as individuals, want to add extra plants to our veggie gardens this year with the goal of donating produce to local food banks. While our offerings will not fill the gap, every bit helps. Mark's office can direct you to a food pantry/bank in your county if necessary.

If adding native plants to your landscape is part of your winter-time planning, check out the Northern Virginia Soil and Water Conservation District (NVSWCD) (<http://www.fairfaxcounty.gov/nvswcd/seedlingsale.htm>) tree and shrub seedling sale and the Virginia Department of Forestry (DOF) (<http://www.dof.virginia.gov/shop/index.htm>) tree seedling sale. Each website is self-explanatory. I ordered from the NVSWCD last year and was very pleased with all the seedlings. There is a limited time sale, so plan to act soon. Seedlings are just that, seedlings. However, they grow quickly and the relative cost vs. a more mature plant is substantial.

COMMUNICATIONS AND PUBLICITY COMMITTEE REPORT by Stacey Smith

The Communications and Publicity Committee welcomes a new co-chair. Kris Behrends has stepped in to help lead the committee through 2016.

The co-chairs are meeting in early February to review the next 12 months' publicity plan. If you have an event that should be publicized in the next year, please email the name and date to Stacey Smith, so we can ensure we have it on our schedule.

As for committee presswork, Elaine Specht finished press for the Blandy Seed Exchange. As you can see in the below picture, she was successful in getting the word out about the event! It was well attended and many seed swappers shared hearing about the event in Elaine's radio interview, reading the article in the Winchester Star, or seeing the event on our and Blandy's Facebook pages.

Successful press is a multi-pronged approach, and the committee works hard for every event. Seeing and hearing our name not only helps bring in attendees, it helps increase our community's awareness of our Association so that when they have a gardening question, they know where to go!

Joy Brunk and Stacey Smith are working on press for March's Symposium. We are so thankful for our wonderful membership. You have put up over 100 flyers about the event at various places in our five counties. Because another MG organization has an educational event March 12th, we are working doubly hard to get attendance up. Please share the event with your friends, coworkers, and neighbors. Put up a flyer in church, at the gym, or on the office bulletin board. All proceeds benefit our high school and college scholarship fund. Visit our website at <http://nsvmgga.org/projects/garden-symposium/> to print a flyer to put up OR to print out and send in to register yourself. This is a great day to spend with your fellow Master Gardeners, our new class trainees, and the public.

NORTHERN SHENANDOAH VALLEY MASTER GARDENER ASSOCIATION NEWS

Finally, our committee is meeting February 21st at 12:45 at the Midatlantic Farm Credit Building, right before our monthly Association meeting. We'll review our publicity calendar, discuss our info-booth best-practice training, and plan out how to increase communication with other MG organizations as well as within our own Association. If you have ideas on how we can better communicate our events, or if you would like to contribute in some other way to helping our committee help our Association, please plan to join us.



EDITORS CORNER by Richard Stromberg

Lesley Mack's article about Winterberry started me thinking about *Ilex*. We have several *Ilex* species in Virginia. Most of them are wetland plants and restricted to the Coastal Plain. The only holly species native to our area are Winterberry, Mountain Holly, and American Holly.

When we encounter red berries along the trail, my fellow hikers often ask me what they are. On our rocky mountain trails they are usually Mountain Holly (*Ilex montana*). When I tell them, the usual response is, "That doesn't look like the holly I know." Of course, they are thinking of the evergreen species we use for Christmas decorations. While you are singing about decking the halls before Christmas, you are singing about English/European Holly (*I. aquifolium*). English Holly is not found in Virginia except where it has been planted. It is an invasive alien species on the West Coast, likely because of the incoming prevailing winds off the ocean like its home ground on the west coast of Europe.

NORTHERN SHENANDOAH VALLEY MASTER GARDENER ASSOCIATION NEWS

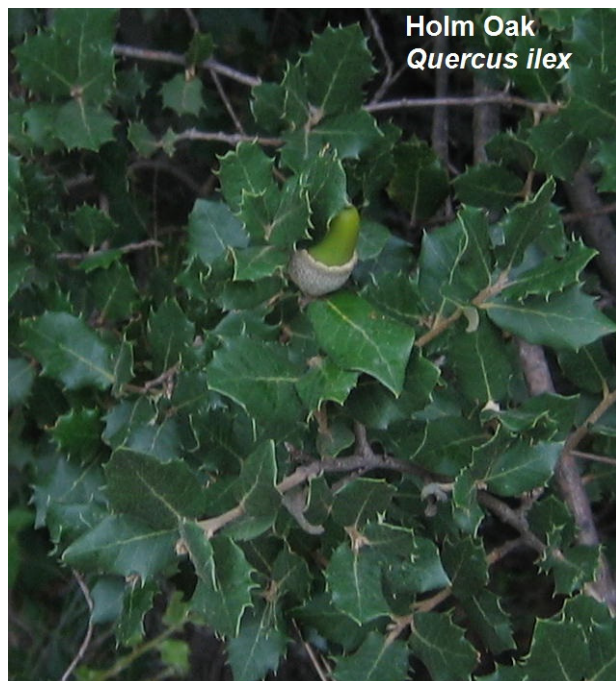
American Holly (*I. opaca*) is very similar to English Holly. It is common throughout Virginia, though infrequent in the mountains. Winterberry (*I. verticillata*), described by Lesley, is common throughout the state and, according to the Flora of Virginia prefers wetlands.

Winterberry and Mountain Holly are very similar. If I'm on a rocky outcrop, I'm pretty sure it is Mountain Holly. Otherwise you have to look very closely to tell which it is. Leaves of Winterberry are rougher and thicker. The flowers and fruit of Winterberry grow in leaf axils while on Mountain Holly they grow on lateral, short shoots from the axils. Other differentiators are even more minute.

The name Holly may derive from a Celtic word meaning "to prick".

Ilex was the Latin name for the Holm Oak, also known as the Holly Oak (*Quercus ilex*). I came across this tree in Mallorca, a Spanish island in the Mediterranean. My first thought on seeing the leaves was Holly, until I saw an acorn. When I saw similar leaves four years later in southern Arizona, I knew to look for an acorn on the Emory Oak (*Q. emoryi*).

Ilex is the only genus in the *Aquifoliaceae* family. *Aquifolium* was the Latin name for Holly and means "tree with prickly/pointy leaves".



NORTHERN SHENANDOAH VALLEY MASTER GARDENER ASSOCIATION NEWS

p.s. As I predicted last month, the Snowdrops came out of the freeze and deep snow as though nothing had happened, even though we had shoveled extra snow on top of them from the driveway:

