

NORTHERN SHENANDOAH VALLEY MASTER GARDENER ASSOCIATION NEWS

UPCOMING MONTHLY MEETING

- **Sunday, March 20 4pm, State Arboretum Library.**

Directions: On U.S. 50, one mile west of U.S. 340.

UPCOMING EVENTS

- **Master Gardener 2016 Class**, Tuesdays and Thursdays from 1 to 4pm at Mid-Atlantic Farm Credit
- **Thursday, March 10, 5-9 pm, Homeowners Association Forum: Common Space for the Greater Good** Algonkian Regional Park Woodlands Conference Center 47001 Fairway Dr, Sterling, VA. This first-of-its-kind event will help HOA residents and leaders discover ways to change landscaping practices to contribute to a healthier local environment, from water and air to habitat for birds and pollinators. Get details and register at <http://www.pecva.org/events/hoa-forum-common-space-for-the-greater-good>. Free of charge.
- **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
- **Sunday, March 13, 1-3pm, Blue Ridge Center for Environmental Stewardship Walk.** For more information about the walk, email piedmontvnps@gmail.com. For information about BRCES see <http://www.blueridgecenter.org/>.
- **Sunday, April 10, 1pm, Calmes Neck Registry Site Walk.** Kristin Zimet will lead a walk at this VNPS registry site walk along the Shenandoah River. Rich mesic forest and ravines promise a spectacular show of Bluebells, Twinleaf, Blue Cohosh, Columbines, ferns and many other plants. The walk is moderate but expect to climb over downed trees. To register and request more information, email piedmontvnps@gmail.com. Limit 20 people.
- **Saturday, April 23, 9am-3pm, Loudoun Wildlife Conservancy Native Plant Sale.** Nurseries will bring a wide variety of plants for you to select from as well as other items. All of the plants are carefully labelled with growing instructions, and volunteers will be on hand to answer your questions and provide advice. For details check the LWC website at <http://www.loudounwildlife.org/>.

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- **Sunday, April 24, 2-4pm, The Barn Series at Belle Grove Plantation: Springtime in the garden, Presented by Lynn Hoffmann and Rodney Dowty (family friendly class*)**
Attendees will learn which plants to plant to attract birds and pollinators to their home gardens. Once you know what kind of plants will keep birds coming to your garden you can add a bit of splash to your landscape by adding a birdhouse for wonderful little birds like Wrens, Chickadees, and Bluebirds. This will be a fun, hand-on workshop decorating a hand-made Bluebird, Wren or Chickadee house. We will have a presentation about Bluebirds, Wrens and Chickadees and their nesting requirements. Students will learn how to make a nesting ball; nesting materials will be available to take home. Each participant (or parent/child duo) will receive a locally made bird house; you will see how it was made and how to maintain it over the years. Students will paint and decorate a birdhouse to take home for their own garden. The fee for one class is \$25 to cover the cost of materials and workshops. Register for all seven classes and the cost will be reduced to \$125 per person. That's two free sessions. **Registration due by April 15.**
***Sign up with a child age 10 to 15 years old and pay only \$40 for both to attend.**
- **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**

FROM THE PRESIDENT by Susan Garrett



It's hard to believe that I am already writing a column for the March Newsletter, or enjoying the flowers, butterflies and birds in the intricacies of this beautiful calligraphy from a card I bought at the Museum of the Shenandoah Valley. Last month, on Groundhog Day 2016, we were told that Punxsutawney Phil did not see his shadow, and the prediction was for an early spring. It seems hard to believe, with the pile of snow

in our front yard, shrinking but still there, that spring is almost here.

However, if you were at the February Association Meeting, you got a good sense that spring, and even summer, was coming quickly. We heard lots about our March Symposium at Shenandoah University, our June 4 Gardenfest and plant sale at Belle Grove, and our Demonstration Garden at Blandy. Planting season is coming fast. County meetings are on the schedule. So we Master Gardeners are moving from planning and dreaming to working and educating. It's a good time to be a Master Gardener!

COORDINATORS REPORT by Mary Flagg

Two weeks ago, we had two feet of snow! If this weather isn't crazy, what is? While I was out clearing the snow from the walkways, I noticed some snow drops coming up, much to my surprise. At that moment, I caught the bug. I felt that I had to clean up my beds, weed and mulch. Oh wait a minute, there was still snow on the ground. But it made me think and try to prepare for Spring. A little preparation goes a long way.

Please take a look at the VMS event calendar. There are events listed for earning project and education hours. It is never too early to start earning the required hours. After your hours are completed please make sure to enter them onto VMS. As I mentioned before, it is never too early to start earning the required hours.

PAGE COUNTY REPORT by Lesley Mack

The “peepers” were out peeping on February 20th.

Page County MG s are anxiously awaiting the March Symposium. It should be a good event, and a chance to hear some thoughts on our planting addictions.

Mycorrhizae

We have wonderful neighbors who always have a showy vegetable garden every year when the weather is moist and cooler. When the Virginia summer sun cranks up, their garden starts to look dry, brown, and not that happy. They deep till, we don't till at all...so when their garden is dry ours is still green...hummmm. We love our mycorrhizae.

Mycorrhizae are fungi that establish a symbiotic relationship with the roots of most plants. They live interconnect with the roots of vegetables, flowers, shrubs, and trees and send out their filaments, called hyphae, which travel many times farther into the soil than the roots. Mycorrhizae have the ability to better search their area for water and nutrients which it transmits back to the roots. They also protect the plant from disease and nematodes. The plant pays for this service with the sugars the fungus needs.

This extended feeding area makes mycorrhizae supported plants healthier. They have better root formation, as well as fewer root diseases, and other soil pest problems. They also require less moisture and fertilizer, and can deal with drought better. Research says that tilling and even simple hoeing can rip apart the mycorrhizae, and they may never really flourish.

Mycorrhizae love organic matter, compost, and organic mulch. Rather than digging in organic matter, which will destroy the mycorrhizae, lay the compost on top of the soil and let it naturally decay into the soil.

Mycorrhizal inoculants are available from several companies, but adding these to your soil is usually not necessary unless the soil microbe population has been damaged. Check the labels for dispersing, when, and where. Most better nursery shops carry mycorrhizae.

Just this past week our wonderful neighbors plowed their vegetable garden, poor mycorrhizae.

[Editor's note: for a detailed description of the different kinds of Mycorrhizae, how they work, and how they interact with plants, see William Needham's article in his “Hiker's Notebook” website at <http://hikersnotebook.net/The+Mushroom+Chronicles+-+Mycorrhizas.>]



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FREDERICK COUNTY REPORT by John Kummer

The planning meeting for 2016 projects in the county is to be held on March 16 at 6:30pm at the Greek Orthodox Church, 1700 Amherst St, in Winchester. The site is next to the Omps Funeral Home. All county master Gardeners, including those in the 2016 training class, are invited. We will update on going projects and brainstorm ideas for new work in the community. Thanks to Angie Hutchinson for securing the venue. See you all there.

COMMUNICATIONS AND PUBLICITY COMMITTEE REPORT by Kris Behrends

Any advertisements that are distributed to the public (flyers, brochures, press releases):

- must show VCE ownership of the program/project.
- Clearly state that it is a VCE project supported by a local MG chapter.
- must include this ADA statement and indicia to avoid any liability concerns:

Virginia Cooperative Extension programs and employment are open to all, regardless of age, color, disability, gender, gender identity, gender expression, national origin, political affiliation, race, religion, sexual orientation, genetic information, veteran status, or any other basis protected by law. An equal opportunity/affirmative action employer.

If you are a person with a disability and desire any assistive devices, services or other accommodations to participate in this activity, please contact Mark Sutphin, Frederick County Extension, at (540) 665-5699/TDD (800) 828-1120 during business hours of 8:00 a.m. and 5:00 p.m. to discuss accommodations five days prior to the event.

This does not apply to administrative resources (e.g. agenda) internally distributed during an event. Mark Sutphin, VCE agent, is happy to review any advertisements before distribution.

When you think of advertising, what is your first thought? If you are like me, you think of newspaper ads. (I'm probably dating myself!) I go to the local store and buy a newspaper for national and local news, local events, weather, sports (and, yes, comics). That is how I learned about the 2013 class for Master Gardeners. There was a good, thorough article on the class and the MG organization, and I wanted to learn more about the organization. I immediately signed up for the class and have enjoyed my MG experiences ever since! In this day and age, though, advertisements for products, services, and learning opportunities can be more widely distributed than just the newspaper. How about online newspaper ads? Radio and TV advertising, public speaking, door hangers and flyers, Facebook, and good ol' word of mouth. Every MG can participate in Publicity by simply spreading the word about MG events to friends, family, neighbors, and co-workers. Our committee had a meeting prior to the February association meeting, and we are pleased to announce that our committee has grown by four: Belinda Palmer, Shenandoah County; Cathy Allen, Frederick County; Liz Stevenson, Shenandoah County; and Virginia Hisghman, Frederick County.

Help us get the word out about Master Gardeners and help to make our events successful!

EDITORS CORNER by Richard Stromberg

Our spring peepers are peeping too, Lesley. On February 17, my wife and I hiked the Appalachian Trail to the Thompson Wildlife Management Area from Linden. When we started out the trail was pretty clear, but as we wound our way upward, snow appeared and got deeper and deeper, about six inches when we reached the Trillium area. We didn't see

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any Trillium, but the seep where the AT crosses the fire road down from the Trillium Trail parking lot was open with running water, and in the water Skunk Cabbage (*Symplocarpus foetidus*) flowers were up.

