

## NORTHERN SHENANDOAH VALLEY MASTER GARDENER ASSOCIATION NEWS

### UPCOMING MONTHLY MEETING

- **September 18, 4-6pm**, Hawksbill Greenway in Page County. Ken Beyer, member of the Luray-Hawksbill Greenway Foundation, will share information about the establishment of the Luray-Hawksbill Greenway. We will learn about the ways in which the Greenway contributes to the beautification of Luray; and the conservation and the preservation of an important natural resource. The Luray-Hawksbill Greenway is a two-mile, ten-foot wide paved walking and biking trail, with handicapped accessibility. For about a mile the Greenway follows Hawksbill Creek. Along the Greenway, visitors may see a variety of birds, butterflies, trout, and other wildlife--all of which find habitats along this special trail. And, there are many native trees and two gardens planted with perennials and shrubs.

**Directions:** Karen Brill will send out directions and the rain-or-shine.

- **October 16, 4-6pm** at Blandy Experimental Farm Library in Clarke County.

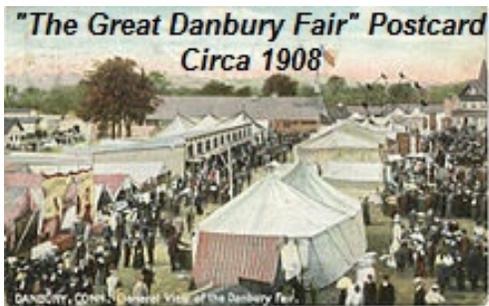
### UPCOMING EVENTS

- **Sunday, September 11, 2-4pm, The Barn Series at Belle Grove Plantation:** Preserving your Garden Memories. Rose Fairman will show how flowers and plants can be pressed and used as note cards and art work. A wonderful variety of flowers will be provide. Sign up at [http://bellegrove.org/calendar/garden\\_memories](http://bellegrove.org/calendar/garden_memories).
- **Sat.-Sun., September 17-18, Edinburg Ole Festival Time at Edinburg Mill.** Our MG booth will be located next Stoney Creek and the new rain garden will be our informational focus for the weekend. Friends of the North Fork, who found funding, professionals and volunteers to implement the garden, will have the booth next to ours. The Festival draws big crowds and lots of fabulous vendors. So, besides sharing knowledge about bioretention and rain gardens, you'll have a front row seat at Festival goings-on among quilters, basket makers, popcorn poppers.
- **Thursday, September 22, 10am-2:30pm, Rt. 50/340 Monarch/Pollinator Habitat Enhancement Project.** VDOT and several local groups have planned a Habitat Planting for the Park and Ride Lot near the intersection of Rts. 50 and 340 in Clarke County. We will have 2,500 native plants that need planting, including milkweed and at least 15 other species, and we'd be thrilled to have your help for any or all of the time allotted. We will meet at the park and ride and after a short dedication ceremony, we will begin. The soil will be tilled and mulched ahead of time, so planting should not be difficult. Please wear sturdy shoes, bring a trowel if you have one, and pack a lunch if you can stay long. Water will be available and there are several convenience stores nearby. For more information contact Steve Carroll at [sbc3p@eservices.virginia.edu](mailto:sbc3p@eservices.virginia.edu). RAIN DATE: The decision to go ahead or not will be made the day before. In case of cancellation the rain date is Tuesday, Sept. 27, 10 am to about 2:30 pm
- **Sunday, October 2, 2-4pm, The Barn Series at Belle Grove Plantation:** Autumn Wreaths

### FROM THE PRESIDENT by Susan Garrett

Agricultural fairs have been popular in the United States since the early 1800's. According to an article I read, there are still over 3200 fairs in the U.S. each year. When I was growing up, every child in Danbury, Connecticut, looked forward to the annual Danbury Fair (founded in 1869). School was closed on the first Friday of the fair, and every Danbury school child got a free pass. There were over one hundred acres of animal barns, vegetable and fruit

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displays, trade show buildings, food booths, rides, oxen pulls, stock car races, and carnival booths. Unfortunately, the land on which the fair stood was worth more for development, and the fair closed permanently in 1981. In its place is the “Danbury Fair Mall”, a large traditional commercial mall—which most of the Danbury residents of my generation resent to this day!

I’m rather happy that my children and grandchildren live in an area of California where county fairs are still big and boisterous and are still a major part of the summer experience. When we visited the Orange County Fair with them in July, I found to my pleasure that the local Master Gardeners had a very large display in one of the buildings, and I had a pleasant talk with two University of California Cooperative Extension Master Gardeners.



We VCE MG’s of the Northern Shenandoah Valley are lucky to have county fairs in all five of our counties. Some of our county fairs are more traditional and more actively agricultural than others, and some are bigger and more actively supported than others, but they all give at least a nod to the long American tradition of the county fair. We have Master Gardener Info Booths each year at three of our fairs, and at those booths we have the fun of sharing horticultural information with the fair-going public.

Some of our members have taken Bob Carlton’s annual fair judging course, and are judging vegetable and fruit entries at local fairs. (By the way, fairs are always looking for new judges, so you might want to place a fair judging class on your calendar next year.)

Being a Virginia Cooperative Extension Master Gardener in the Shenandoah Valley is a great privilege. We get to do all sorts of fun things, like county fairs, and we are part of a long tradition of folks who care about the land and what it can produce.



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### SHENANDOAH COUNTY REPORT by Sharon Bradshaw

The Master Gardener information table at Shenandoah County Fair is staying busy. We have answered several gardening questions and distributed both fall and September gardening tip publications, shared enthusiasm with ribbon winners, and introduced the concept of Extension Master Gardeners to many fairgoers. Along the way, we've had several folks sign up to receive information about events, including the next trainee class.

The fair judging workshop, taught by Bob Carlton, went very well in early August. One of the attendees is already volunteering as a fair judge: Congratulations to Suzanne Boag!

We will have a presence at our two farmers' markets, the South Street Barn Market in Woodstock and the Strasburg Market at Pot Town Organics through mid-October.

The two rain garden projects are very different but both which feed the North Fork of the Shenandoah: the ones in New Market are for filtering rain surface runoff on land and the one in Edinburg handling rainwater overflow along a steep slope into Stoney Creek.

Alice Findler is anticipating the Edinburg Ole Time Festival on September 17 and 18, where she will staff a booth for Master Gardeners near the new rain garden. She still has room for a couple more volunteers. Interested MGs may sign up on VMS.

Other ongoing projects include Green Help Line, Corhaven Graveyard, community group presentations and, when necessary, home consultations. Joy Brunk recently created two beautiful signs to be posted at major entrances of the Shenandoah County Government Office Building during our twice per month office hours. These will guide people bringing plant questions as well as alert visitors to the opportunity to ask questions.

### TRAINEE CLASS OF 2017 by Sharon Bradshaw

If the popularity of the recruitment handout is indicative of the number of applications for the Class of 2017, we'll be swamped! And that's a good thing. The class announcement letter will be going out from Mark's office in mid-October. If you have a sign-up list of interested people, please get them to Mark's office: mail, scan and email, or hand them to him at the next meeting. If you need the half-page announcement, check with your county coordinator or email Sharon Bradshaw, [bradrod573@gmail.com](mailto:bradrod573@gmail.com), to get a pdf of the handout sent to you.

### BARN SERIES AT BELLE GROVE "FAIRY GARDEN WORKSHOP" by Lynn Hoffmann

Angie Hutchinson presented how to utilize moss in small dish gardens and talked about different components of making a fairy garden. We had a great class and 3 Grandma/child attendees. So our age group went from 3 1/2 yrs. old to 70. Everybody went home with a wonderful creation.



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### SAVING SEEDS FOR THE SEED EXCHANGE by Elaine Specht

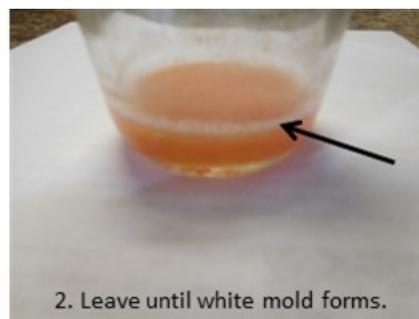
Calling all seed savers and prospective seed savers, mark your calendar for the 7<sup>th</sup> Annual FOSA/NSVMGA Seed Exchange, 10am–2 pm, Saturday, January 28, 2017 at Blandy.

If you are not familiar with saving seeds, try your hand with another fun aspect of gardening. Unlike many tasks in the garden, saving seeds takes minimal effort with the promise of a big benefit. You can get even greater benefits when you participate in the annual Seed Exchange. Bring just five packets of your own seeds to the exchange and you are welcome to take home as many packets as you like.



Saving seeds from many herbs and flowers is simple. Allow seed pods or flower heads to dry on the plant before collecting. Remove the seeds from the pods or crumble to separate the seeds from the chaff. Place seeds in paper bags or paper envelopes and label.

Some vegetables, most notably tomatoes, can be a bit trickier. Leave tomatoes on the vine until they're fully ripe. Squeeze seeds and some pulp into a jar with a small amount of water. Allow seeds to ferment: keep at 75–85°F for 1.5–2 days, leaving for about one day after bubbling or white mold appears, then clean in water. Viable seed will sink to the bottom. Remove viable seed from water, dry, and store in paper bags or paper envelopes.



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If the process still seems daunting (and even if it doesn't!), join your fellow NSVMGA members at one of the October and November group workshops, where we will clean and package seeds for the Seed Exchange. If you have them, bring dried flower heads, seed pods, or prepared vegetable seeds.

- Seed Cleaning and Pizza Evening, Specht Residence, Woodstock, October 24, 6–9pm
- Seed Cleaning at Blandy (Dining Room), November 1, 9am–Noon
- Seed Cleaning and Morning Muffins, Specht Residence, Woodstock, November 5, 9am–Noon

Please e-mail [especht@shentel.net](mailto:especht@shentel.net) with questions or for directions:.

### **PRESENTATIONS AT ARBORFEST** by Russ Watkins, Arbor Fest Presentation Recruiter

The Master Gardeners are trying something new and different at ArborFest, October 8<sup>th</sup> and 9<sup>th</sup>, at Blandy, giving presentations. I would like to see it expanded to other information booths like county fairs. At County fairs, farm markets, etc. Master Gardeners give out handouts to the public on any number of subjects, e.g. Gardening Tips for a certain month, test kits, plastic cards and rulers with the five counties' Help Desks phone numbers on them. From the phone calls I answer at the Frederick County Green Line the public needs to be better educated, especially the gardener just starting out. When I was at the Clarke County Fair Master Gardeners information booth, I had a couple of people tell me they had brown thumbs. I do not believe that. I gave them a card with the phone numbers for the Help Desks and told them it all starts in the soil. I hope presentations at ArborFest and other events will get more people involved in gardening. Maybe more people will get involved with the Master Gardeners Class. If we describe pollinator, bee, and Monarch Butterfly issues, someone might want to start a pollinator garden. Master Gardeners' main function is to educate. So pick a topic to present at ArborFest. I thought what needs to be done in the fall and winter in the garden or house plants would good subjects. Your presentation might get someone out in the fresh air and something growing. Do not be bashful. Prepare a presentation and help someone learn something new.

*"Die when I may, I want it said of me, that I plucked a weed and planted a flower wherever I thought it would grow."* --Abraham Lincoln

### **BOTANY** from Karen Brill

As I reviewed notes from my 2007 VCE Master Gardener Volunteer intern class, I found the following poem. I think we can each remember our individual reactions to the botany section of our course.

"BOTANY" AUTHORED BY BERTON BRALEY  
Science News Letter, March 9, 1929

There should be no monotony  
In studying your botany;  
It helps to train  
And spur the brain--  
Unless you haven't gotany.

It teaches you, does Botany,  
To know the plants and spotany,  
And learn just why  
They live or die--

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In case you plant or potany.  
You learn, from reading Botany,  
Of wooly plants and cottony  
That grow on earth,  
And what they're worth,  
And why some spots have notany.  
You sketch the plants in Botany,  
You learn to chart and plotany  
Like corn or oats--  
You jot down notes,  
If you know how to jotany.  
Your time, if you'll allotany,  
Will teach you how and what any  
Old plant or tree  
Can do or be--  
And that's the use of Botany!

### IMPROVING ROADSIDE HABITAT by Sally Anderson

Have you noticed that VDOT in our area has limited mowing on major highways? The Staunton District, which includes Clarke and seven other counties, has committed to improving roadsides as habitat. Plantings like this are made possible in part by the new pollinator license plates. There is still a lot of work to be done on invasive plants, but they are trying. But they need to HEAR FROM YOU. Right now, most calls they get are from people who wonder why the roadsides are not as well-groomed as the rest of the state or surrounding states. If you value this change in mowing practices please let them know, email contact: Cliff Balderson at [Clifton.Balderson@VDOT.Virginia.gov](mailto:Clifton.Balderson@VDOT.Virginia.gov)

### EDITORS CORNER by Richard Stromberg

I just returned from the Virginia Master Naturalist Statewide Volunteer Conference and Training, headquartered at the Skelton 4-H Educational Conference Center on Smith Mountain Lake. The Conference is similar to Master Gardener College: field trips, presentations and classes/training sessions. If you know me, you know I was out on field trips where I could botanize, but I also attended some sessions that were garden related.

Booker T. Washington National Monument is not far from the Lake. It is where he was born a slave in 1856 and freed in 1865. Besides reconstructions of buildings where he lived and worked, the Monument also contains some natural habitat and gardens. Tobacco was growing in a patch much smaller than Washington would have known. One end of it was a pumpkin patch, wherein I noticed a woodchuck. When we walked close by it, I did not see an intact pumpkin. They also had a representative vegetable garden—fenced in.



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One of the classes I took was “How to Establish a Successful Pollinator Habitat Project”. Carol Heiser, Education Manager and Habitat Education Coordinator at the VA Department of Game and Inland Fisheries, gave an excellent justification for using native plants to create a beautiful alternative to conventional landscapes. Jack Price, a Master Naturalist, Master Gardener, a DGIF Habitat Facilitator and a Shenandoah National Park volunteer, talked about the creation of the nature trail and pollinator habitat project in the Town of Washington, Rappahannock County. It is on the right of Warren Avenue (Bus. 211) just after you get into the town.



Tim McCoy, research and extension staff member with the Entomology department at Virginia Tech, gave the keynote presentation Saturday evening. It about bees and what people can do to help these pollinators. After an update on honeybee health (many things could cause hive collapse, but we are not sure of any one cause), he told us about the different native bees, which are more efficient pollinators than honeybees, and how we can provide nesting tubes to help them. Since 2014, Tim has worked with VT Pesticide Programs, developing pesticide safety and environmental protection information for pesticide applicators. One of the goals of a new Pesticide Safety Education program he is coordinating is educating Virginians about the need to protect native pollinators, not just from pesticide misuse, but also from habitat loss.

I went on two field trips to Virginia Department of Conservation and Recreation Natural Area Preserves.

At Grassy Hill Natural Area Preserve above the town of Rocky Mount, Wes Paulos, Virginia Natural Heritage Program Mountain Operation Steward for the Shenandoah Valley and Mountain Regions of western Virginia, led us along woodland trails and eventually off-trail into a sunny area where Smooth Coneflower (*Echinacea laevigata*) grows. It is listed as imperiled in the state and globally, meaning it is at high risk of extinction. The plants here are in very poor shape. Each plant is marked by a silver tag in the ground. No plant was taller than three inches nor had more than three leaves. But we could feel that the top of the leaf is smooth, whence its name. It is the only *Echinacea* native to Virginia. The Purple Coneflowers in our gardens come from elsewhere in the U.S.

Ryan Klopf Virginia Natural Heritage Program Regional Supervisor for the Shenandoah Valley and Mountain Regions of western Virginia led us in the Poor Mountain Natural Area Preserve, outside of Salem. The name of the mountain reflects the impoverished soil weathered from sandstone bedrock. I have learned from hiking around here that the understory in such areas is dominated by the Heath Family (*Ericaceae*), Blueberry, Mountain Laurel, etc., and that's what I saw there. On Poor Mountain the *Ericaceae* are

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joined by Sandalwood Family (*Santalaceae*) member Piratebush (*Buckleya distichophylla*) another state and globally imperiled species. It grows in only a handful of sites in the mountains of Virginia, Tennessee, and North Carolina. Poor Mountain has the world's largest population. It is semi-parasitic, deriving nutrients from trees via mycorrhizal fungi (not surprising as it is in the same family as Mistletoe). We saw lots of fruit on the bushes, but no seedlings. Ryan said they are scarce, and they do not know why.

