

## NORTHERN SHENANDOAH VALLEY MASTER GARDENER ASSOCIATION NEWS

### UPCOMING MONTHLY MEETING

- **Sunday, November 13, 2-4pm, Warren County Government Center**, Front Royal. We will celebrate our accomplishments for 2016 and elect officers and approve our budget for 2017.
- **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 St).

### UPCOMING EVENTS

- **Monday, November 14, 1pm, Belle Grove Christmas Decorating Workshop Training Session**, at Belle Grove
- **Tuesday, November 29, Belle Grove Christmas Decorating**
- **January 28, 10am–2pm Seed Exchange at Blandy**

### FROM THE VOLUNTEER COORDINATOR by Mary Flagg,

Thanks to all the Master Gardeners who have met or exceeded their education/ project hourly requirement. Thanks for entering your hours onto VMS. We still have projects going on like the MG Photography Class, the Belle Grove Holiday decorating, the Blandy Seed Exchange preparation, and the Garden Fest plant preparation for those that still need hours. As we wind down the 2016 season, please enjoy the holidays with your family and friends!

### FROM THE PRESIDENT by Susan Garrett

As I write my last newsletter column as your President, I wanted to include this picture of my great-niece Anna at the Clarke County Fair. When I look at that sweet little face and remember all the fun she had at the fair, I am reminded of why I became a VCE-MG.

Many of us learned to love the natural world as children. I noticed that when we published the bios of the NSVMGA officers and coordinators in the newsletter a few years ago, many of them spoke about their love for horticulture beginning in influences from their childhood. I can remember following an uncle around his farm, helping my mother can vegetables, enjoying the flowers around my home—early influences count!



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And I have found that the longer I am a VCE Master Gardener, the more I learn and the more I can teach others. That makes being a VCE-MG a very rewarding way of spending my time.

So I want to thank each one of you for what you have taught me during the years, and I especially want to thank you for your support and enthusiasm during these past two years. Being your president has been a joy and a privilege! Thank you.

### PAGE COUNTY REPORT by Lesley Mack

Happy November everyone! Hope you all are well and enjoying the fall season, with hopes of piles of snow this winter (aka water!, which we could use).

At the Board Meeting this month the discussion will be about all the Counties Unit Projects' to assess the success of each. We did well In Page County. Thanks to our Page County group: Susan Finlay, Robbin Holland, Cheryl McDonald, Charlie Newton, and Tom Mack, and our emeritus members, Shelby Hadelor and Fran Gregory, and our honorary MG, April Mays. 2016 Projects:

- Fair—two chances for our county MGs and area folks to meet:
  - The Page Co. Fair in June sharing information about water quality and other related garden topics
  - The Heritage Festival In October sharing information about plants
- Farmers' Market—Cheryl McDonald has been steadfast in following the FM wherever the organizers decided to have the event for that weekend. We hope the organizers will settle on the traditional FM area next year. Cheryl talked with lots of folks. She was quite pleased with the interest in the MG s.
- Greenline—April Mays has been a *wonderful* collector of questions that come into the Stanley Extension office. The same day April receives the question she sends out an email with all the pertinent information, photographs, contact information, etc. One of our MG s takes care of the question via email, phone, or a visit.
- Home Consultations—This goes along with the Greenline. If a question/request is made, one of us will pay the person a visit. Most questions are answered via email or phone.
- Educational Tours/Mack Garden (aka *Birdsong Pleasure Garden*)—Now that the Garden is listed on: Virginia is for Lovers, Artisan Trails of Virginia, Facebook, and Trip Advisor, and rack cards can be found in area restaurants/shops and B&B's, the visitation rate has increased. Visitors enjoy all the various types





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garden areas, have their questions answered, and learn ideas for their own gardens. Some of the visitors to Birdsong are shown in the pictures.

- Chinquapin Oak—The fabulous oak continues to thrive. MGs had several to inspect the oak, weed, mulch, etc. One of the "workdays" involved the youth from the Valley Health Care system on one of their 'give back to the community' days. The large group spent several hours during the HOT summer working around the oak. We continue to work with the town to prepare an area for the marble bench and an explanation about the tree. We hope to have the town's Arbor Day Celebration at the oak with the dedication of the bench.



- Farm Day—Shenandoah Elementary school hosted a Farm Day in April, 2016. The Page County MGs were invited to participate. We prepared peat pots for two types of veggies for the students at the school, including extras for the teachers and one for the classroom. The seeds were sprouted and green when we delivered the pots. Each pot was bagged. Cheryl McDonald made excellent planting and care tags for each pot.



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### SHENANDOAH COUNTY REPORT by Sharon Bradshaw

Most of our activities have slowed down. Planting spring flowering bulbs with a couple of community groups is scheduled for Corhaven Graveyard this month. Our newest effort, the Woodstock Community Garden, is in a very active planning period, with gardening classes to begin in March.

### WARREN COUNTY REPORT by Richard Stromberg

On October 29<sup>th</sup> the James Huttar Memorial Pocket Park was dedicated along the Royal Shenandoah Greenway near Skyline High School. Jim is the late husband of MG Emily Huttar. He was instrumental in making the Greenway a reality. One section of the Greenway remains to be built to complete a four mile loop through Front Royal and along the South Fork of the Shenandoah River.

The Pocket Park was designed by local consultant David Means. Three oak trees were already planted, and a Tri Color Beech was in a hole for people attending the ceremony to fill in with soil. David said that Jim and Emily had told them the Tri Color Beech was their favorite tree. Its leaves are dark green in the center, outlined by white and pink. The park also has a bench and a sculpture of a bicycle, as cycling was a favorite pastime of the Huttars.





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### BELLE GROVE CHRISTMAS DECORATING by Lynn Hoffman

The Master Gardeners will decorate Sally's Room at Belle Grove in Middletown for Christmas. This year's theme is the Christmas tree, decorated with your own theme. So as Master Gardener's, I think we better do a garden aspect. We will do natural ornaments to decorate our trees and using our garden tools to accent the room.

We will have a workshop training session on Monday Nov. 14 at Belle Grove starting at 1 P.M.

The decorating day will be Tuesday Nov. 29th. It's EARLY this year. Even if you can't make the decorating, all are welcome for the workshop. We will make ornaments from natural materials and you can make a lot and leave some for the Belle Grove trees.

If you think you might come, please let me know at [gwendydog@gmail.com](mailto:gwendydog@gmail.com) so I have plenty of materials. Also bring a clipper and a glue gun if you have one. Burlap or ribbon would help also.



### UPDATE ON THE SEED EXCHANGE AT BLANDY (AND THE STORY OF HOW I BECAME A SEED SAVER) by Elaine Specht

Six years ago, on a brisk November morning, a moving truck and three super-strong men pulled up to our house in Blacksburg to transport the rest of our belongings to Woodstock. Over many summer and fall weekends, Dan and I had already brought everything we could carry ourselves, which, in addition to way too many boxes of dishes and books, included a three-year-old Japanese maple, iris, hostas, astilbe, hibiscus, and assorted shrubs.

As the movers loaded the last of our furniture, I checked to be sure I hadn't missed anything. With the house empty, my scan turned to the yard where I spied the French marigolds around the mailbox. I grabbed a plastic grocery bag, and started picking off the dried seed heads. And *that* was the exact moment when I became a seed saver. Until that day I had never thought to save seeds, and I didn't even know if they would germinate. But if the seeds were viable, I figured I would have one more reminder of the home we left behind. Plus, they were FREE! It seemed like a no-brainer to at least give it a try.

That's not quite the end of the story, though. Two springs went by and I forgot all about the marigold seeds. When my third spring in Woodstock rolled around, I came across the seeds again. I debated tossing them in the garbage fearing that they were too old to germinate, but I tossed them into the edge of my perennial bed instead. They germinated and flourished. So much so that I entered some blooms into the Shenandoah County Fair and even won a ribbon! Yes, I was definitely hooked at that point.

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This year, I raised the great, great marigold grandbabies that resulted from those first seeds that I saved.

What's your seed saving story? Bring your seeds and your stories to the Seed Exchange at Blandy on January 28, 10 am–2 pm. Even if you don't have seeds, please join us. We will have plenty to share. In addition to seeds, there will be plants, roots, bulbs, cuttings, gently used books, and great door prizes. Vendors Penny's Plants, Blooming Hill, and Larkin Tea Company will be back. Also, Rusty Foltz, President of the Virginia State Beekeeper's Association, will give a presentation about the current state of the honey bee, honey bees and pollination, and the best flowers for honey bee nutrition.



Admission is free. More information is on our website: <http://nsvmgga.org/projects/blandy-seed-exchange/>.

### **MG CLASS OF 2017** by Sharon Bradshaw

Within two days of the emailed invitation to apply for the new class being sent, we had 24 requests for applications. YAY! We will have flyers at this month's meeting for volunteers to take for posting in various communities. The speaker contact team has worked its magic and most of the presenters have been confirmed. Thank you, Janet and Barb.

### **CONSERVATION CORPS RETURNS TO THE VALLEY** by Lesley Mack

The Great Appalachian Valley Conservation Corps (GAVCC) is a new program based in New Market. The GAVCC is supported by the Shenandoah Valley Battlefields Foundation. The Corps strives to cultivate a new generation of local land stewards.

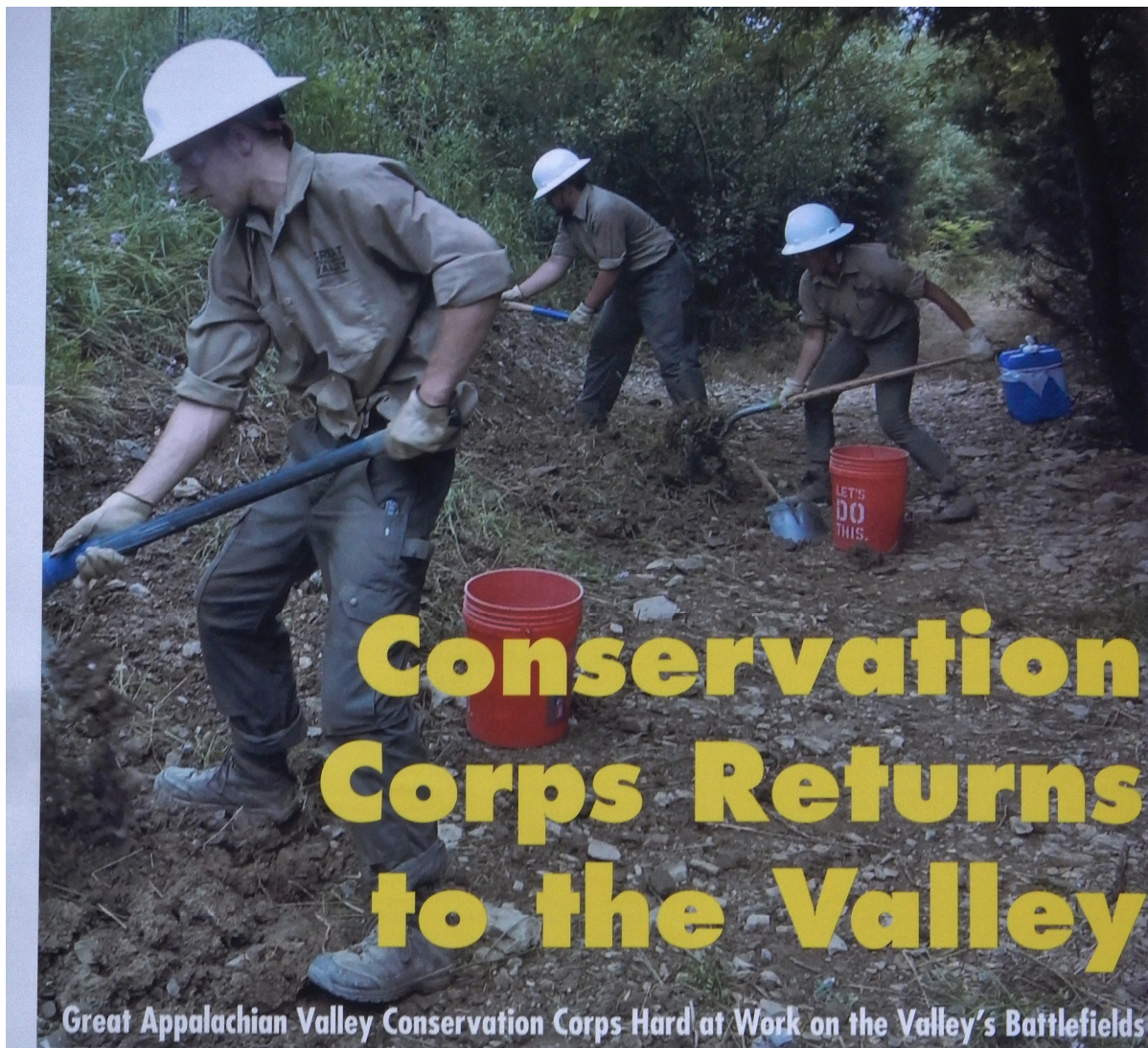
Zach Foster is the head of the Corps. His office is in the same building as the Shenandoah Valley Battlefields Foundation in New Market.

The crew worked on projects at the Third Winchester Battlefield Park, Star Fort and Cedar Creek. They also jumped into help with the devastating floods in West Virginia this summer.

This is the article that appeared in the Shenandoah Valley Battlefields Foundation's 2016 Fall magazine, a copy is available at the Battlefield's office.

If you have a project in need of conservation, contact Zach at [Zach@conservationlegacy.org](mailto:Zach@conservationlegacy.org) or 540-246-9224.





# Conservation Corps Returns to the Valley

Great Appalachian Valley Conservation Corps Hard at Work on the Valley's Battlefields

In 1933, during the height of the Great Depression, the Civilian Conservation Corps (CCC) was founded to offer employment and work experience to young men. During its operation, the CCC built roads and other infrastructure in remote areas, improved many state parks, planted trees and fought wildfires. The CCC had strong roots in the Shenandoah Valley; the first CCC camp, Camp Roosevelt, was established in the George Washington National Forest.

Today, the Great Appalachian Valley Conservation Corps (GAVCC) is a new corps program based in New Market, Virginia, moving forward from the tradition of the CCC to

engage young people in conservation service projects. The GAVCC is supported by the Shenandoah Valley Battlefields Foundation and is working for five weeks on SVBF preserved properties during this first field season.



The GAVCC strives to cultivate a new generation of local land stewards. The GAVCC partners with local land managers to accomplish impactful and lasting conservation service projects. GAVCC crews work to build and support sustainable public access, historical interpretation, and ecological health.

This field season, a GAVCC crew of 6 young adults age 18-Shenandoah Valley Battlefields National Historic District



24 and two crew leaders are spending five weeks working on projects at the Third Winchester Battlefield Park, Star Fort and Cedar Creek. The crew has already built more than a half mile of new trail through the West Woods at Third Winchester to connect to existing trails. This trail includes two new footbridges, extensive gravel in-fill to raise the trail above wet areas, and a sustainable grade to prevent erosion damage. Great care was taken to not disturb any areas of cultural

significance. Over 40 tons of gravel and fill material was moved by hand to lay the trail. At Star Fort the crew is building replica winter huts modeled on period photos and recorded descriptions as an educational focal point on the site.

Later in the year GAVCC aims to have crews working on additional projects at Cedar Creek, Virginia, and on the Natchez Trace Trail in Mississippi.



Back row, left to right: Stephanie Shickel, Wyatt Asher, Margaret Via, Diana Mendoza, Wilson Caicedo, Rachel VanWormer, Morgan Billingsley. Front row: Robert Pullen.



After this year's devastating floods in West Virginia, the GAVCC Battlefields Crew volunteered to travel to Rainelle, West Virginia, to aid in the flood response. Over the course of a 21 day deployment the crew ran operations at the Rainelle Volunteer Reception Center and led a field assessment and residential "muck and gut" team.

## The Civilian Conservation Corps

From 1933-1942, the Civilian Conservation Corps built more than 800 parks and planted nearly 3 billion trees across the country. Enrollees "also dug canals and ditches, built over thirty thousand wildlife shelters, stocked rivers and lakes with nearly a billion fish, restored historic battlefields, and cleared beaches and campgrounds."<sup>1</sup> In Virginia itself, "the development of a state park system was the most important legacy of the CCC [Virginia had no state parks before 1933]... CCC workers also labored on the federal projects of the Shenandoah National Park, the Skyline Drive, and the Blue Ridge Parkway."<sup>2</sup> Nearly 3 million men took part in the CCC. Some of the more famous included legendary test pilot Chuck Yeager, boxing champion Archie Moore, and actors Walter Matthau, Raymond Burr, and Robert Mitchum.



Office of War Information Photographic Collection

<sup>1</sup> The Reader's Companion to American History. Eric Foner and John A. Garraty

<sup>2</sup> Heinemann, R. L. "Civilian Conservation Corps." Encyclopedia Virginia. Virginia Foundation for the Humanities

## Sierra Club on the Battlefield

For the second consecutive year, Sierra Club volunteers from across the country gathered at the Third Winchester Battlefield Park to lend a hand with the continuing restoration work at the site. The 18 volunteers spent an entire week on site tackling multiple projects including constructing historic fencing on the Huntsberry Farm and removing large amounts of trash from the newly preserved West Woods property.





### EDITORS CORNER--OAKS by Richard Stromberg

Oaks are in the Beech Family (*Fagaceae*) along with Chestnuts and Beeches. They are all deciduous, nut-producing trees or shrubs. The leaves are simple (not divided). Leaves and branches are alternate. They are monoecious, meaning that the female and male flowers are separate but appear on the same plant. They are wind-pollinated.

Oaks (*Quercus*—the ancient Latin name) are the dominant trees in our area. About 500 species are known world-wide with eleven common in the NSVMGA area. All Oaks produce acorns and have buds clustered at twig tips. Bud and twig shape and color are useful for distinguishing species, but I will concentrate on more easily seen structures.

Leaf, acorn, and bark structure can help you determine the species with a quick look, but many features are similar across species and variable even on the same tree, and the species cross-breed. (The “purebreds” survive best.) Acorn shape and size and how much of the nut is covered by the cap are fairly consistent in a species. Bark structure changes as the tree matures. Leaves have some unique features for a specific species but can vary across trees or even on the same tree. Oak leaves decompose slowly on the ground and often stay on the tree all winter until pushed off by spring growth, so you can see them year-round.

In spring tiny yellow-green, male flowers grow on dangling catkins as the leaves start to grow. The flowers turn brown and dry, and the catkin falls off. Female flowers are inconspicuous in the leaf axils. Flowers are similar on all Oak species.

Our native Oaks can be divided into two groups based primarily on leaf shape:

- Pointed lobes with a bristle tip—the Red Oak group
- Lobed with rounded tips lacking a bristle tip—the White Oak group





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Next month I will cover the White Oak group, and the following month, the Red Oak Group.

I plan to tell you about some big trees in our area. Virginia Tech keeps the list of Virginia big trees at (<http://bigtree.cnre.vt.edu/>) and American Forests keeps a list of national champions at <http://www.americanforests.org/explore-forests/americas-biggest-trees/champion-trees-national-register/>. The Remarkable Trees of Virginia by Nancy Hugo and Jeff Kirwan is a book with descriptions and beautiful pictures of many special trees.



Red Oak (*Quercus rubra*)  
flowers and new leaves