

NORTHERN SHENANDOAH VALLEY MASTER GARDENER ASSOCIATION NEWS

UPCOMING MONTHLY MEETING

- **No meeting in December**

UPCOMING EVENTS

- **Saturday, December 10, 1-2:30 pm, Samuels Public Library, 330 E. Criser Rd, Front Royal, Master Gardener Speaker Series: National Ecological Observatory Network (NEON) and Project Budburst.** Learn how NEON's continental-scale research platform is helping predict ecological changes over time and about the Project budburst program that has citizen scientists log observations of plants in their yards to contribute to a national network of observations. Presenters Greg Chapman and Diana Soteropoulos of NEON are currently working with the Smithsonian Conservation Biology Institute in Front Royal.
- **Thursday, December 15, 6-8pm, Invasive Species Removal Landowner Workshop, State Arboretum at Blandy Farm.** Blue Ridge PRISM and the USDA Natural Resources Conservation Service are offering funds to assist landowners in a 10-county area with the removal of invasive plants (Albemarle, Augusta, Clarke, Greene, Madison, Nelson, Page, Rappa-hannock, Rockingham and Warren counties). The dollar amount available to an eligible landowner could be as high as \$22,000 over a three-year period. Find out how to apply and learn about this program in this free workshop. For information call 540-837-1758 Ext. 287.
- **Saturday, January 28, 10am–2pm Seed Exchange at Blandy**



FROM THE VOLUNTEER COORDINATOR by Mary Flagg,

Happy Holidays to you all! Thanks for a wonderful 2016 membership year!

FROM THE PRESIDENT by Cy Haley

I hope you're having a great holiday season and looking forward to the rest we gardeners get during the winter. Also, taking a break as a Master Gardener gives us a change to rejuvenate our determination to help every gardener we can. As you sit back, maybe enjoying a toasty fire, having a cup of cocoa, leafing through all those seed catalogues we'll soon be receiving, I hope you take a little time to congratulate yourself on a job well done.



The 2017 Garden Fest will be geared towards kids and we will have kid-related and kid-friendly events and activities so put those thinking caps on now and be ready to share those ideas at the January meeting. The date and time will be published soon.

We have the following Garden Fest leader positions open:

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|-----------------------|------------------|-------------------|
| • Entry Table | • External Signs | • Publicity |
| • Visitor Parking | • Education | • Photographers |
| • Port-a-potty Patrol | • Displays | • Tool Sharpening |

Remember, you don't have to work in that area the whole time, just make sure everything is set up and, if it requires volunteers, make certain there are enough scheduled for the time frame.

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FREDERICK COUNTY REPORT by Helen Lake

Our annual end of the year meeting took place the evening of the November 15, hosted by Frank Baxter and Skip Bowling at Westminster–Canterbury Lifecare Community. We had a solid turnout of twenty Master Gardeners who actively participated in discussions and review of Frederick County's MG projects. Notes from the meeting, with status of each program noted, went out to the county membership via VMS on November 22. If you did not receive the Word document via email, please contact Helen Lake, incoming Frederick County Coordinator for 2017 via alyena@shentel.net.

Those present at the meeting thanked outgoing Frederick County Coordinator, John Kummer for all of his work on their behalf with rousing applause.

WARREN COUNTY REPORT by Katherine Rindt

Katherine Rindt and Terry Bowman will be Associate County Coordinators in 2017. Please be sure to copy him on any emails so he can become more involved in activities. Also be sure to let us know about anything that can be included in the NSVMGA Newsletter and Warren County Report to the Board and members.

2017. Projects:

Help Line, Katherine Rindt project leader – We will continue with the same roster method for the schedule which will be Monday mornings from 9:00 - noon from April - September. We will try to get more publicity to try to increase the traffic into the office.

Samuels Library, Beth Cypser project leader - This will be the umbrella project form for our library activities. Additional MGs should still plan Speaker Series and other events and coordinate with Beth.

HJB Elementary School, Joey Waters, project leader - Joey would like to have more classes scheduled there for 2017. The pruning and shrub care follow on with David Means is high priority. HJB will also be part of the pilot to develop a gardening program for 3rd graders that matches the SOLs.

Calvary Episcopal, Margie Miller, project leader - Margie will continue to work with the church members on the demonstration gardens. Any MG who would like to help is welcome.

Belle Boyd, Katherine Rindt, project leader - Tuesday morning will be regular work day for 2017. Any MG who would like to help is welcome. There will be a focus on publicity to encourage more involvement by the public.

Happy Creek Arboretum Butterfly Garden, Katherine Rindt, project leader - Margie Miller is now our Tree Steward contact for this garden. The garden needs an overhaul to improve the variety of plants to attract more kinds of pollinators. Margie has developed a new plan which we will help implement in 2017.

Warren County Fair, Katherine Rindt, project leader - We decided to have an educational display at the fair again in 2017. Because of the limited traffic that comes into the Wonder Building, we will set up a table like in 2015 with information but will not try to staff it every evening.

SHENANDOAH COUNTY REPORT by Sharon Bradshaw

Our seasonal projects are completed for this growing year, but our Green Help Line is still active with new lead Rich Howell handling the coordination of several Green Line assistants.

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Monitoring is continuing for both the New Market Rain Garden and the Edinburg Mill Rain Garden. At the end of November, Alice Findler met with representatives from the Town of Edinburg and Friends of the North Fork to plan for some plant replacements for the Edinburg Mill project. Corhaven Graveyard is also being monitored, with a newly marked path to guide visitors around the grave sites and plantings.

Probably the most active project this time of year is the Woodstock Community Garden. The planning committee, under leadership of Cecelia Latham and Carolyn Wilson, has created a curriculum and several members are active in coordinating the workshops planned to begin in March. Their next meeting will be early January.

The Shenandoah County MGs are meeting on December 11 for a project review while sharing appetizers and seasonal cheer. We've had a busy year, with 14 county projects in addition to the several Unit projects.

MG TRAINEE CLASS OF 2017 by Sharon Bradshaw

The Management Team is meeting regularly to ensure that all plans are staying on track. Kudos to Janet Keithly and Barb Hallar, who have worked together to book the presenters. The schedule is finalized and we're very pleased with the speaker roster that is in place.

Listen to "The Valley Today", Radio 95.3—"The River", on December 16 at 12:30 PM, when we will join Mark to share information about the new trainee class. Your county coordinators have flyers and half page handouts. Please help us distribute these throughout your communities.

PUBLICITY AND COMMUNICATIONS by Lynn Hoffman

I am walking in the footsteps of the past Pub and Comm. chairpersons and want some help to keep things up to par. So in 2017 I need help on the committee to write about events and disseminate information about the works and programs of the NSVMGA. If you would be interested in assisting and being on the committee, email me at gwendydog@gmail.com. We will be very busy starting in January and I can use lots of help.

FUND RAISING FOR THE NSVMGA by Lynn Hoffman

We have registered with Brent and Becky's Bulbs to be in their giving program to non-profit organizations. Brent and Becky are the owners of a garden business in Virginia and have



given several presentations to Master Gardeners throughout the state and at Master Gardener College. They grow bulbs and plants and have donated throughout the years. Please consider their business as an option when you want to order bulbs or plants. Log on to <http://www.bloominbucks.com/> to order bulbs and select Northern Shenandoah Master Gardeners Association, and they will donate 25% of your order amount to us!

FAQs ABOUT PREPARING SEEDS FOR THE SEED EXCHANGE by Elaine Specht

As coordinator for the NSVMGA Seed Exchange at Blandy, I tend to hear many of the same questions about seed saving from our members. As with almost every gardening

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question, many of the answers could start with “it depends” and cover a number of variables. But in the interest of helping our membership take part in the Seed Exchange at Blandy, here is my attempt to offer some simple answers to some of the most frequently asked questions.

How do I save seed? Of course, it depends on the plant. Review the article in the September 2016 newsletter where I described saving seeds from two different types of plants: those that have spent flower heads that dry on the plant and those that have seeds that must be fermented and dried.

What should I put clean, dry seeds into? Once you have separated the seeds from the chaff (all those other dried bits of the spent flower head) or dried fermented seeds, place the clean, dry seeds into a paper envelope. Coin-sized envelopes work well, but any envelope will do. Plastic bags generally are not recommended, but I find they work fine if I am certain the seeds are dry.

How many seeds should go in each envelope? Use commercially available seed envelopes and your experience as a guide. Are you more likely to want 15 tomato seeds or 50? My bet is on 15.



Why do I need to separate the seed from the chaff? Many gardeners, including me, save complete seed heads and just crush them into the soil when planting in the spring. For the Seed Exchange, however, we need to keep our less experienced gardeners in mind. If they thought all the material in an envelope containing seed and chaff would produce new plants, they would be disappointed in the outcome. We want all patrons to have a positive experience with the seed they get from the Exchange so they keep coming back.

Which is the seed and which is the chaff? For some plants, such as the seed pod of a hardy hibiscus, there is no mistaking which part is the seed. For other plants, it takes practice and careful observation. If you are not sure, ask your Master Gardener friends for help or look for resources online.

How should I label the packets? Include

- Common Name (*scientific binomial*)
- Typical bloom time
- Light requirements
- Height at maturity
- Type (e.g., annual, perennial, vine, herb)
- Bloom color
- Special planting instructions that may apply
- Year seed was harvested

Example

<p>Feather celosia (<i>Celosia argentea</i>) Bloom June–Frost Full Sun 2' Tall Annual rose red Sow after danger of frost or start inside Harvested 2016</p>
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What types of seeds can I save? The Seed Exchange at Blandy features all kinds:

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| • Annuals | • Vegetables | • Vines |
| • Perennials | • Native plants | • Bulbs |
| • Herbs | • Drought resistant | • Cuttings |

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Are there any seeds I should not save? That you can't save seeds from hybrid plants is a myth. Many hybrid plants produce viable seed. However, the offspring may be very different from the parent plant. Clearly mark if you bring seeds from hybrid plants. To be sure that the seed from your hybrid plant is not sterile, plant a few seeds and see if they germinate.

Can you use seed from years past? Seeds from some plants can last a remarkably long time. Others, most notably parsnips, must be used within a year of when they were harvested. If you find seeds that you saved back in 2005, plant a few to see if they will germinate before packaging them up for the Seed Exchange.

BELLE GROVE CHRISTMAS by Lynn Hoffman

In the beginning... there were pine cones!

Belle Grove Christmas started in November as a workshop to create natural ornaments made from things you can grow and harvest from your garden. About 20 MGs worked like Santa's elves to make pine cone hearts, angels, corn husk dolls and bottle luminaries. All these ornaments were to bring home or share with the final decorating for Christmas in Sally's Room of Belle Grove.

We came back together at the end of November to a blank slate within the walls of the basement room in Belle Grove. It was a clean, stone walled room waiting for some magic to happen!

Our theme this year was The Christmas tree. The caveat was garden decor. So we added lots of gardening items, like an antique hand plow from Ginny Smith's family. Everyone would put a plow on



a bureau to show off the great artifacts that were used to garden years ago. Then we went to new additions made by Master Gardener Rodney Dowty. We used 3 pallet wood Christmas trees as accents in the room. They were a great addition to the

30 year old pine cone wreath that has adorned Sally's room all these years.

We also decorated the welcome area of Belle Grove. Rose Fairman and Shan Kilby decorated trees with dried Osage orange, apples, oranges and cranberries and cones. And we pulled everything together and decorated the main tree—the culmination of dried flowers, fruits and nuts, cones and berries and the creative prowess of the Master Gardeners.



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EDITORS CORNER—WHITE OAKS by Richard Stromberg

The leaves of the White Oak group have rounded tips with no bristle tip. Five species are common in the NSVMGA area.

White Oak (*Quercus alba*—white), is North America's most abundant tree, growing all over the eastern United States into the states lining the western side of the Mississippi. Its leaves are short-stalked with evenly-lobed leaves. The depth of the sinuses between the lobes varies from being almost un-lobed to very deeply incised. The $\frac{3}{4}$ -inch acorns have shallow caps. Bark on young trunks is pale gray in long strips that peel from one side, maturing into peeling ridges or small blocks.

Bur Oak (*Q. macrocarpa*—large fruit) is a mid-sized tree with gray, flaky, deeply furrowed/ridged and checked bark. The leaves have 4 to 7 pairs of irregular-lobes. The sinuses near the middle are the deepest and widest. The big differentiator is the acorn. It is the biggest, up to an inch and a half. The cap covers half to most of the nut and the scales taper to fringes that stick below the cap and make it look like a bur. It is not common in our area. It grows on river bottoms, such as the Potomac, Shenandoah and their tributaries. [The Remarkable Trees of Virginia](#) describes the largest tree in our area in front of the Elkton Municipal Building on W. Rockingham Street a block east of US-340 just north of the junction with US-33. It measures 351 points. The national champion, in Indiana, measures 426.



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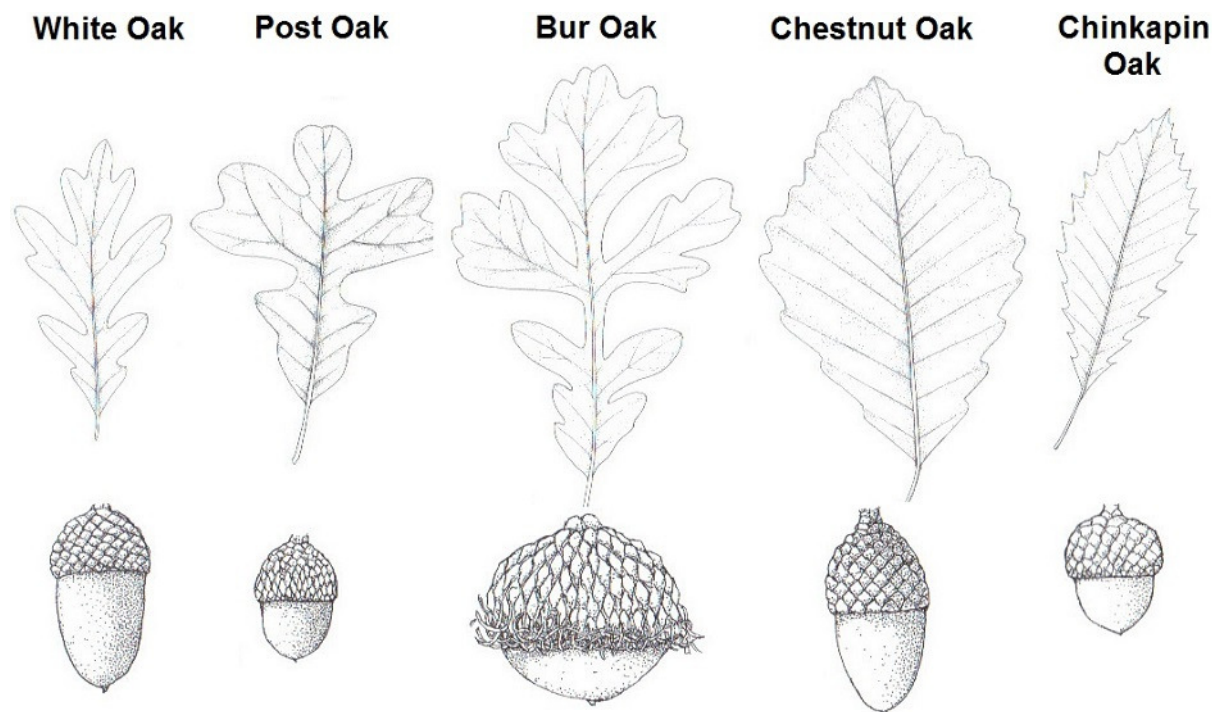
Post Oak (*Q. stellata*) is a characteristic tree of tall-grass prairies of the Midwest but also grows in open, upland woods. The leaves have five lobes, one protruding at the tip and the two below it much larger than the lower pair, giving the appearance of a cross. The underside of the leaf has star-shaped clusters of hairs, whence *stellata*. Light gray bark is flaky, ridged or checked, some areas appearing flattened. The caps of the $\frac{3}{4}$ -inch acorns go $\frac{1}{3}$ to $\frac{1}{2}$ way down the acorn and often are retained on the tree.

Two Oak species have toothed, unlobed leaves, similar to Chestnut leaves: Chestnut Oak and Chinkapin Oak.

Chestnut Oak (*Q. montana*) is very common in our mountain forests (hence *montana*). The name “chestnut” has been applied because the leaves look very much like Chestnut leaves except the teeth are rounded, not pointed like Chestnut leaves. The acorns are over an inch with domed caps that reach almost halfway down the nut. The bark is blocky with deep furrows.

Chinkapin Oak (*Q. muehlenbergii*)—named after eighteenth century botanist G. H. E. Muehlenberg) is usually a small to medium tree similar to Chestnut Oak and Allegheny Chinkapin. The leaf teeth are pointed like the Chinkapin, but it grows on basic soil rather than the acid soil preferred by Chinkapin, so it is usually found in the limestone-based valleys rather than on the mountains.

Leslie Mack has often written about the Chinkapin Oak next to the Page County office building on South Court Street in Luray. It is described in [The Remarkable Trees of Virginia](#). It is the third largest in the state (375 points). The largest in the state is by the south fork of Shenandoah River in Rockingham County (387), best seen from a canoe. The national champion is in Kentucky (404).



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