

# Shenandoah Valley GARDENING

Newsletter of NSVMGA, the Northern Shenandoah Valley Master Gardener Association

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## Happy New Year



Plant Clinic 2019  
photo by Stacey Morgan Smith

## Indoor Plant Clinic: February 1 Lynn Hoffmann

It's such a wonderful feeling to get your hands into the soil and watch something grow. At this time of year we don't have much opportunity to dig in our gardens, so the next best thing is to do some indoor gardening!

On **February 1** we will host our plant clinic at **Bowman Library** in Stephens City. Three great speakers are scheduled for the event. **James Jones** will present Orchids and Ferns in Your House at 11:15 am. There is nothing as lovely as an orchid in bloom with a Boston fern in the background. At 12:15 pm **Joey Waters** will discuss Plants: Division, Repotting & Caring Tips. Learn how to tackle those root-bound potted plants and divide them. The afternoon session also includes a presentation at 1:15 pm by Horticulture Therapist **Helen Lake**. Her presentation, Plants Can Make Me Feel Good, will explain the benefits of plants in our everyday lives.

There will be lots of plant give-aways. We have plants that bloom, plants that help clean your home's air, plants that climb, plants that drape gracefully and plants that stand straight up. You will be able to divide plants and repot the divisions and learn how easy it is to propagate a large variety of indoor plants. Please plan on attending and have some fun with plants while learning how to take care of them at home!

The event occurs on Groundhog Day weekend. The Bowman Library is hosting a great children's event with a live groundhog. Bring the kids or grandchildren and stop at our table to make a leaf or twig impression on a clay heart and bring it home.



## Register for the Gardening in the Valley Symposium Lynn Hoffmann

The NSVMGA will hold its annual "Gardening in the Valley Symposium" on **March 7** at Shenandoah University. There will be a variety of speakers along with book sales, garden vendors and wonderful eclectic raffles and numerous door prizes.

This year we will host the young couple who own Valley Roots Farm in Middletown. **Tyler** and **Angel Wakeman** will speak about the history of a fifth generation farm family and best practices for small farms in the 2020's. They will relate how a family farm can grow crops, raise livestock, market the items, AND make a living.

**Wendell Combest**, Professor Biopharmaceutical Sciences Department, Shenandoah University, will talk about medicinal plants and herbs and explain how to use them in your daily living by making compounds such as lip balm and mouthwash.

**Karen French** from the USDA Training Office will discuss organic plants, foods and animals. The definitions of organic and sustainable growing will be discussed. There will be an overview of methods of growing organically. What starts first, the organic seed or the organic plant? Bring your questions for a lively discussion.

**Marianne Willburn**, is a freelance garden journalist and author of Big Dreams, Small Garden, a columnist at *The Frederick News Post* and blogger at [www.smalltowngardener.com](http://www.smalltowngardener.com). She will speak about home gardens. How often do we see a plant and buy it; but, when we get home, there isn't really a good spot to plant it?

**Stacey Morgan Smith**, VCE Master Gardener, will discuss how to attract butterflies to your garden using flora local to the Shenandoah Valley. Her talk will cover how, with a little planning, one can bring in butterflies and moths throughout the growing season.

Come and listen to many different aspects of gardening and how to connect to the environment. Please check the website at <http://nsvmga.org/events/symposium/> and go directly to the symposium page. Click on the Buy Now button and register for the symposium via Pay Pal.

## From the President Bob Gail

If you are anything like me, the winter weather is bringing on the annual bout of cabin fever. Although the conditions are not exactly perfect for gardening, there are a few things that you can do that can help bring forth a successful year in the garden.

Now is the best time to review your records from last year and to learn from your mistakes. If you did not write down your successes and failures last growing season, try it this year. You will be amazed at the information that you can gather from simple notes. Look at the varieties of plants that produced the most and tasted the best. Draw simple diagrams of your garden so that you can remember where you planted what and practice crop rotation on a small scale. You can also order your seed catalogs and start researching new varieties of plants that you want to try. And, you can attend the Northern Shenandoah Valley Master Gardener Association's 10th annual Seed Exchange being held on Saturday, Jan. 25, at Blandy Arboretum and Experimental Farm. This is a free event that is great for seed gathering and for spending time with others who share your passion for gardening.

Although this may seem elementary, winterizing tools is an essential part of gardening and saving money. Remove soil and other debris with a steel brush to prevent corrosion and decay. If the tools have wooden handles, remove splinters with fine sandpaper and apply a light coat of oil over the entirety of the tool. Many wooden handles will rot if stored improperly, costing money and causing headaches in the spring so store them inside where they will be protected from the elements.

If it has been three years or more, complete a simple and inexpensive soil test to gauge the status of your garden. A soil test will provide an analysis of the pH and nutrients, and give recommendations for amendments to improve the soil. This can save money in terms of fertilizers, lime, and other treatments. Remember, proper soil pH allows plants to take up nutrients from the soil and utilize them fully, making a healthier, more disease and pest resistant plant. For more information on soil testing or for soil testing kits, contact your local VA Cooperative Extension office.

Lastly, plan to attend the NSVMGA 2020 "Gardening in the Valley Symposium" being held on March 7 at Shenandoah University. The scheduled speakers are excellent and there will be garden vendors for your shopping delight, book sales from the speakers, and door prizes. See details for registration at left.

Although winter may be a time that you can't actively grow plants, there are plenty of activities to get you through to the next growing season!

## Gardening Tip for Winter: Seed Tutorial Elaine Specht

It may be the dead of winter but now is the perfect time to organize the seeds you'll need for spring planting. As you acquire seeds, keep in mind that they cannot all be treated alike for planting. The definitions and tips below will help demystify seed starting terminology and techniques.

**Annual**—Plants that live their entire life cycle in one growing season and then die. They must be replanted each year from seed.

**Biennial**—Plants that live their entire life cycle in two growing seasons. Typically, they will sprout and grow foliage in the first year and then flower and die the second year. If you plant a biennial from seed, be prepared to wait until the second summer to see a bloom.

**Perennial**—Plants that live year after year. The foliage will die back to the ground in winter, but the roots will send up new shoots the following spring. Many herbaceous perennial seeds require stratification to germinate.

**Cold Hardy**—Plants that can tolerate frosts. Seeds for cold hardy plants can be planted in very early spring because the sprouted seedling will not be killed by late spring frosts or snow.

**Planting Depth**—The amount of soil that can cover a seed as it germinates. Some seeds require light to sprout, so they should only be covered lightly with soil. The general rule of thumb is to plant a seed into soil that is 1½ times the diameter of the seed.

**Scarification**—A process that helps break the outer layer (coat) of a seed to facilitate germination. Methods of scarification include soaking seeds in water or other solution, filing with an emery board, or nicking with a knife.

**Stratification**—A period of cold-moist treatment given to seeds to enhance germination by mimicking the conditions a seed has when exposed to winter weather outdoors. Do this at home by placing a seed in moist soil in a sealed plastic bag and refrigerating, or sow the seed outdoors when the ground is soft on a nice early winter day. Durations of stratification vary by seed type and can extend into multiple years.



photo by Elaine Specht

When in doubt, follow the directions on commercial seed packets or ask a VCE Master Gardener. Our Greenline contact information is available at <http://nsvmgga.org/more/contact/>.

To learn more about plant propagation from seed, check out this fact sheet from the Virginia Cooperative Extension. [https://www.pubs.ext.vt.edu/content/dam/pubs\\_ext\\_vt\\_edu/426/426-001/426-001.pdf](https://www.pubs.ext.vt.edu/content/dam/pubs_ext_vt_edu/426/426-001/426-001.pdf)

To get started on your supply of seeds for 2020 planting, join us at the Seed Exchange at Blandy, co-sponsored by NSVMGA and Foundation of the State Arboretum. <http://nsvmgga.org/events/seed-exchange/>

Everyone will get seeds to take home, even if you don't have seeds to share. There also will be a book and magazine exchange, plus vendors with gardening-related items and food, education stations, and hands-on activities.

Saturday  
Jan. 25  
2020

10AM-2PM  
**FREE!!!**

10th Annual

**Seed Exchange**

At Blandy

• Annuals  
• Perennials  
• Edibles  
• Native Plants

• Hands-On Workshops  
• Garden Book & Magazine Swap

Learn more at: <http://nsvmgga.org/events/seed-exchange/>

**Please NO INVASIVE ALIEN PLANTS on the Arboretum's Invasive Species List**  
<http://blandy.virginia.edu/arboretum/virginia-invasive-plants>



## 2020 Volunteer Opportunities

Lynn Hoffmann, Publicity Chair

The upcoming year has many activities that will benefit the public and continue the Extension's educational mission. Each activity requires many volunteers to make the event worthwhile and successful. Please remember that we cannot accomplish all of these goals without your help and input.

**Seed Exchange at Blandy on January 25** is the first event of the New Year. The planning may be done for 2020, but a committee is already thinking about 2021 and how it can bring next year's event to even more people. Seeds start forming and seed collection starts in May and June! Let Elaine Specht know how much you enjoyed the event and that you can help her next year.



**Indoor Plant Clinic at Bowman Library** will be held **February 1**. We have three speakers scheduled to talk about indoor plants and answer questions from the public. This event is a great way to get your hands in some potting soil and show people how to pot up a plant or divide it into many little ones to take home. Kris Behrends is coordinating the plants and the rootings and divisions everybody has started at home. If you have at least 10 plants/rootings that you have cared for and donated to the Plant Clinic you can log one hour of project time. In addition to the plant stations we will have an activity table for kids. Mary Turner and Tricia Boyd will show kids how to make clay hearts with leaf impressions, all in time for Valentine's Day. If you're not signed up, please email Lynn at [gwendydog@gmail.com](mailto:gwendydog@gmail.com) and we will assign you a spot to help.

**Gardening in the Valley Symposium** is scheduled for **March 7**. The committee is all set with great raffles and door prizes. There are speakers from the USDA on Organics, and Garden Journalist, Marianne Willburn, will present "Big Dreams, Small Garden." VCE Master Gardener Stacey Morgan Smith will speak about growing native plants for pollinators from spring through fall. A young farming couple will speak on being a fifth generation farmer and growing and selling produce in today's market. Guest speaker Wendell Combest, a Professor of Biopharmaceutical Sciences from Shenandoah University, will discuss herbs and their uses in the home. Please sign up on the website.

**Garden Fest** at Belle Grove Plantation is **June 6** and it will be another great year. We will miss Cy Haley who is relocating to Texas to be closer to family, but we are still planning for all our great vendors and the wonderful plant sale. This year we will have sheep dog demos, police dog demos and hopefully a horse or two to pet and a hayride for kids. This is a full-day event geared toward gardeners and families who want to come out to beautiful Belle Grove and enjoy the day. Please sign up to help for the event as we cannot do it without you!

**Fallfest 2020** is set for **September 12** at Richard's Fruit Market in Frederick County. Susan Groom is taking the lead and is looking for lots of volunteers to help with information tables and display set ups.

All these major events are just part of what VCE Master Gardeners do throughout the year. We have kids programs in the counties, farmer's markets, day camps and monthly library programs and adult programs through Parks and Recreation. Opportunities for public speaking in every county is frequent and requests come in from service organizations, garden clubs and home visits. We always need more speakers so please volunteer when the opportunity is there for you.

Behind the scenes are many volunteers that keep the organization running. Kudos to all VCE Master Gardeners who invest time and effort to make us the best group in Virginia!

## Off the Beaten Path: Blandy Experimental Farm Elaine Specht

Residents of the Northern Shenandoah Valley are fortunate to have a garden gem within easy driving distance. Blandy Experimental Farm, located in the southwest corner of Clarke County along Route 50, encompasses 700 acres bequeathed by Graham F. Blandy to the University of Virginia for agricultural research. In addition to the environmental and ecological research being conducted at the site, the public is invited to view the grounds 365 days a year from dawn until dusk. Visitors can enjoy seven themed gardens: native plant, pollinator, iris, zoo, herb, dwarf conifer, boxwood and the community gardens. For exercise enthusiasts, Blandy offers four walking trails ranging in length from  $\frac{3}{4}$  to 2 miles long and a  $7\frac{1}{2}$ -mile bridle trail for horses and riders. Dogs on a leash are permitted. For the mobility impaired, there are areas accessible by car.

Within the Blandy Farm, 172 acres are set aside as the State Arboretum of Virginia, containing more than 5,000 woody trees and shrubs from around the world. The arboretum includes the American Boxwood Society's Memorial Garden with 162 kinds of boxwood and also serves as a reference garden for the Southeast Region of the American Conifer Society. Other notable collections in the arboretum include a 300-tree ginkgo grove and 36-tree Cedar of Lebanon allée.

Even in January there are sights worth seeing at Blandy, such as the Witch Hazel tree in the Native Plant Garden that provides an important nectar source for pollinator insects in the winter.

Check out their website at <http://blandy.virginia.edu/> to learn more about Blandy Experimental Farm and the State Arboretum of Virginia, including the wide variety of educational programs offered year round. Better yet, stop by the Seed Exchange at Blandy, co-sponsored by NSVMGA along with the Foundation of the State Arboretum. The free event runs from 10 am to 2 pm on January 25. There will be plenty of seeds to share (even for people who do not bring any), as well as a gardening book and magazine exchange, education stations, hands-on activities and vendors.

Ginkgo trees at Blandy with 2019 fall color,  
*photo by Joyce Watson*



Witch Hazel bloom,  
*photo courtesy of Blandy Experimental Farm*



## Bright Red, Right Red Lesley Mack

**The Wrong Red...**Many cedar waxwings were found dead in a yard in Thomas County, Georgia, in April, 2009. On examination, the gastro-intestinal tract of these birds were distended by intact and partly digested berries of *Nandina domestica* Thunb (Heavenly Bamboo).

In all the examined birds, there were pulmonary and tracheal hemorrhages. Several tissues and organs including the lungs, liver, kidney, uvea of the eye, heart, the meninges, and the brain, were diffusely congested and hemorrhagic.

The findings are consistent with lesions associated with cyanide toxicity. *Nandina domestica* berries may contain large quantities of cyanogenic compounds. As seen in these cedar waxwings, in birds that die from cyanide chemical toxicosis multiple tissues or organs, particularly the lungs, may be hemorrhagic. Cyanide is a mitochondrial toxin that impairs cellular respiration, causing morbidity or mortality within a very short time.

If you have Nandina with red berries, cut the red berries off and dispose of the berries where the birds will not find them and eat them.

**The Right Red...**Winterberries (*Ilex verticillata*). This deciduous holly is among winter's brightest lights and will not endanger our beloved birds.

We have had our *Ilex verticillatas* for more than 10 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 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 color runs from reds to a brief yellow to nonexistent, 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.

These hollies are dioecious, with male and female flowers on separate plants. One male plant can pollinate five to 10 female plants, or more depending on the species, and should be planted in reasonable proximity to the females. It is also important to choose the male pollinizer that blooms at the same time as the female winterberries you are planting.

As usual with plant species, *Ilex verticillatas* have also been hybridized for color and size. Typically a large shrub at eight to 15 feet in height and width, there are now dwarf cultivars available, 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. The name of one of the cultivars tells it all..."Sparkleberry".

### References

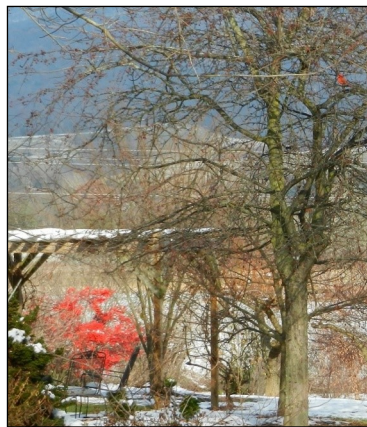
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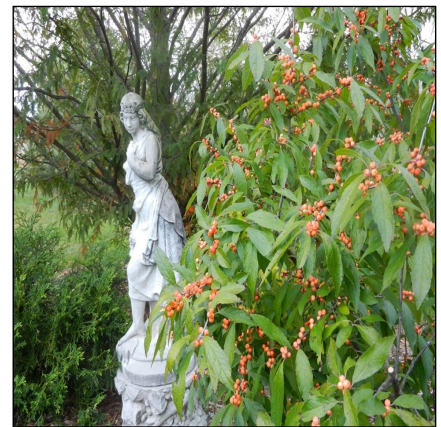
<https://www.novaregion.org/DocumentCenter/View/10615/Northern-Virginia-Native-PlantGuide---FINAL>



December day



Sparkleberry  
photos by Lesley Mack



Winterberry

## Extension Master Gardeners in the Community

### Frederick County Update

Mary Mitchell Turner

Winter has fallen upon the Shenandoah Valley, stilling activity on most Frederick County Master Gardener projects. Our Old Town Winchester Farmers Market tent is stored away until the market re-opens in May. Our community and school gardens, well prepared in fall for spring planting, are now resting.

A team of Extension Master Gardeners is designing an intensive information sharing plan to help slow the spread of the invasive Spotted Lanternfly.

EMGs associated with Fremont Street Nursery and Timbrook Community Gardens are preparing to order seeds and start seedling transplants. Gardeners from all five counties are now starting seedling plants that will be available for purchase at Belle Grove during Garden Fest.

Our Greenline offers online assistance for Frederick County through the winter months at <https://frederick.ext.vt.edu/>. Don't hesitate to contact us through the extension office during the winter months. We would be delighted to be of assistance with gardening questions.

Here are a six of my personal winter gardening activities:

- 1) Re-pot and refresh houseplants.
- 2) Clean, sharpen and oil garden tools.
- 3) Refresh soil mix in raised beds.
- 4) Prune apple and cherry trees.
- 5) Repair hoses.

- 6) Pick up a few soil test kits from the Frederick County Extension Office at 107 North Kent St. The soil analysis lab at Virginia Tech gets very busy as the weather warms, so it is best to complete this as soon you can dig.

### Clarke County Update

Ann Levi

The Clarke Master Gardeners welcome three new Trainees: Heather, Joan and Kathy, to our ranks. We look forward to working with you. Our county meeting will be at 2 pm, just before the NSVMGA meeting on January 19 at the Strasburg Library.

I would like to take a moment to highlight a real horticultural gem in Clarke County. The State Arboretum of Virginia covers the center 172 acres of the much larger Blandy Experimental Farm of 700+ acres, which was gifted to the University of Virginia in 1926. (see article on pg. 5) The Arboretum "now contains over 5,000 woody trees and shrubs from around the world." Hiking, dog-walking, bird-watching and horseback riding are just some of the activities to enjoy. Also at the Arboretum are the Virginia Native Plant Trail, Conifer Trail, Boxwood Garden and the beautiful Ginkgo Grove. The grounds are open from dawn to dusk, 365 days a year. So come out and explore all that Blandy has to offer. To learn more go to <http://blandy.virginia.edu/home>.

### Volunteer Coordinator's Report Stacey Morgan Smith

Happy 2020 to our Extension Master Gardeners (EMGs) and the homeowners we help. I look forward to serving this year as Volunteer Coordinator, supporting our team of volunteers. Have you set any goals for the year? Here are a few ideas!

**Try new things.** If you aren't as excited about the EMG program as you used to be, try a new project! Join in a variety to see what you like and what you don't. We have projects to fit any personality.

**Attend meetings.** NSVMGA schedules eight meetings throughout the year, which offer fellowship, education, and more information about how your Association supports you. We'll also recognize member accomplishments and awards at each meeting. If you make it to one meeting per quarter, you already have 50% of your educational requirements and 20% of your volunteer service hours!

**Enter hours monthly.** Spend a little time at the end of each month to enter hours and take away the end-of-quarter stress...or be like Misa, who enters her hours before leaving a project! We run reports throughout the year, and having accurate hour and contacts recorded ensures we have accurate data.

Here's to a fulfilling 2020! You'll hear from me regularly as I encourage you to join a project or as I share continuing education and training opportunities. If you ever have any questions or need any help, get in touch!



## Should You Consider Biochar for Your Garden? Will Daniels

As the word suggests, biochar is charcoal, but it is produced not as fuel, but as a soil amendment. Soon you could be standing in a garden center staring at a bag labelled "biochar," and wondering what it is and whether you should try it in your soil. I heard about biochar a few months ago, in a discussion on global warming, of all things. Advocates of biochar believe it deserves a leading role in lowering carbon dioxide levels and reducing rainforest loss. It's a fascinating topic and if you would like more information, sources are provided below.

The purpose here is to help you decide whether to buy that bag of biochar for your garden, or perhaps instead to make your own in the backyard. Many folks on the internet are eager to show how it's done.

If you've never thought of dumping spent briquettes into your vegetable garden, why would you consider digging finely-crushed charcoal—biochar--into it? The closest you're likely to have come is disposing of wood ash in garden soil, to provide potassium and raise pH. Ash is different, though, flaky stuff produced when carbon-containing matter is burned completely. Tiny nuggets of charcoal are almost pure residual carbon, and form when the fire has little oxygen to feed it. The technical term is slow pyrolysis.

Since the reason for considering biochar is to grow better crops, the question to answer is how it achieves this. It is not by adding nutrients to the soil, with the exception of a small amount of potassium that helps raise pH. Biochar is largely inert, but it contains lots of pores and surfaces that nutrients like nitrogen and phosphorous bind to and become available to plant roots. Because biochar can also last for many years, perhaps even hundreds, nutrients tend not to leach from the soil. The pores of biochar can also hold more water in the soil, making it more drought resistant. Improving soil structure, much like perlite does, is another benefit.

Because organic compost delivers the benefits just mentioned all by itself, the best way to view biochar is as an amplifier of compost. Biochar simply makes compost go farther. The synergizing effect is best achieved by *charging* the biochar *before* it's added to the soil by mixing it with compost and waiting for a few weeks. The good microbes will have a chance to colonize the biochar. If the biochar is added unmixed, results may be delayed until the microbes set up home in the bits of char.

For me personally, the attraction of biochar was getting its benefit for free, by burning dried brush or cornstalks lying around the backyard. That's better than sending them out on yard-waste collection day. Better, too, than letting them all decompose, in terms of CO<sub>2</sub>. That is true

because when charcoal is made and stored in the soil, a portion of the carbon that would have gone to the atmosphere through decomposition stays put in the ground.

Having suggested playing with fire, I should say that the responsible and efficient way to make biochar is to use a purpose-built cooker. This equipment can be homemade and simple, but without it all you have is a campfire, releasing particles into the air. A biochar oven operates with little smoke, and it will turn more of the biomass into charcoal, instead of ash.

If you decline the DIY approach but want to try biochar, be prepared to shell out for the commercial product, unless you can find a local person selling his own (it seems to be a guy thing). A one cubic ft. bag of one brand sells for \$47. Biochar blended with compost costs less. Taking the sting out a little, this should be a one-time expense.

Are there drawbacks besides the cost? Prof. Rory Maguire of Virginia Tech notes that most studies show that biochar can increase soil productivity, but some do show decreased productivity. The reasons are not well understood. It might be smart to try biochar in a small area of the garden and compare results to an untreated area with the same crop.

If any readers have experience with biochar, please share it with us. I'm sure it will be of interest.



*Left: Biochar should have a fine texture. photo from Pacific Biochar website*

*Below: A biochar oven made from a 55-gallon drum. photo from Milkwood Permaculture website*



### References

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## Plant Profile: Hellebores Joyce Watson

Hellebores, which begin to bloom as early as December in some locations, are the perfect plant for impatient gardeners awaiting spring. Different varieties offer rose-shaped flowers in a range of colors and are a welcome sight while the rest of the garden is dormant. The attractive low clumping foliage is evergreen in all but the coldest regions. These long-lived timeless perennials will bring you years of pleasure and beauty, and are ideal for woodland gardens.

**Botanical name:** *Helleborus*

**Common name:** Hybrid Lenten rose

**Plant type:** Herbaceous perennial

**Zones:** 4-9; evergreen in 6-9

**Bloom time:** December through May

**Bloom size:** 2-3 1/2"

**Bloom colors:** white, mauve, green, burgundy, yellow, black-purple, bi-colored, speckled and more

**Height/Spread:** 18-24"/24"

**Site:** partial to full shade; rich, well-draining soil

**Characteristics:** low-maintenance, deer-resistant, generally pest-free

**Interesting fact:** Hellebore flowers don't have petals but have colorful, cold hardy sepals which attract early season pollinators and protect the plant's reproductive parts.

### References

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<https://extension.umd.edu/ipm/landscape-management-nursery-production/hellebore-winter-spring-bloomer>

Pine Knot Farms, located at 681 Rockchurch Road in Clarksville, Virginia, specializes in Hellebores. They will be attending the Garden Fair at Blandy Experimental Farm (Boyce, VA) May 9-10. (For informational purposes only. Does not indicate endorsement.) <http://www.pineknotfarms.com/>



Hellebores in winter are the harbingers of spring.

*photo by Joyce Watson*

**"The flowers of late winter and early spring occupy places in our hearts well out of proportion to their size." Gertrude S. Wister**

Ms. Wister was a nationally recognized horticulturist, author and consultant who devoted her career to public horticulture. She died at the age of 94 on July 13, 1999, at her home in Swarthmore, Pennsylvania, on the Swarthmore College campus. <https://scholar.lib.vt.edu/ejournals/JARS/v53n4/v53n4-sawyers.htm>

## Welcome Master Gardener Trainees Class of 2020

Clarke	Frederick	Page	Shenandoah	Warren
Enloe, Heather	Adams, Jennifer	Edmonds, Julie	Dornatt, Rochelle	Gee, Cynthia
Holcomb, Kathy	Alverson, Debbie	Kulick, Vanessa	Higdon, Kerry	Hubli, Kenneth (Scott)
Newman, Joan	Courtney, Bernie	Reed, Mark	Jorgensen, Jerry	Schwartz, Lisa
	Fowler, Gail	Reed, Nancy	Jorgensen, Chris	
	Lamborne, Pam		Korrigan, Mary Jane	
	Lewis, Mary		Korrigan, Michael	
	Loving, Tammi		Morrison, John	
	Michael, Janet			
	Peterman, Susan			
	Rogers, Alan			
	Royaltey, Joanne			
	Shoemaker, Alice			
	Talley, Debbie			



photo by Stacey Morgan Smith

*Congratulations on your acceptance into  
the Northern Shenandoah Valley  
Master Gardener Trainee Program.*

*Thank you for joining the ranks of Extension volunteers.*

*We look forward to getting to know you and working in our communities together!*

## NSVMGA Calendar of Events—1st Quarter

Sunday                      Monday                      Tuesday                      Wednesday                      Thursday                      Friday                      Saturday

### January 2020

<b>12</b>	<b>13</b>	<b>14</b>	<b>15</b>	<b>16</b>	<b>17</b>	<b>18</b>
<b>19</b>	<b>20</b>	<b>21</b>	<b>22</b>	<b>23</b>	<b>24</b>	<b>25</b>
NSVMGA Mtg., 3-5 PM, Strasburg Community Library						Seed Exchange at Blandy
<b>26</b>	<b>27</b>	<b>28</b>	<b>29</b>	<b>30</b>	<b>31</b>	

### February 2020

						<b>1</b> Indoor Plant Clinic at Bowman Library
<b>2</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>5</b>	<b>6</b>	<b>7</b>	<b>8</b>
<b>9</b>	<b>10</b>	<b>11</b>	<b>12</b>	13 Board Mtg., 6 PM, MidAtlantic Farm Credit - Winchester	<b>14</b>	<b>15</b>
<b>16</b> NSVMGA Mtg., 3-5 PM, Blandy	<b>17</b>	<b>18</b>	<b>19</b>	<b>20</b>	<b>21</b>	<b>22</b>
<b>23</b>	<b>24</b>	<b>25</b>	<b>26</b>	<b>27</b>	<b>28</b>	<b>29</b>

### March 2020

<b>1</b> Spring Newsletter submission deadline	<b>2</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>4</b> Greenline & Frederick County HelpDesk, 10 AM - 1 PM	<b>5</b>	<b>6</b>	<b>7</b> Gardening Symposium, Shenandoah Uni.
<b>8</b>	<b>9</b>	<b>10</b>	<b>11</b> Greenline & Frederick County HelpDesk 10 AM - 1 PM	<b>12</b> Board Mtg., 6 PM, MidAtlantic Farm Credit - Winchester	<b>13</b>	<b>14</b>
<b>15</b> NO Association Mtg.	<b>16</b>	<b>17</b>	<b>18</b> Greenline & Frederick County HelpDesk 10 AM - 1 PM	<b>19</b>	<b>20</b>	21 Education Ad- ventures, 10 AM - Noon, Belle Grove Plantation
<b>22</b>	<b>23</b>	<b>24</b>	<b>25</b> Greenline & Frederick County HelpDesk 10 AM -1 PM	<b>26</b>	<b>27</b>	<b>28</b>
<b>29</b>	<b>30</b>	<b>31</b>				



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## **From the Editor: Gardening-Related Activities**

Winter for gardeners is a respite and a time to recharge the battery. But, most of us enjoy keeping busy so here are 10 activities to keep you active until spring.

**1) Browse through seed catalogs.** Planning and dreaming about what to grow next season is a favorite winter activity. Seed Savers Exchange is a tax-exempt 501(c) 3 non-profit organization dedicated to the preservation of heirloom seeds. (For informational purposes only. Does not indicate endorsement.)

<https://www.seedsavers.org/>

**2) Force bulbs.** Daffodils, Tulips and Hyacinth bring a glimmer of spring into the home. Forcing bulbs is easy to do if you follow the instructions in the publication from VA Tech, "*Fooling Mother Nature: Forcing Flower Bulbs for Indoor Bloom.*"

<https://www.pubs.ext.vt.edu/HORT/HORT-76/HORT-76.html>

**3) Start annuals from seeds.** The start to finish satisfaction of growing from seed is rewarding for gardeners. The variety of seeds, selection of heirlooms, cost savings and ability to control GMOs are also benefits. Click on the link below for an informative piece on starting seeds indoors from The University of Missouri.

<https://extension2.missouri.edu/g6570>

**4) Listen to gardening podcasts.** A podcast is a digital audio file for downloading to a computer or mobile device. Radio internet talk is often available as a series. There are numerous podcasts including "You Bet Your Garden."

<https://player.fm/featured/gardening>

**5) Create a log/sketch of your plants.** If you have saved plastic plant descriptor stakes, transpose that information to a journal and record the plants on your property. Add the botanical and scientific names and characteristics of the plants and perhaps a sketch.

<https://www.thespruce.com/scientific-names-of-plants-listed-alphabetically-4120570>

**6) Visit the State Arboretum of Virginia.** See Elaine Specht's article on pg. five.

<http://blandy.virginia.edu/arboretum/>

**7) Read a book.** *The Founding Gardeners* by Andrea Wulf, 2011, is a fascinating and well-researched historical and horticultural book. It examines the lives of George Washington, Thomas Jefferson, John Adams, and James Madison, in their roles as founding fathers and presidents, and in their shared passions of gardening, agriculture, botany, farming and landscape design.

<https://www.nytimes.com/2011/05/08/books/review/book-review-founding-gardeners-by-andrea-wulf.html>

**8) Decoupage clay pots.** This is a technique that uses paper cut-outs to decorate objects such as clay pots, furniture or trays. The cut-outs from magazines, photographs, napkins, etc. are glued on the pot and a protective coating is applied. This 13-minute video demonstrates the decoupage technique.

<https://www.bing.com/videos/search?q=how+to+decoupage+clay+pots+for+outdoor+use&view=detail&mid=52EE9F3785F47298BFA552EE9F3785F47298BFA5&FORM=VIRE>

**9) Maintain garden tools.** Upkeep of gardening tools prolongs their usability and functionality. Sharp clean garden tools will have a positive effect on your gardening efforts. Read more from our President Gail on page two.

<https://www.doityourself.com/stry/maintaingardentools>

**10) Learn about native plants.** Native plants are easy to grow and are already adapted to the local soil and climate. Natives help to restore habitat for wildlife by providing food and shelter. An individual membership of The Virginia Native Plant Society is just \$30.

<https://www.dcr.virginia.gov/natural-heritage/document/pied-nat-plants.pdf>

<https://vnps.org/>