

NORTHERN SHENANDOAH VALLEY MASTER GARDENER ASSOCIATION NEWS

UPCOMING MONTHLY MEETINGS

- **Sunday, May 21, 4pm, Belle Grove Plantation Barn**, Myron Kremer, Stone Mason, HardscapingStone, will talk about and demonstrate stonework in the garden outside the barn in the parking lot following the business portion of the Association Meeting. Please remember to wear your nametag/badge, and bring a dish, dessert, or finger foods to share.

Special Request: Please bring all **Intern badges** to the meeting and turn in to Sharon Bradshaw as they will be needed soon! Also, Sharon is collecting soup sized cans, empty toilet paper rolls & empty paper towel rolls for GardenFest Children's Activities.

Directions to Belle Grove 336 Belle Grove Rd, Middletown, from Winchester:

Merge onto I-81 S toward Roanoke (11.02 miles).

Take the VA-627 exit, EXIT 302, toward Middletown.

Turn right onto Reliance Rd/VA-627.

Turn left onto Main St/US-11 S. Continue to follow US-11 S. (2.03 miles)

Turn right onto Belle Grove Rd/VA-727.

Belle Grove Rd is just past Long Meadows Ln

If you reach Water Plant Rd you've gone about 0.6 miles too far

If you reach Meadow Mills Rd you've gone about 0.1 miles too far

Directions to Belle Grove 336 Belle Grove Rd, Middletown, from Woodstock:

Start out going north on S Main St/US-11 N toward Valley Vista Dr.

Continue to follow US-11 N. (12.45 miles)

Turn left onto N Massanutten St/US-11 N/VA-55.

Continue to follow N Massanutten St which becomes US-11 N.

Turn left onto Belle Grove Rd/VA-727.

Belle Grove Rd is 0.6 miles past Water Plant Rd

If you reach Long Meadows Ln you've gone a little too far

If you reach Meadow Mills Rd you've gone about 0.1 miles too far

- **Sunday, June 11, 4pm, Birdsong Pleasure Garden**, Page County outdoors. Tom & Lesley Mack will give a tour and talk about Birdsong Pleasure Garden
- **Sunday, July 16, 4pm, Blandy Library**, Paula Brownlee, Fall/Winter plantings
- **Sunday, August 20, 4pm, Mid-Atlantic Farm Credit**, French Price, Shenandoah Valley Farm to Table, Buy Fresh, Buy Local
- **Sunday, September 17, 4pm, Shenandoah University Cool Spring Campus**, Gene Lewis, Going native process & research at Cool Spring Campus
- **Sunday, October 15, 4pm, Weber's Nursery, Frederick**, indoors/outdoors. Peter Weber Right tree, right place
- **Sunday, November 2pm, 11/19, Warren County Govt Center**, President/Volunteer Coordinator, Election/Business Meeting

UPCOMING EVENTS

- **Sat. & Sun., May 6 & 7, Wildflower Weekend at Shenandoah National Park.** Appreciate the diversity of wildflowers growing in the Blue Ridge. More than 1,300 species of plants thrive in Shenandoah National Park, a haven for native woodland wildflowers. Choose from among many activities at the Park website, <http://www.nps.gov/shen/planyourvisit/event-details.htm?eventID=3747987-307230>
- **Sunday, May 21, 2pm, Belle Grove Plantation, Garden Fest meeting**

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- **Sunday, May 28, Belle Grove Barn Series: Special Gardens for Small Spaces** (\$25 per person)
- **Saturday, June 3, 2pm, Belle Grove Plantation, Garden Fest**
- **Sunday, June 18, Belle Grove Barn Series: Sauces Dips & Pico de Gallo** (\$25 per person)
- **June 22-25, the 2017 Master Gardener College at Virginia Tech** Enrollment will soon open. More information, including the curriculum, is at <https://drive.google.com/file/d/0B08Q7snDJsYvSkJncVY5QTRhb3c/view>
- **Sunday, July 9, Belle Grove Barn Series: Edible Herbs & Soft Fruits of the Belle Grove Garden** (\$25 per person)
- **Sunday, August 6, Belle Grove Barn Series: Air Plants: Those Tillandsia** (\$30 per person — \$25 class; \$5 supplies)
- **Sunday, September 10, Belle Grove Barn Series: Lavender: Crafting & Growing** (\$25 per person)
- **Sunday, October 22, Belle Grove Barn Series: Williamsburg Holiday Display** (\$30 per person — \$25 for class; \$5 for supplies)

MASTER GARDENER CLASS OF 2017 SCHEDULE by Sharon Bradshaw Shenandoah County, VCE Classroom

- May 9:** Volunteerism: NSVMGA Committee leads and Unit project leads
Youth in Horticulture, Carol Nansel, Helen Lake and Lynn Hoffman – Junior MGs
- May 11:** Green Help Line Practicum
- May 16:** Green Help Line Practicum
Distribute Exams
- May 18:** Grade Exam: Management Team
- June 3:** Garden Fest and Graduation

TRAINEE CLASS OF 2017 by Sharon Bradshaw

The Trainees have become a cohesive group, working together to create a very impressive map of the New Market Rain Garden. In addition to working in the gardens themselves to locate and map individual plants, they have created a display panel to be on exhibit inside the library, along with a coded map, a plant list featuring both scientific and common names of each plant, a dichotomous guide, children's activity pages and a trifold take-away map for visitors to the site.

Of the last six classes, four will be Green Help Line practica sessions. Questions have been pulled from archived files of greenhelpline@gmail.com, chosen to feature a wide variety of local concerns, with editing to ensure anonymity and use of the current PMG. All those class lectures and Handbook readings will now be pulled together and put to use in practical applications.

2017 GARDENING SERIES AT NSV REGIONAL LIBRARIES by Sara Carp

Come learn from your fellow MGs. Entrance is free to all. For more information, contact sarigardens@gmail.com. You get MG education hours for attending any talks. or see (for the Handley series) or countylib.org (Shenandoah County series).

- **Frederick County/Handley Regional Libraries** <http://handley.libcal.com/event/2992655>
 - **Saturday, May 20 @ 2 pm:** *From Monticello to Your Backyard: Growing Your Own Historic Garden*, by Sari Carp

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- **Success in the Garden** Bowman Library, 871 Tasker Rd., Stephens City
 - **Saturday, June 10 @ 2 pm:** *I Love My New Home, But Where are the Flowers?*, by Anne Dewey-Balzhiser
 - **Saturday, July 8 @ 2 pm:** *Water Wise Gardening*, by Carolyn Wilson
 - **Saturday, August 12 @ 2 pm:** *Save Seeds, Save Money, and (Maybe) Save the Planet*, by Elaine Specht
 - **Saturday, September 9 @ 2 pm:** *How Not to See Your Neighbors: Successful Tree Screens*, by Sari Carp
- **Clarke County/Handley Regional Library System**
 - **Sustainability in the Garden** Barns of Rose Hill (sponsored by the library), 95 Chalmers Court, Berryville
 - **Saturday, July 15 @ 2 pm:** *Swat, Spray, Squash - or Smile? How I Learned to Love (Some) Garden Bugs*, by Pat Casey
 - **Saturday, October 21 @ 2 pm:** *Happy Soil, Happy Plants*, by Elaine Specht
- **Shenandoah County Library System**
 - **Adventures in Gardening** This series will alternate monthly between the main county library in Edinburg (514 Stoney Creek Blvd.) and the branch library in New Market (160 E Lee St.). Fort Valley Nursery has kindly agreed to donate topic- or season-appropriate plants to be raffled off as door prizes each month, and there will be monthly seed and seedling giveaways as well!
 - **Saturday, May 6 @ 3 pm (New Market):** *Swat, Spray, Squash - or Smile? How I Learned to Love (Some) Garden Bugs*, by Pat Casey
 - **Tuesday, June 6 @ 6:30 pm (Edinburg):** *Water Wisdom in the Garden - A How-to Guide for Saving Time, Money and H2O*, by Sarah Pak
 - **Saturday, July 1 @ 3 pm (New Market):** *Corhaven Graveyard: Using Plants as Tribute in an Historic Burial Ground for Enslaved African Americans*, by Sarah Kohrs
 - **Saturday, August 5 @ 10:30 am (Edinburg):** *Enjoying the Harvest: Choosing and Growing the Right Produce to Preserve*, by Stacey Morgan Smith
 - **Saturday, September 2 @ 3 pm (New Market):** *From Monticello to Your Backyard; Growing Your Own Historic Garden*, by Sari Carp
 - **Saturday, October 7 @ 10:30 am (Edinburg):** *Bring Your Containers Indoors! Grow Fresh Herbs, Greens and More for the Winter*, by Paula Brownlee
 - **Saturday, November 4 @ 3 pm (New Market):** *Happy Soil, Happy Plants*, by Elaine Specht
 - **Saturday, December 2 @ 10:30 am (Edinburg):** *Joy to Your Houseplants: Tips for the Holidays and Beyond*, by Carolyn Wilson

WINCHESTER JUNIOR MASTER GARDENER SCHEDULE by Lynn Hoffman

Date	Topic	Teacher
May 16	Herbs	Student Talks Ginny Smith Helen Lake
Week of May 22	plan on planting at the C-CAP garden.	Date depends on the weather.
May 23	Native Plants and Nature Walk at Westminster Canterbury	Frank Baxter
May 30	Submission and Review of Science Journals and Garden Talks	Lynn Hoffmann, Ginny Smith
June 3	Gardenfest and Jr. MG Display table Journals and Garden Talk Displays	

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GARDEN FEST by Cy Haley

Spring means the next item for NSVMGA members is Garden Fest. Remember, this is our general fund raiser for the year and we need all hands on deck. If you have not signed up to work in one or more areas please do so soon. If you are not sure where to volunteer, please let me know as we have several areas where you can help.

We will have a Garden Fest meeting at 2pm on May 21st in the Bell Grove barn before the Association meeting at 4pm. At the meeting we will also help prepare items for the Kid's Scavenger Hunt and workshops, so bring tin vegetable cans and toilet paper tubes. We will walk around the grounds and show where everything will be laid out.

If you have items for Second Hand Rose, you can drop them off at Belle Grove when Angie Hutchinson and her SHR group will be there be pricing items:

Wednesday, May 10th, 3:00 to 6:00 PM

Wednesday, May 17th, 3:00 to 6:00 PM

Saturday, May 20th, 2:00 to 4:00 PM

Tuesday, May 23rd, 3:00 to 6:00 PM

Please wipe down your items to save time for the SHR group.

Please label plants you bring for the plant sale with Stacey Smith's label format (see below). This will expedite set up on June 2nd. We will have a plant drop off area designated so no plants will be put in the plant sale area prior to Stacey's crew being there and ready to accept them.

We plan to start putting up the canopies at 10:00.

GARDEN FEST PLANT SALE by Stacey Morgan Smith

If your yard is starting to look like a small nursery, you aren't alone. NSVMGA members attended more than a dozen digging and potting parties this spring, as well as a couple of digs last fall. Because of our members' hard work at the parties and digging at their own homes, the Garden Fest Plant Sale will have a lot of old favorites and unique varieties.

This is a great year to attend if you collect Siberian Iris or daylilies. If you want pollinator plants, you'll find many nectar sources and host plants. The sale features an assortment of plants for your native, shade, sun, and drought-tolerant gardens, as well as mature specialties at bargain prices, including peonies and hellebores. Keep an eye on Facebook in May to learn more about the plants for sale. Some are in bloom now, and others' buds are about to open.



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Now that you've potted plants for sale, you just have to keep them alive and thriving for another month, and that means plant sitting. After the plants have spent a week or two in the shade recovering from transplant shock, it's time to move the sun lovers back to the sun.

As their roots fill the pots, those few cups of soil will quickly dry out, so you may need to water daily on warmer days. Of course, all that watering is leaching a lot of fertilizer out of your pots, so begin now with an every-other-week feeding schedule.

Deadhead gaillardia and plants blooming this month. Pinch back asters, mums, mints, and others to keep them compact. Maybe pinch back half of your bee balm in each pot. A great resource for what/when to pinch and deadhead is [The Well-Tended Perennial Garden](#) by Tracy DiSabato-Aust. Mary Craig shared this favorite book, which is written by a Master Gardener College speaker.

You can also start cleaning up the plants. Cut out dead, yellowing, or insect-damaged growth. You can remove bad damage now and do a quick spruce up before the sale, or you can wait



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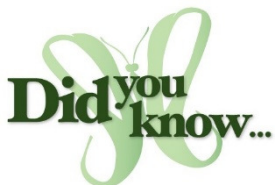
and do it all the last week or two of the month. Also remove any labels still on the pots to protect the nurseries that donated the pots and to avoid frustrating shoppers.

You should start making labels for your pots, and you have a few options. This is the first year with “packing-tape laminated” paper labels. The paper labels lets you provide more info for the customer, lets the Association save label pages to reduce work next year, and makes it possible for everyone to make labels even if they can’t make it to the meeting to pick up tags. You’ll receive another email later this week with more information, and you’ll get a demonstration at the May meeting. If you can’t print from home, send your info, and a member of the plant committee will make tags for you.

You can also label with craft sticks for herbs and veggies. Those are available for a couple dollars at stores, or you can pick them up at the meeting, along with the few remaining plastic labels from last year.

Finally, Garden Fest is never over! If your grow lights are lonely, consider starting perennial seeds now. You can plant them out later this summer and then pot up next spring for the 2018 sale. Prune and shape bushes now that you’d like to bring in the future. Take cuttings of your favorite plants to propagate. Talk with a member of the plant committee to get more information on how you can turn your vegetable garden into a nursery over winter.

Thank you to everyone who contributes to the effort with plants, labor, and time. The Garden Fest Plant Sale proceeds help fund the Association’s educational programs, both for its own membership and for the public, and without you, it would not succeed.



...THE DUTIES OF PROJECT LEADERS? By Susan Garrett

A Project Leader has the following duties:

1. **FOR A NEW PROJECT** proposed by a VCE-MG, the first step is to discuss the project with the County Coordinator to make sure it is in keeping with both VCE goals and the County or Unit needs and capabilities. The County Coordinator will determine whether the project should be a County or a Unit project.
 - a. If both the County Coordinator and the VCE-MG agree that the proposed project is appropriate and the MG proposing the project would be the appropriate project leader, the next step is to fill out a Project Application.
 - b. Prior to filling out the application, the Project Leader and County Coordinator must identify
 - i. The project name
 - ii. Project description
 - iii. Project date(s)
 - iv. Project supplies and funding requirements
 - v. Community partner(s)
 - vi. Responsibilities of both the community partner(s) and the NSVMGA
 - vii. ***(Note: The Project Leader should also make sure that the community partner understands that NSVMGA projects are approved for a year at a time and that the Association does not accept responsibility for future garden maintenance.)***
 - viii. Estimated personnel needs

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- c. A **Project Application Form** (available on VMS) should be completed by the Project Leader and submitted for approval as a VCE project to the County Coordinator, the Volunteer Coordinator, and the VCE Agent in turn.
2. **FOR A CONTINUING PROJECT**, a Project Leader may be recruited by the County Coordinator or at a County meeting, and the Project Application Form may be filled out by the County Coordinator.
3. **FOR EITHER A NEW OR CONTINUING PROJECT**, the Project Leader must
 - a. Identify and recruit personnel
 - b. Make sure the needed supplies are available
 - c. Assure that volunteers are scheduled so interns have an experienced MG partner and all time slots are filled
 - d. Confirm that the project is executed in adherence to VCE guidelines
 - e. Make sure appropriate clean-up takes place
 - f. Thank the volunteers
 - g. Evaluate the success of the project and determine whether it should be repeated
 - h. Make sure that any contacts generated by the project are reported on VMS

p.s. We are going to try to have a "Did You Know?" Column for each newsletter. If you have a question or concern or an issue that you think should be explained to the members, please let Susan Garret know at SusanSGarrettMG@gmail.com

PAGE COUNTY REPORT by Lesley Mack



Have you ever heard someone say, "A Seed is a Promise"? Well, think about it, all seeds have the 'promise' of making a plant similar to their parent. A seed that you can hold in your hand has the promise of making something as big as a tree. If you have ever held an acorn, an orange seed, or a tomato seed, you have held a potential tree or plant in your hand.

This is what the Page County Master Gardeners, were hoping the Shenandoah Elementary students and teachers, grades K-5, learned during their recent "Farm to Table" Day, when they received their free peat pot of seedlings. The Page County Master Gardeners prepared over 400 peat pots with two vegetable seeds planted in the soil, either bush cucumber or butternut squash.



Charlie and Robbin



Marcia



Tom with Excellent labels from Cheryl

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Last year, we worried that the seedlings would get too leggy before the students and teachers were able to plant their veggies outdoors. This year has been so warm that we were worried the seeds would not sprout fast enough, especially since it does not look as though we will have a last frost date in May. Thanks to Page County MG, Cheryl McDonald, Robbin Holland, Susan Finlay, Charlie Newton, Tom Mack, Marcia Kaetzel, and Kristin and Jeff Goulard for making an exceptional assembly line for filling the peat pots, labeling boxes, stuffing the plastic bags, and planting the seeds in just a couple of hours.

Thanks to Kristin and Jeff for watering and watching the hundreds of pots. We should take a trip up to their place on the mountain. Jeff is a fabulous woodworker and has made a wonderful greenhouse for Kristin.



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SHENANDOAH COUNTY REPORT by Sharon Bradshaw

April has been a busy month for MGs in Shenandoah County. We provided an information table at Natural Art Garden Center for the county's annual Artisan Trail open house weekend. The same Saturday was our first Woodstock Lowe's Help Desk. We were pleased with the number of contacts and their interest in learning more about our offerings.

Our five-part series of Growing Groceries workshops, within the Woodstock Community Garden project, is coming to an end. Participants have been encouraged to return to the onsite raised planting beds throughout the summer to weed and to help harvest the ripe vegetables when they are ready. Attendance was small but enthusiastic; we'll determine final success as the growing season continues.

Corhaven Graveyard, the site of the Association's April monthly meeting continues to attract visitors. On May 9, a group of families with young children will work together with several MGs to create a Monarch Way Station. The inspiration for the Way Station was the final presentation at our Symposium on April 1.

FREDERICK COUNTY REPORT by Helen Lake

Looking at the NSVMGA calendar on VMS you get the idea that all of us are putting in the MG hours while having a great time at so many different events and venues.

May will be bustling with events that will get our volunteers in front of the public, like the Old Town Farmer's Market and Lowe's Help Table in Winchester. I'm sure there are still some slots open for you to sign up and join the comraderie that comes with sharing time with fellow MGers and an interested public wanting to know more about GARDENING or sharing their stories about their successes and failures.

The Greenline Workshop, scheduled for Monday, May8, still has some slots open for anyone in NSVMGA to sign up on VMS calendar (under View all Events). For anyone working Help Tables or Greenlines, this workshop will be a great way to gain new insights into the resources available to all of us either online or the references available at our Extension offices. There will also be time allocated to discussing (topic led by Mark Sutphin, our Extension Agent) interacting with the public at person to person events.

Several Master Gardeners in Frederick County have hosted potting parties which made for some wonderful time spent together digging, potting up, and taking home to baby sit a growing number (pardon the pun) of plants to be sold off at Gardenfest. Thank you to our hosts for sharing with the Association your wonderful plants and opening up your gardens and homes.

Frederick will be hosting the monthly meeting at Belle Grove and hearing Myron Kremer, a master Stonemason. Myron is a friend and neighbor and a true artist of hardscapes. Psst, a little secret? Myron is a gardener too!

The Fremont Street Nursery/Timbrook Community Garden Project enters its second year this month with the addition of a new 1,300 square foot garden of raised beds at the Winchester school. Funds donated by the United Way paved the way for the new garden which will include a contemplative space, shaded tree bench seating, a birdhouse trellis, a children's gazebo, a small water feature and 22 raised beds.

Food grown at the school will be donated to Fremont families and to the nearby Highland Food Pantry. In 2016, the students donated more than 250 pounds of produce from one small plot at Timbrook Garden. The goal for 2017 is to increase the volume and variety of produce grown and to increase the focus on learning assessments.

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The master gardener team, led by 2016 class member Mary Turner, includes Nina Hale, Bob Gail, Carolyn Rutherford, and Carroll Walker, all from the Class of 2016, as well as Frederick County veterans John Kummer, Janet Keithley, Karen Brill and Mary Flagg. In addition, two members of the 2017 class, two others in the 2016 class, and three community members who are not (yet) master gardeners all have expressed interest in working on the projects. While most of the produce will be grown at the school, the team will use spaces at Timbrook Community Garden to help the students create a pollinator garden and a melon patch.



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PUBLICITY by Lynn Hoffman

Spring and summer are our busiest time of year. We have Farmers Markets, Lowes Help Desk, Rain Gardens, Edinburg Mill events, Belle Grove Gardens, Library Talks, etc. But all these great programs need to be advertised. As a non-profit, our limited funds restrict our spending on getting the word out to the community. We depend on advertising by our members. That means you! We need you to email friends with our flyers, tell a neighbor or leave flyers at the local supermarket or post office. If your child has friends and we have a kids event, let them know. Please help, shout it out, we depend on you.

EDUCATION COMMITTEE by Kris Behrends

It's hard to believe May is here already! The Education Committee has been working hard to provide you with educational opportunities. There were two workshops in the winter--Fitness for Gardeners and Pruning with two more this fall--Photography II and Mushroom ID Walk. Not only that but there have been successful Library Series presentations at libraries in four counties for both the public and Master Gardeners! More are scheduled each month through November (you can find out what is offered when and where on the VMS calendar)! Lots of opportunities to add to your ever-expanding knowledge!

The Education Committee will be meeting soon to review the first half of 2017 and to prepare for 2018! If you have suggestions for workshops, please do not hesitate to contact me or Sari Carp especially while we're in the planning phase for next year.

What do you want to learn about? Plant ID? How to create PowerPoint presentations? Creating bonsai? Those are just some of the ideas we have received.

We look forward to receiving your ideas as well as continuing to present opportunities for continuing education!

SCHOLARSHIP COMMITTEE by Lynn Hoffman

We have selected two students for the 2017 High School Memorial Scholarship. Michaela Shell from James Wood H.S., Frederick County, and Cameron Terzian, Clarke County H.S., are the two young ladies who will be receiving \$500 each to be used toward college costs. These students were outstanding academically and showed interest in pursuing a career in horticulture/science. They were very active in high school volunteering in many organizations.

This scholarship was first presented in 2015. We have added to the scholarship fund each year, and we look forward to continuing to support our local students in years to come.

I want to thank the committee and all the members that contribute to the scholarship fund and the programs that donate to the fund. We couldn't do it with you.

MG KIDS by Lynn Hoffman

We are all so happy spring is here and we are getting some rain. So the old cliché goes "April Showers bring May flowers" and then kids ask, "What do May flowers bring?" So the gardener in me ponders until they shout out, "Pilgrims!" Oh my—to be in 4th grade again.

The Jr MG program is getting some great support from a Frederick County Business, American Woodmark. We were looking for help to cut down trees and shrubs in the CCAP garden and

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had to get some quotes for tree trimmers to come in. Our lowest bid was \$550 to cut and chip the tree stump. As MGs we try to do as much on our own as possible, but cutting trees that overhang sheds are a little beyond our expertise. Luckily, Bob Gail suggested asking American Woodmark for a grant and we sent in a letter describing our dilemma.

Two week ago we got the great news that they reviewed our request and thought it was a worthwhile cause and April 27th they gave us a check for \$550 to take care of the infringing trees. I am so thankful for their generosity and Bob's great suggestion.

We have been blessed over the years with support of local (and internet) businesses. Weber's Nursery, Southern States, Blandy, Johnny's Seeds and Burpee have all help support our program. But we could not do this program without the support of the Master Gardeners and all the time and effort they put into teaching and helping the kids help the CCAP clients.

We are going on 8 years, (unless my math is wrong). When you think about volunteering your time, there is nothing more lasting than teaching a child. They will remember! So please think about volunteering for CCAP Homeschool programs, Green Wood Mill Elementary Garden Club, and don't forget about the Timbrook Community Gardens. Mary Turner would love to have some help and show you around the gardens.

A HUMBLE THANKS from Mark Sutphin

Hello to all of you wonderful Extension Master Gardener volunteers serving the Northern Shenandoah Valley! In light of National Volunteer Week, April 23 - 29, I want to offer each of you my sincerest THANK YOU for the great work that you are doing throughout the counties of Clarke, Frederick, Page, Shenandoah, and Warren. I wish I had the resources to better show my appreciation for your incredibly hard work. Fortunately, I think many of you are like me, and find great satisfaction in the work we do and seeing the lives we change. This is the true reward we seek.

I will offer you these astonishing figures. Over the last five years, YOU, the Master Gardener volunteers in the Northern Shenandoah Valley have reached over 33,000 people with educational information related to horticultural and environmental best management practices. While volunteering for Virginia Cooperative Extension, you have contributed almost 53,000 volunteer and continuing education hours. These hours are valued at over \$1.25 million. That doesn't even take into account the impact your programs and efforts have had on the individuals that you reached, it is solely a valuation of your time. I am in awe, and very humbled by your dedication.

I continue to be astonished at all of the great things you are doing in our local communities. Keep up the great work and please accept my meager offering of thanks for all that you do!

REFLECTIONS ON MASTER GARDENER COLLEGE 2016 assembled by Helen Lake

[Master Gardener College 2017 is next month. To remind you of what a great opportunity this is, we are repeating what last year's attendees wrote about their experiences.]

Eight Master Gardeners from NSVMGA attended MG College at Virginia Tech last year. Most had participated in previous MG Colleges and came prepared for the rhythms of what was to follow: walking, sleeping in college dorms, eating in the huge (huuuge) cafeteria, being barraged by a lot of information, and being surrounded by over two hundred fellow Master Gardeners. As always, we came away with different experiences. This year, we'd like to share some of those experiences with you. The following short stories from several of the attendees will give you a snapshot of what happens at MG College.

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Carolyn Wilson– “Thru the Years”

I have been to 10 MG Colleges over the past 14 years. Each one has been a great experience with a wide range of workshops and lectures to choose from. I learn something new and interesting every time. I especially enjoy the local private garden tours and an evening spent wandering through the beautiful Hahn Gardens. However, the most memorable aspect for me is the wonderful comradery between our fellow MGs, both with our group and MGs from other units. It's a wonderful bonding time. Next year will be the 30th anniversary of the MG College and they are planning some special events. (However, when I told Dave Close that I heard there might be fireworks, he just laughed). I hope that you will attend MG College next year. I certainly plan to be there.

Stacey Smith “My First Master Gardener’s College”

I have wanted to go to Master Gardener College ever since Virginia Tech Alumni Magazine included an article on the event years ago. This year I finally made it!

It was a great experience from start to finish. Registration was smooth and easy to do online, and I was able to sign up for all of the classes I wanted. The directions to get to where we needed to be for parking, field trips, and registration were spot on. The shuttle from the parking lot to the residence hall was quick, and volunteers were there to help load and unload bags. Check-in took two minutes, and I received a folder full of helpful info, a nametag, an access/food card, and a VCEMG button (for first timers). For those who chose to walk to the classes, we saw plenty of signs to help navigate. There was little chance of getting lost!

Dining was “all you can eat,” and there were plenty of options. In 2015, VT’s Dining Services were voted Number 3 in the nation for “Best Campus Food” by the Princeton Review, and they were in the top one or two in 5 other rankings. The beef barbacoa was wonderful! (Visit this link to see some of the options available, and you can also calculate the nutrition information. <http://foodpro.dsa.vt.edu/FoodPro.NET/shortmenu.aspx?sName=Virginia+Tech+Dining+Service&locationNum=15&locationName=D2+AT+DIETRICK+HALL&naFlag=1>)

The residence hall rooms were comfortable, with air conditioning and, if selected, in-room bathrooms. When my first room’s AC didn’t work, I called the number in our welcome packet, and within 10 minutes I was in a new room. Follow Cy’s recommendation to bring a foam pad or mattress cover. The mattresses are covered in vinyl, and it helps to cut down on annoying noises every time you move. (I didn’t bring one, but Carolyn looked out for me and brought a spare.) The provided sheets, pillows, towels, and blankets are really thin. If you care about comfort, you may want to bring your own if you have room in your luggage. I brought a towel and pillow, but the sheets were ok for a few nights. (I plan to keep an eye out for end-of-season sales on XL twin sheets and buy a set just for MG College.) We did have a midnight fire alarm interruption thanks to some kids in town for a camp, but that just helped contribute to the college experience.

We enjoyed great speakers, classes, and garden tours. A few literally wrote the book on their topics (one wrote a new section in the 2016 MG handbook). Spending time with knowledgeable people who have the same interests was wonderful. Even better, I got to know our own members better during breaks and meals. We ate together and walked to classes together. We also toured the Hahn Horticultural Gardens twice, and, as shown, we had a lot of fun! I hope even more of us can make the trip in 2017!

Cy Haley- “I’m a Thief!”

Yes, I admit it, I steal ideas whenever I go to MG College. Going on any tour or taking any workshop at MG College will give you exposure to many things you may not have seen or

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experienced before. Some of us collect plants and revel in the many specimens we see during garden tours or classes around the VT campus, then we order or barter for the plants. I, however, have a love of yard art and growing forms. I take pictures of things that peak my interest and I steal the ideas like these from this year's MG College:

- Put interesting rocks on a painted pedestal. How easy is that for adding interest to your garden and how did I not think of that?
- Putting shelving in your front window to show off those beautiful house plants?
- Those of you that have been to my house know I have started putting goats and chickens in the yard, now I need to add a cow. Better yet, a cow with a chicken on it!
- And who ever thought of putting a tomato cage around a squash plant is a genius!
- Now for the piece de resistance...these chairs were all over VT's Hahn Gardens and at some of the garden tour homes so of course I had to get pictures for Hubby so he can make me some.

It's amazing what you learn, see, and get to experience at MG College. It's a lot of instruction but also a lot of fun. You get to know each other better as well as meeting new MGs.

Susan Garrett- "Can't walk far? Worry about dorm beds? No problem!"

One of the things I love about MG College is that persons of every activity level are welcome. For the walkers, there is a beautiful campus to be experienced during the walks to and from class, and for bikers, it is a bike-friendly place.

But for those of us with bad backs, tricky knees, or other mobility issues--well, there is room for us as well. MG College has three shuttles driven by volunteers that run between the dorms, the dining hall, and the classrooms. I can't walk far, but I have had a wonderful time at MG College for the last two years, and found I can absolutely rely on the shuttles to get me where I need to go. If you have a DMV Handicapped parking permit, there are also many places to park around campus.

Bad backs are not fun, but I have also discovered how to sleep well in a dorm room. The twin mattresses are plastic-covered, but quite firm. I bring a 1 inch memory foam mattress-topper (cheap at Target and similar stores), cover it with my own flat, folded over queen sheet or a mattress cover, and put the dorm sheets on top. I also bring my own pillow, and, *voila*, I sleep like a baby.

MG College is for everyone--and no matter your preferred activity level or physical abilities, I hope you will consider attending some year.

Suzanne Boag "Master Gardeners in Motion!"

Do you like action? Do you like to learn by doing? Master Gardener College offers an array of activities for people who want to get out and explore Blacksburg or learn how to do something garden-centered and hands-on. Workshops and tours offered this year included: kayaking the New River, Stadium Woods Service Project removing non-native invasive species, Gardens of the New River Valley Tour (Delbert Jones), Landscape Analysis, From Hop Yard to Hoop Houses (Holly Scoggins), Hiking in the New River Valley, Beliveau Vineyards & Winery Tour, Tree Budding and Grafting Workshop, Sun Red Tomatoes Tour, VT Greenhouses & Hahn Horticultural Gardens Tour. Past activities also included Bicycling Scenic Tour, Visit to Riverbend Commercial Nursery, and a Visit to a Private Hosta & Daylily Grower. This year's hands-on classes included: Living Flower Arrangements with Bulb Layering Hands-on and Fact or Fiction as Seen on TV. In the past, hands-on classes have been offered on Plant

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Propagation, Canning, Hybridizing Petunias, and more. For the past couple of years, MG College has offered an evening trip to Floyd, Home of Blue Grass Music, and I can testify to the rollicking return trip to VT, with music blaring and the whole busload of MGs singing along to, "Amie, Whatcha Wanta Do?" after being immersed in Floyd's tradition of Blue Grass Music on Fridays.

Master Gardener College is so much more than just lectures, so if you like action and hand-on activities, you will enjoy the wide selection of workshops, classes and tours offered to MGs!

Helen Lake- "A time of reunion and discovery"

This was my third year attending MG College. I anticipated reuniting with Master Gardeners from different units that I have sat beside

- in vans driving to Floyd to see wonderful community/private gardens or enjoy bluegrass music on Friday night
- at sessions where we discovered similar passions
- over a glass of wine during social hour at the atrium or a chance encounter at one of the lounge areas at the dorm

Our fellow Master Gardeners are involved in so many interesting projects throughout the state! This year, a particular one grabbed my attention, "Share the Spare", a program by the New River Valley Master Gardeners. They advertise for the public to drop off extra produce folks may have raised in their gardens at the MG Table at the Blacksburg Farmers Market distribute it to local food banks. And they ask the vendors at the same farmers market to donate the produce that didn't sell that day to Share the Spare. It makes me think, can't we try something like this at one of our county farmer market tables? For those that know me well, it doesn't take much for me to get me excited at trying something new and 'out of the box'. There is lots to get inspired by between the programs of our MG units statewide and the amazing span of ongoing programs at Virginia Tech and in the Extension Program.

Each year I come away impressed at the caliber of our fellow Virginia Master Gardeners and the magnitude of ways we all strive to make a difference in our communities.

THE SAGA OF THE GIRLS: GUIDE DOG NEEDED? by Cy Haley

In the ongoing saga of raising back yard chickens (which turn into pets), when the girls start to grow old, like us, certain parts begin to fail. Smokey, who recently turned seven, has begun losing her eyesight. Taking her to the ophthalmologist doesn't seem like a practical option, so I have started thinking outside the box, literally, since she doesn't want to hang out in the coop all day. She can still hear but she has trouble determining which direction the sound is coming from. Her coop mate, Bernie, doesn't have much sympathy for Smokey and heads out on her daily hunt for bugs leaving Smokey behind. If Bernie would just keep clucking Smokey would be able to follow her around, but Bernie is a serious bug hunter and doesn't have time to talk to her friend constantly. So that leaves me, and, since I work, I can't keep Smokey on the move and protected. Hence the need for a guide dog. Sam, our eleven year old mutt is pretty good at hanging out with Smokey most of the day, but when it gets hot Sammy has a love of air conditioning and heads into the house to keep cool. I can't blame her since it's been miserably humid and hot the last couple of days.

Now I'm left with the dilemma of keeping them in the run all day and staying protected but bored or letting them out and hoping for the best. I guess bored will have to be their outcome for the time being but I still think there is a small dog longing to be a guide dog. I can see it now, Smokey with a leash attached to a dog who will walk beside her and watch out for the dreaded

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haw. However, a squirrel might make a visit to our yard. That scenario probably wouldn't play out very well for a chicken tethered to a dog. Oh well, internment in the run it is.

EDITOR'S CORNER by Richard Stromberg

In the September, 2015 issue of this newsletter I reported Great Ash Sphinx caterpillars (*Sphinx chersis*) devouring the leaves of our Fringe Tree. They resemble tomato hornworms. It was blooming when I bought the tree at the Blandy Garden Fair in 2014 and had bloomed again in



the spring of 2015. I hoped the few leaves left on the tree after I picked off the caterpillars would carry it through to the next year. I had lots of leaves in 2016, but I saw only two flowers. Good news, the little tree is full of dangling, white flowers this year.



May, 2017