

A detailed black and white line drawing of a grapevine with several clusters of grapes and large, textured leaves. The drawing is positioned at the top left of the page, partially overlapping the title.

GRAPEVINE



New River Valley Master Gardener Association Newsletter

January 2015

January meeting:

On the 15th at the Gov't Center at 6:30 pm. Talk - "Every Thing is Coming up Roses" by Linda Fiedler , former member.

Election results!! Our new officers...

President - Mo Fallon

VP- Susan Lockwood

Secretary-Beth Kirby

Treasurer-Susan Eifried

Members at large:

Evelyn Melia,
Annette Perry,
Nina Templeton



Bald Cypress knees at First Landing State Park, Virginia Beach

A Note from our new Master Gardener Coordinator

Hello! My name is Leslie Mathews and I am so happy to be your new Master Gardener Coordinator. I am really looking forward to getting to know all of you, and I want to share a little bit about me.

I am a Nutmegger – born and raised in West Hartford, Connecticut, and I've heard we may have some other New Englanders here in the beautiful Blue Ridge. My family and I moved to Blacksburg from Santa Barbara, CA about three years ago, and I love it here. The mountains remind me of the rolling hills of the Connecticut River Valley. I come to you from a background of academic librarianship, having worked in libraries in Connecticut, Georgia and California. As a reference librarian, I have focused on helping people with their research, doing marketing and outreach, and essentially trying to assist people in being successful with whatever they want to accomplish. Librarians have to have a great interest in the world around them, as well as a desire to learn continually. We also have to know who to ask and what sources to consult when we don't know the answers. As I begin my work here, I will be calling on all of you to share your knowledge and expertise with me so that I can be the best coordinator I can and help our wonderful program grow and flourish.

I have a Bachelor's Degree in English Language and Literature from Smith College in Northampton, MA, a Master's in Library and Information Science from Simmons College in Boston, and a Master's in Graphic/Information Design from Central Connecticut State University in New Britain, CT. While I don't have a background in horticulture, I have a great love of nature and being outside and a passion for our environment. I have a son who is almost four who loves to go to the Hahn garden with me, and I am so proud to tell him that my new job means that I will get to work with gardeners who grow wonderful food, beautiful plants, and gardens to help our environment, and who help others do the same. In my spare time, I like to do watercolor painting, practice tai chi, play tennis, and just spend time with my son outside, even if it's snowing! Well, especially if it's snowing.

In my life, I am focused on planting seeds of kindness. I am so thrilled that my work will allow me to help others plant literal seeds that will in turn yield not only vegetables, fruits, flowers, plants, and trees, but will also facilitate community growth and spirit. Again, I'm looking forward to meeting all of you and I am grateful for the opportunity to work with you as your New River Valley Master Gardener Coordinator. My eMail address is lesliem2@exchange.vt.edu.



From the Board

Recently the folks at the Hahn Hort Garden requested some financial help from NRVMGGA in sponsoring two out of town speakers. The board voted to sponsor (one of the two)- an educational seminar(s) that the Hahn Horticultural Garden is bringing to the Virginia Tech campus. Our last sponsored speaker was a number of years ago; and was an interesting talk on boxwood disease at Monticello and the problems with maintaining a formal garden with a disease prone plant. . .

In March 2015 (date, time and location) to be announced) we will be sponsoring a talk entitled "Design Principles Of The Pros That Can Be Applied To The Home Landscape, A Design Talk". The speaker is Dan Benarcik, (<http://www.danbenarcik.com>) horticulturist at Chanticleer Garden . The board voted to give \$250 to help bring this renowned speaker to the Va Tech campus. The Extension Office has approved these volunteer hours as "educational". One of the primary missions of Master Gardeners is to bring education to our community. We hope you will share in our pride to be a partner in bringing Dan Benarcik to the New River Valley and bring your gardening friends. We will make sure it is advertised statewide to all of our fellow Master Gardeners. Tickets will be discounted for Friends of the Hahn as well as Master Gardeners.

Editors note: if you have never been to Chanticleer Garden, you need to go. It is an amazing place. And yes you can get landscaping ideas for your humble home garden from a visit. The garden consists of about six mini-gardens with a different theme to each area; it is not a lavish, wonderful, expanse of formal beds like many public gardens are.

Note: the other seminar will be on Jan. 22. This one will feature Peter Hatch, former director of gardens and grounds at Monticello. Smithfield Plantation is assisting in sponsoring that event.

AND,....

Our always active Beth Umberger is fielding ideas to having another speaker visit us to address the increasingly discussed topic of stormwater runoff. As you may have heard, the town of Blacksburg is now charging fees for stormwater and offering credits for property owners that are collecting run-off. Our recent hosting of rain barrel workshops fall right in step with our continual promotion of good water stewardship. Beth might have us visit a rain garden in person, or lasso someone to do a talk, or have a joint meeting with the Master Naturalists. . There is the potential to incorporate information on soils and invasives if we choose. We hope to join forces with other groups that are interested, such as the Master Naturalists and Sustainable Blacksburg. If you have any input, please express your ideas and opinions to either Beth fredandbeth@verizon.net or myself lbrammer@vt.edu.

Submitted by Lynn Brammer



Above:
Approaching the
Manor House

Left
Formal Garden

Travels with Charles

The three of us (Erica Jones, her spouse and Charles-the-dog) took a slightly delayed trip to the eastern shore of Virginia immediately after Christmas. We were going to go right after Thanksgiving but a broken wrist put a damper on that.

In any case, on the way back from staying at First Landing State Park we stumbled on Chippokes Plantation State Park; and yes it really is a plantation. The land was donated to the state of Virginia by one Mrs. Stewart to help preserve the work she and her husband did on the plantation.

One of the many houses on the grounds was built mid 1800's (stucco applied to brick on the front!) and had an impressive formal garden in the rear of the house. Tours of the mansion are available on weekends during the more normal tourist season.; and anytime to groups of 10 or more.

After parking and walking towards the River house (this is a smaller, older house) and past this to the Chippokes Mansion it is hard to miss the line of *Juniper virginiana* – i.e. red cedars. These are noble relatives to all those shrubby blobs you see growing in abandoned or poorly mowed pastures all over Virginia. These specimens are worthy a slot in the book “Magnificent Trees of Virginia”. They obviously were deliberately planted as they are in a line at even spacing. Old red cedars develop a very nice form!

The front of the mansion is not very noteworthy (being winter probably did not help), but look around back. Some distance from the back door is a formal garden consisting of American boxwood and Rhododendrons, crepe myrtle and *Ilex opaca* (American holly). The combination of slinky bare branches, rounded dark green, big leaved dark green, and very tall red berries was quite nice. Oh, and in the corners were a pink and a red very single (not double) camellia in full blast. I will have to go back during the growing season to see what else is there.

The garden did lose a lot of its formality, in my book, given the age and size of the residents, and height of the hollies in particular. The crepe myrtles had been very nicely pruned to a fairly uniform height and the evergreens were BIG. The hollies had been left more so to do their thing and they varied much more in shape and height.

One other garden activity you can do there is to take a look at the agricultural museum; especially the hand tools. The antique tractors are not bad, either. This is one of the better Ag museums I have seen.

To get to Chippokes you can take the southern route (460 east) or get yourself to Jamestown via I64 and take the (free!) ferry across the James which puts you very close to the park.



The author chilling out with his person

This and That

Being the new year and having a little space to fill, I am going to make a stab at some ideas for (mostly gardening) New Years Resolutions.

1. Write something for the Grapevine. Or your local newsletter. It's not hard; honest! And practice makes perfect (or well, better).
2. Plan on planting a new-to-you flowering plant or vegetable or herb. Some of them will be flops, but you might find something you really like. For years I avoided green peas, but about three years ago planted some snap peas and I have been a convert since. This past year it was a new "flavor" of basil. Branch out! Try something new!
3. Give a stab at trying to have something flowering, or a vegetable every month of the year. The flowers I've been trying which have blooms in the winter months (pansies, crocus and hardy cyclamen bulbs) have filled those bleak spots on the calendar. The vegetables might involve a lot of mulch or a cold frame. Branch out! Give it a stab! Do you like parsnips? Spinach takes a mountain of abuse, too.
4. Splurge and buy yourself one thing new this year to make gardening easier. Hey, it might just be a new pair of leather work gloves. Last year I tried one of those pre-coiled small diameter hoses. Somewhat of a flop for range of use, I will admit; but they do store nicely in between uses. It worked well when I did not have to stretch it out too far.
5. Figure out something useful to do with your old Christmas tree and/or other greens from decorations. I'm thinking cut up branches for mulch – I just found some poorly mulched areas. Come spring will have needles on the ground and toss the branches? I hope.

Happy gardening, Erica

New River Valley Master Gardeners Association



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Grapevine:

The New River Valley Master Gardener Association is a nonprofit organization working in conjunction with the Montgomery County Virginia Cooperative Extension Office to bring horticultural education and enjoyment to people in the New River Valley.

As Master Gardeners we are committed to learning about gardening and communicating our knowledge of gardening to others. We direct our efforts to creating and maintaining an awareness of the need for intelligent stewardship of the environment.

Share your know-how and enthusiasm for gardening in the *Grapevine*!

All NRVMA members are welcome to contribute articles and other materials for publication in the *Grapevine*. We welcome project highlights, photos, book reviews, gardening tips, event announcements, stories on garden visits, how-tos, favorite recipes, and other garden-related items for publication in the *Grapevine*. And, remember, time spent researching and writing articles counts toward your Service Activity hours.

Please send your submissions for the *Grapevine* to Cheryl Heisey at rogersmca@verizon.net. The deadline for submission for the next edition is the 22nd.

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