



GRAPEVINE

New River Valley Master Gardener Association

March 2016

Spring!

To the right—Alleghany pachysandra. I bought this from one of last year's donors for our plant sale - Take It Outside in Pembroke.

It is growing on the west side of the house underneath a evergreen holly shrub. It does not keep leaves over the winter in colder climate but it did for me (zone 5++ ? 6—?).

Below is a deciduous magnolia which seem to be persevering in spite of the odd weather.





An amusing style of blooming—clumps along larger branches.

And some orchids get with the spring thing, too



Hellebore. After this bumpy spring, they STILL bloomed!



Some ongoing Projects

We have some fun projects going on in our four counties. A lot of MGers have found picking a good project is the key for them to stay in the program and being a happy volunteer. Three project approaches are 1) start your own project 2) join an ongoing meet-every-week type or 3) help out at the one time deals. The better organized things are they happier you will be (unless you do your own thing and then you have to deal with yourself alone!). A volunteer hint – if you are picky about how things get organized and done, you might do better to start your own project. If you are one of those marvelous types that will lift, tote and push when someone tells you to, keep helping with other projects.

Here are some brief descriptions for projects from folks who contacted me.

At the Hahn Horticulture Garden they have an on-going Jr MG program which runs during the school year with weekly two hour meetings. Currently there are 11 kids in it; ages average about 10. During the last two meeting times they met they learned about bugs, constructed “bug suckers” to help catch insects and identify them, and a VT graduate student brought his “bugs” to show them. Their handbooks and the leaders' books contain a lot of substance. Chapters include plant growth and development, soil and water, ecology and environmental horticulture, insects and diseases, landscape horticulture, fruits and nuts, vegetables and herbs, and finally, life skills and career exploration. When chapters/units are completed they receive badges. The group also chooses a community service project to do. They often give produce and flowers from their raised beds to nursing homes (flowers) and Share the Spare (vegetables).

Bob and Susan Lockwood are in their fifth year of helping with this program. Five years probably means they have the kinks mostly ironed out. JrMG comes with excellent student and leader material so when you get desperate for something to do just look in the handbook.

Floyd High School has a history of doing a lot fun horticultural stuff and have been recipients of our community grants. A recent session there was about grafting fruit trees with a demonstration by Jon Vest. Gwen Douglas can tell you more about goings on there.

The Christiansburg library (my project) maintains containers on the patio (herbs, landscaping, flowers and a water garden), and has educational sessions at various times for both adults and children. My whole involvement there started when the head librarian told me she liked water lilies.

This spring the library organized a “Welcome Spring” day and we had about 30 participants. Last fall I did a “Do NOT Plant These in YOUR Garden” session for adults. Afterwards I tried to get them to help me plant bulbs but I have to admit I had no takers. I think having a supposedly experienced gardener get up and admit to their mistakes for what they should not have planted must have been refreshing. At the library there is also a “Wildflower” garden. I put that in quotes as some plants are not strictly wildflowers (not sure there is one definition of “wildflower”). That garden got started from leftovers from a previous plant sale and a deciduous magnolia got planted there coming from our plant sale. The town supplies some labor (the pruning is frustrating) and lots of mulch. I support my plant habit there with a (so far) yearly mini grant which have kept me afloat.

Another project in Christiansburg is called “Adopt a Plot” which is run by Virginia Reilly. Virginia started this at the (historic) Christiansburg Presbyterian Church in an effort to improve the landscaping, given a small congregation. The church is at Hickock and Main streets. Go take a look!

Basically the outside is divided into sections (the plots). For example, the side entrance and the front church sign area are separate “plots” and a group volunteers to take care of their section for the year. Last year Virginia got muscle help from the “Big Event” (organized by Va Tech). She even had them weeding! (after some discussion of “what is a weed”). She also has some home schoolers with plots.

Projects, continued

She has the problem that a lot of public gardens have – where is your water source? So she is encouraging the use of plants that have low water needs. She started this project in 2012. Since the church has a newsletter she can get free promotion and advertising if she writes an article.

Out in the wilds of Craig county (located about 35 minutes from downtown Blacksburg) I also keep the “Triangle” which is a road side public garden which has been there for about 40 years. It is officially kept up by the Maywood Garden Club; in practice I do the planning and planting but do get help about twice a year when I beg for it. Over the years I have been trying to get away from putting in bedding plants and am switching over to more shrubs and annuals grown from seeds and drought resistant perennials. The only water there is water you carry in yourself and the soil is a layered mix of bottom clay, small gravel and some organic matter on top. The land was used for road gravel storage before the garden club got it. It is privately owned, but since it is surrounded on all sides by public highway, so there is nothing else you could do with it. Trees should be out (too close to the road) although owner planted a *Magnolia virginia* in the middle in a low spot. Mowing is a problem and is currently paid for by the garden club which is their biggest yearly expense. I am continually amazed that they are still willing to pay for the mowing. The garden club ladies who help vary wildly in knowledge and vary wildly in whether they really do want to learn anything different about gardening techniques. I have probably done the most education in the horticultural varieties of plants that have been installed over the years than actually gardening techniques.

Submitted by Erica Jones

Calendar and Upcoming Master Gardener Events

Last week we had a really great showing (about 20) for the March meeting at Stadium Woods. We divided up into three groups to tour the woods.

April 18th (MONDAY)

Meeting will be at 7:00 PM. at 220 Price Hall on Virginia Tech Campus (Entomology bldg). Eric Day will be talking about new pests that we have to deal with. Come and expand your knowledge on pests.

April 22- 24 (Weekend)

Abingdon Mid-Atlantic Garden Faire. www.gardenfaire.net I should apply for a tourism job down there; I think it is a great place to visit. In past years they have done a very good job with this.

May 5th (THURSDAY)

Pot-luck at the Montgomery County Government Center Community room at 6 PM. We will have our milestone celebration that day. Bring your plant sale plants, please. So turn in your hours and get updated.

May 6th (FRIDAY)

Pricing and organizing plants for plant sale. Contact Beth at nrvmgplantsale@hotmail.com

May 7th (SATURDAY)

Plant sale front of building at M. C.G. G. Starts 9am. Set up will start 5 am if you can make it that early. Contact Beth at nrvmg-plantsale@hotmail.com; departments still need help (like annuals).

May 23rd (MONDAY)

NRVMGA meeting at 6:00 PM at Pulaski Grow in Draper. Lee Speigel has an aquaponics garden/farm where students and other volunteers grow veggies for their CSA. This is a non-for-profit grant recipient for 2016.

June, first week of (dates to be announced) (from Wendy Silverman)

We are going on a field trip with transportation provided. It will be a one night overnight. The stops we are making (subject to change) are to Boxerwood Nature Center and Woodland Garden in Lexington, Alson H. Smith Ag Research and Extension Center in Winchester and the State Arboretum of Virginia in Boyce (8 mi from Winchester). We will stay overnight in Winchester. Wendy am also hoping we can get together with the master gardener group up there. With luck this will be finalized by the beginning of April.

Our New Coordinator - Deanna Reid

Deanna comes to us by way of Riverbend Nursery ("it gets crazy in the spring") where she worked for two ish years, by way of Ferrum College. At Ferrum she had three majors one of which was Horticulture (she was talking too fast for me to write down the other two). (Truthfully she said Agribusiness and Spanish). At Riverbend she managed hostas, perennials and ornamental grasses in 74 (!) greenhouses.

She grew up watering plants in her parent's retail, year around greenhouse where they grew bedding plants, fall flowers and Poinsettias. When I asked her if she had heard of Master Gardeners before I got a "yes" (yeah!). Seems the active local group requested tours of their facility in Broadway which is near Harrisonburg.

She is looking forward to meeting everybody so don't be shy about stopping by to say hi. Her eMail address is drreid@exchange.vt.edu Her office hours are approximate but she tries for 9-3pm.

Biography Board member Gwen Ewing

Hello All, Most of you know me, I'm Gwen Ewing, NRV MG Association Secretary and past president. I took the MG training in 1990 and have been volunteering on the Board, and at the Hahn Horticulture Garden, the Christiansburg/Montgomery Museum garden, Shawsville, Tomato Fest, a few Share the Spare clinics at Blacksburg and Christiansburg and various other fairs. I'm the quiet one with a big smile.

I enjoy growing things, most perennials. I should grow vegetables and I am jealous of those who do but I do know that these vegetables usually come IN in July/August when I'm on vacation.

I love pass-along plants, I have dug up and potted 4 red-stemmed dogwoods and 4 forsythias for the plant sale and I also have 2 weeping willows rooting in water. As I remove more brush I'll find lots of daylilies but I'll have to wait till next year, to know what color they are.

We have a strong Association and I enjoy getting to know you. If you have taken any pictures of any MG meetings and/or events, email me them to me, As the Associations' Historian I will archive these on our webpage.

Happy Spring, Gwen [Editors note— Gwen just retired which is great for us].

Some Past History

Gwen Ewing, being historian, was digging through our old Grapevines and she supplied me with these nuggets (um, raisins?):

2011

Our NRV MGA Board in 2011 was Connie Lawson, President ; Helen Young, Co-Vice President; Ini Beckman, Co-Vice President [editors note – these two ladies decided to divvy up the job of finding speakers/programs] ; Cynthia Mize, Secretary ; Erica Jones, Treasurer ; Jack Selcovitz, - Member at Large; Lynn Brammer - Member at Large; Keith Mileski - Member at Large

The monthly meetings for 2011 included, Tour of Roper Solar Greenhouse and YMCA Wind/Solar Teaching facility off North Main St; Tour of Riverbend Nursery, Landscaping and garden tour of Pamela Cadmus and Jane O'Keefe, Tour of Square foot gardening and Therapeutic Gardening - Debra Graff, and more.

NRV MGA started a Lawn Care Team. We had a new paper time sheet with SA, VM, EH and CH, Service activates, Volunteer Management, Educational Hours, Contributed Hours - Thanks Wendy!

2005

Association officers were Trish Cregger, and Ginny Ritenour, Co-Presidents; Delbert Jones, Vice President; Doris Fleming – Secretary; Dottie Woods – Treasurer; Linda Mack - Past President; June Johnson - Member at Large ; Sarah Liddle - Member at Large; Brenda Schnell - Member at Large; Rich Connors - trainee member at large

In the April newsletter it was mentioned that six grants were awarded. MG members mentored a trainee and the 2005 board wrote a short biography about themselves, as did the MG Coordinator, Barry Robinson.

New Annuals (excepts from www.greenhousegrower.com)

New introductions to the plant world are trialed at various locations; California being a prime spot. After a plant graduates from the trial, it will take some time for bedding plants of any new plant to become available in this area (if ever). Some growers are stuck in ruts; “new” seeds/start cost more; growers worry about how a new variety will perform for their customers in our area, or, what I suspect is the most common reason, they do not want to pay more for newer introductions.

Annuals have received some “gruff” for lack of sustainability. As I was cruising some of my horticultural eMail messages I looked at the web site at www.greenhousegrower.com. Most of the reviewed new “annuals” will not be available by seed for home growers for various reasons. Some of these plants are pretty difficult to start from seed; some are really very tender perennials who are willing to bloom their socks off all summer in a true annual fashion. And there were some plants in the trial which we amateurs can grow from seed like celosia and snapdragons. To me, plants which grow one year, set seed for the following year, to me are the ultimate in sustainable. Whatever sustainable means.

Reading the text that went along with the fantastic color photos you realize what really drives plant selection for the big companies. Most often stated as a plus is how the plant will look best for sales - “idea for 5” pots” (a calibrachoa). Another: “extend summer sales with... (an admittedly neat large flowered single white begonia)”. Or “needs less plant growth regulator than other begonias”. How about “great shelf life” (used with one of those horrible very short celosia) (yes shelf life but never performed much after that). Finally “makes beautiful, tight pots..” (a bidens). This last one I think translates into “not so floppy”.



All that grousing aside, seems companies are coming out with some way neat begonias. Begonias that can fill in the area between the tried and true small flowered very floriferous bedding plants, and the bigger flowered ones (think tuberous begonia). These annuals are being

bred for more sun tolerance and flower size.

One other trend seems to be a bigger viola (which I try to treat as a biennial but whatever). No mention here if they will survive winters as well as the smaller flowered types and/or reseed themselves, but they look like fun. There is one small flowered variety called ‘Bunny Ears’ in a medium purple which, yes, has bunny shaped flowers. Cute.

So back to the seed grown annuals. A very random list of some annuals that you can grow from seed at home and your may or may not find as a bedding plant:

Ageratum (‘Blue Planet’) – the tall (24”), later blooming version – good for cutting

Alyssum – easy, low growing. Used as a good food source for predatory insects and pollinators

Artemisia – tall sweetly fragrant everlasting. Grows like a weed (!)

Calendula – edible; reseed; flowers good for chickens. Very easy to start/grow but needs deadheading.

Nicotiana –Tobacco – fragrant, neat flowers and colors. Fairly easy to start.

Nigella –good source of blue flowers and neat seed pods. Easy and good food for pollinators.

Scabiosa – not as easy to start, but fabulous for cutting. Good blues and an almost black

Phacelia – another (small, easy) blue flower. Or another thing to try—some of the mixes that are recommended to see outdoors.



Travels with Charles— New River Gorge National River

Very early spring is a fine time to visit this part of West Va even though it is probably most famous for rafting and rock climbing. This is a fabulous time of year for hiking (as long as it is not raining or snowing) with less competition for parking spots in the park and hotel rooms.

The New cuts through a set of mountain ranges on it's way to the Ohio river and left a deep gorge and lots of rock cliffs. The national park was set up some 40 years ago; and being a "national river" the park land extends quite the linear length with a lot of private land inholdings.

When we were there we got to visit the now abandoned mining town of Nuttallburg which was named after the owner of the mine. To get there you have to calmly read your WV Gazetteer (GPS might do better I don't know); and the maps supplied by the park are, well, horrible. Seems WV likes to name county roads as subsets. For example, (main) county road 8 will have offshoots of 8-1, 8-5, 8-4, 8-20 etc etc. Most offshoots are dead ends. And road signs never tell you what road you ARE on. Well, you get the point.

To get to Nuttallburg go downhill. Lots. On a definitively one lane road with occasional turnouts. We never did see grass growing in the road so we kept going. The "town" consists of a coal tipple, coal shoot, coke ovens and the foundations (usually stone pillars—no excavating necessary) left from (I assume) wood structures such as housing and the company store. The gardening part comes with these. Scattered around the pillars were a very early King Alfred type daffodil, yucca, daylily and another early spring bloomer that I could not identify. These plants seem to be common around almost all abandoned housing. Even though there was little "town" left, the plants put there to brighten up the residents yards live on. Rah! Plant on!



Left—the author who does not like cliffs hiding behind one of his people. In the background you can see part of the steel arch bridge put in about the same time as the part was started. Rumored to cut the time to cross the New from 45 minutes to 45 seconds.

Right—an admitted obsession with lichens. Why don't these grow in my yard?



Club Notes:

Being a registered non-profit complete with federal tax ID number, if you are a member and purchasing something for a project or club "do", if you fill out a state form ST-10 (sales tax certificate of exemption) you will not have to pay sales tax. These forms available on-line off menu at <http://www.tax.virginia.gov/forms/search/business/sales-and-use-tax> down near the bottom. Don't get put off by the terminology of "Dealer". That's us.

The plant sale committee hopes you are having luck dividing, repotting and labeling. Don't procrastinate! Do it now!

Unapproved NRV MGA Board meeting minutes, March 3, 2016, a snowy evening

Present: Erica Jones, Sharon Eifried, Wendy Silverman, Gwen Ewing; Kelli Scott; also attending Beth Kirby for plant sale update

Absent; Steve Hale, Evelyn Melia, Sarah Smiley

We have a quorum,

January Board meeting minutes approved. there was no board meeting Feb 2016.

Treasurer Report. 2016 Budget approved

Bylaws, Kelli reported the Bylaws committee will meet again 3/17, Kelli will send the Board the revisions the by-laws committee wrote.

Erica asked the Board members to review the standing rules. the Board will need the bylaws revisions in order to update the standing rules.

Bus Trip - Wendy is organizing an overnight trip to gardens in Virginia, probably in early June.

Plant Sale, working with Mother's Day, and Radford and VT Commencements. Beth Kirby suggested the spring/may pot luck be moved to Thursday night, and have the plants brought in Thursday and Friday, the plant sale team will price all the plants on Friday, and then set up of tables, tents will be Saturday morning. Plant Sale will be May 7th, 9-2 pm.

Donations are being requested in each county

Kelli will request the room, table, chairs set up for potluck on Thursday, May 5th. HOURS 4 to 9 for set up and clean up?

Kelli will request permission from VT to _____

Kelli will request building open earlier on Saturday, May 7th, with access to tables, carts, at the Roanoke Street entrance. (takes a lot of time and energy to put tables on carts and push them out of the building and around to Roanoke Street.

Discussion on updating the banner's, date, and time of plant sale.

Maurine Fallon is requesting permission for plant sale signage,

Sharon has asked Gwen Ewing and Evelyn Melia to be the cashiers, Gwen asked Kelli to have 2 tents set up for Saturday May 7th.

Advertising / promotions by Maurine Fallon, Sharon Eifried and Gwen Ewing

Plant Sale is coming along, coordinators for annuals, trees and shrubs, perennials, rain barrels, etc.. Plant Sale committee met March 8th.

All plants must be labeled and searched on google for pictures. we can laminate these in the extension office. we can make Bows and promote extra sales for Mother's Day

March meeting is March 18. Friday, 5 pm, Dr. Jeff Kirwan will talk about invasive plants; what to avoid planting; and we will meet in Stadium Woods. Wendy will ask about parking, if raining we will meet at the Hahn garden Head House/ classroom.

April meeting is Monday, April 18, Eric Day, 7 pm, Price Hall.

Scholarship fund. Wendy explained \$150.00 for 1 or 2 people to attend Master Gardener College. She will investigate the cost to attend this year's two day event. We approved this funding. Scholarship may have an application and may be required to write an article on what was learned.

NRVMGA Minutes, con't

Kelli was pleased to report Deanna is our new MG coordinator, and she began work, March 7, 2016

NRV MGA T-shirt sales, lot of pictures and styles, Wendy/Kelli will put information on Google drive for all to view.

Respectfully submitted,

Gwen Ewing

NRV MGA secretary

Some Parting Thoughts on Spring Colors and Spring Flowers - Ruth Ann Sloop Whitener



Spring Colors and Spring Flowers bring renewed JOY and HOPE into my life! Earth is NOT dead! Earth is very much ALIVE! Earth begins to awaken from its cold drab and dark winter colors. Even though I enjoy seeing and embracing the lacy silhouettes of the deep black tree forms against the winter skies, the many shades of green in the Spring show me a new beauty and renewed life on Earth. Have you ever really paid attention to the different shades of green in Nature? All one has to do is Google them: Army green, asparagus, bright green, chartreuse, emerald, fern green, forest green, Hunter green, jade, Kelly green, lime green, olive, pear, sea green, Spring green, tea green, and yellow-green to mention only a few! The greens of iris and daylily leaves shooting up

from the winter ground excite me. The lime green leaves of the lilac springing forth on the lilac branches bring eager anticipation!

As my husband and I were traveling home from South Carolina soccer tournaments this past weekend we were amazed at how brilliant the colors were in SC, NC and then even a wee bit into our state of Virginia! Dark magenta pink of the wild redbuds along the highways lift my spirits! The brilliant white of the wild dogwood says a welcome into a springtime of year. Of course, we cannot miss the unique white of the terstate! The "pop" of the yellow is gold" as we called it when we lived of the forsythias and the daffodils of the white, yellow and gray pussy. The first colors I noticed this spring backdoor a few weeks ago! Then our side yard walkway. The tiny house now. Soon our purple tulips to our eyes! Nature never ceases to Several years ago when our Draper, we were swinging in our outdoors



ornamental pears or wild pears along the in- the sunny yellow jessamine or "South Carolina in Darlington, SC! It is also in the peeking out right here in Dublin, Virginia! It is in the midst willow buds in our own back yard! were the purple crocuses right outside our came the purple and violet anemone along grape hyacinths are just showing off at our will appear and bring another shade of purple amaze me.

VA, granddaughter, Louise, was five years old, swing. I had picked one daffodil earlier and

had it with me. I was wishing out loud for more and she decided to go look for some! The swing was down in a lower area of our yard. As she climbed the hill all of a sudden she turned and skipped back down as she yelled out, "Grandmama! Look what I found!" I went running, acting like I did not know what she had found! Further over the hill that past fall my husband had planted 800 daffodil bulbs, a "host of golden daffodils"! ("I Wandered Lonely as a Cloud" by William Wordsworth). Louise was overcome with joy! We picked for a long time until she had enough for a HUGE bouquet to take home to her mommy and daddy! The brilliant yellows, the softer tones of pale yellow, the fried egg yellow all create a gorgeous array of yellow daffodils to lift our spirits and then our hearts too can "dance with the daffodils"! (same source).

Why not allow your heart to dance this springtime and summer as you notice the many colors around you! I certainly am enjoying this dance during this most beautifully vibrant time of year! Join me, please!



New River Valley Master Gardeners Association



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 NRVMGGA 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-to's, 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 and/or education.

We need a Grapevine editor. Please consider doing this! We don't bite!

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