



GRAPEVINE



New River Valley Master Gardener Association Newsletter

May/June 2015

Congratulations, Graduates!



New NRV Master Gardener Interns: (l-r) Annie Pearce, Karen Strickler, Sheryl Locascio, Connie Helm, Lara Miller, Lynn Trease, Tacy Newell, Brenda Clark, Gwen Douglas, Kevin Crispin, Leslie Mathews (NRV Master Gardener Coordinator), Dianne Blount, and Kelli Scott (Extension Agent).

On May 8, 2015, we celebrated our new graduates at our annual potluck. We had 19 trainees graduate from our program, eleven of whom are pictured in the photo above. One graduate is now an official Master Gardener volunteer since she completed her 50 hours of training already! Congratulations, Gwen Douglas for this accomplishment! We enjoyed some food, fun, and a silent auction to benefit the scholarship fund for the NRV MGA. We also enjoyed an informative talk from Glen Davis, Physical Therapist, who shared the right and wrong ways to bend and work in the garden.

"Nature is slow but sure;
she works no faster
than need be".

~ Henry David Thoreau

Congratulations to our Milestone Award Winners!

7,000 Hours

Bill Gottert

2,000 Hours

Lynn Brammer

1,000 Hours

Erica Jones
Susan Lockwood
Dave Orcutt
Javad Torebinejad
Beth Umberger

500 Hours

Tom Alston
Michaelene Balconi
Carol Eggleston
Sharon Eifried
Donna Fern
Stephen Hale
Robert Lockwood
Janice Mileski
Keith Mileski

250 Hours

Denis Gracanin
Cheryl Heisey
Beth Kirby
Laura Morris
Penny Tully
Olin Whitener
Ruth Ann Whitener

In this Issue:

- Congratulations Graduates
- NRV Garden Tour
- Christiansburg Farmer's Market
- NRV MGA Meeting Recap
- Postcard from Death Valley
- Adventures in Pruning
- Project Highlight: Montgomery Museum
- Calendar
- A Visit to Reynolda Gardens
- Update from VMGA
- Grants News



Charles Darwin Roses in Susan Lockwood's garden. Photo by Susan Lockwood

2015 Plant Sale a Big Success! Money raised goes to community grants



Save the date: NRV Garden Tour July 11, 2015

The NRV Garden Tour will take place on Saturday July 11 from 9 until 5 rain or shine.

This year the tour takes us to the Riner/Childress/Christiansburg area to explore seven wonderful gardens. They include Jim and Julie Snyder, former owners of Riverbend Nursery, Lisa Lipsey (one of our Hahn Hort Garden divas) and Sean Distler and a wonderful garden featuring ponds filled with koi that will be for sale that day!

Our members are invited to play “co hosts” to assist the owner in showing the community these amazing gardens. Your role would be to visit the garden before the tour and chat with the homeowner about the dynamics involved that we as Master Gardeners would like to promote.

We ask each gardener to fill out a questionnaire about subjects such as composting, erosion control methods, soil amendments, pest management etc. you would get a copy of that questionnaire. We request two hour shifts, arriving 15 minutes prior to take over the reins from the previous MGer. You would be welcome to take more than one shift as long as you had ample time to get to the other garden. It is a role for those that enjoy the interaction and discussions with fellow garden lovers. I will send a more detailed list as the date gets closer if you would like to “play”.

We have made an arrangement with Attimo Winery to serve as pit stop during the day. Located on the Childress Road the winery will be open and some local food trucks will be in the parking lot with the tasty goodies for sale. Sounds fun right!!

As a gesture of appreciation for your volunteering you would be cordially invited to attend the “thank-you” party the next day from 4 until 6 at the spectacular garden of Jo and Bud Brown in Blacksburg.



Photo: Friends of the Library Garden Tour Web site <http://www.mfrlfriends.org/gardentour.html>

Please email lbrammer@vt.edu if you have any questions or are interested in this opportunity to engage the public by reminding them of all Cooperative Extension and Master Gardeners do to give back to our community service.

NEW MG Project: Christiansburg Farmer's Market by Lynn Brammer, Project Leader

It's that time of year when we begin the season of fresh produce collection from donors that visit local farmers markets. Historically we have had the downtown Blacksburg Farmers Market as our home base. This booth we host serves also as a Plant Clinic to answer questions, pass out soil test kits, bug tattoos for the kids and generally engage with the public regarding all that Cooperative Extension and Master Gardeners represent. We typically begin our season mid-May when there is more produce available.

Share the Spare asks the visitors of the market to consider buying one or two more items of fresh produce as they shop, and drop them in our basket to then be turned over to local food groups. These groups see to it that this produce gets on the table of those in need in a timely manner considering it's perishable nature. We have expanded this mission to also be a drop point for any surplus a backyard gardener has in their own garden. Also vendors/farmers often pass on some of their extras that might not make it to their next market. We often get tips on fruit trees or other harvestable produce that we get a glean team to the site.

The Town of Christiansburg has started a farmers market on Thursdays from 3-7 PM.

The organizers are being careful to not coincide with other markets so that they can get a variety of vendors. Share the Spare has been invited to set up a booth at this market and we are thrilled for the opportunity. Christiansburg is my home town and if you know the town, there is an even greater need for this fresh locally grown food in this community. The market will be on Commerce Street which intersects Hickok St. This is behind Mountain View Spay and Neuter Clinic and kind of in back of Macado's Restaurant. On the same side of Main St as the Christiansburg Presbyterian Church. These markets are an excellent opportunity to connect with our neighbors and friends and make our Master Gardener work known to the public. There are still many people that have no idea what we do and all we offer.



The Share the Spare booth at Christiansburg Farmer's Market. Lynn Brammer (left) shares info. Extension agent Kelli Scott helps out.



From l-r, MG Gwen Douglas, Extension Agent Kelli Scott and MG Donna Fern at the Share the Spare Booth.

If you would like to become part of the team by offering to help work a two or four hour shift for the Christiansburg Farmers Market please let me know via email.

We need to acknowledge this will be a learning curve for those that shop this new market and may not know anything about our mission.

So we need folks that enjoy interacting and are eager to let the patrons know about this project as well as MGers in general. Trainees, this would be a great way to get your "feet wet". You will be working with a Master Gardener until you get your initial hours in and become a full-fledged MGer.

This is a very exciting opportunity and I look forward to working with each of you that may want to take on this project! Denise Dodd who is helping coordinate taking this produce to Giving Tree Food Ministry. They do an amazing job of assisting those in need. Their distribution is on Friday evenings so it seems like a perfect fit for a Thursday market. <http://thegivingtreefoodpantry.org/>

Questions and suggestions are welcomed and encouraged, I'm sure there are more details and logistics to iron out as we expand our program. And many thanks to all that have been involved in some way. You are the reason this happens and I am grateful for your assistance! Lynn Brammer lbrammer@vt.edu. At left, Lynn in action putting some tattoos on the kids!



Out and about with NRVMG: Recent Meetings

March Meeting at the Hahn Garden with Robert McDuffie



Robert McDuffie

The new Director of the Hahn Horticultural Garden, Robert McDuffie, Head of Landscape Design at Virginia Tech, spoke briefly to the Master Gardeners earlier in the Spring. He said he'd like to add more sculptural elements - such as recycled columns, or hard-scape features, to define and embellish the garden "rooms".

Dr. McDuffie also stated he'd like to extend the pathways within the Garden, so as to have a continuous durable surface for walking. His plan would assist those with mobility limitations to better enjoy the Garden. Presently, there are a lot of paths, but not all are interconnected. He said he'd like to see the addition of electrical service within the Garden, to be able to add "uplights" and focal-point lighting to some of the trees and other features. He sees an improved, more defined, entrance to the Garden being developed in the future.

He commended the staff and volunteers who work endlessly to maintain this beautiful space. He mentioned how the Garden had expanded since its original concept, and how he was honored to continue the stewardship of this popular destination. I think the diversity of features is a large part of the appeal of the Hahn Garden. You can stroll around and learn about the plants. You can discover what grows well here, and how to implement various cultivars in your own landscape designs. You can find a quiet spot for meditation or for taking your lunch break. You can take a yoga class on the lawn, and breath deeply of all that oxygen and vibrant life. And you can get involved with the team providing the ongoing maintenance of the Garden, and help with new installations - enabling the next chapter of growth of the Hahn Garden, by becoming a part of Robert's vision here, in this green jewel on the Virginia Tech campus.

Submitted by Gwen Douglas

April Meeting at the Farmacy Garden in Christiansburg With Kelli Scott, Extension Agent: Co-Founder and Main Supporter of the Farmacy Garden

Our own Kelli Scott gave our members a tour of the **Farmacy Garden**, a garden that she helped to found and take from an idea to a living, growing entity that produces a bounty of fresh food and actively helps local residents by providing not only food, but also an opportunity for getting some exercise and getting involved with their community.

According to the Appalachian Foodshed Project Blog: "In addition to serving WIC clients by allowing them the opportunity to take home fresh vegetables and to learn gardening skills, the garden will seek participants from local health centers with a Garden Prescription Program. Doctors at the Community Health Center of the NRV and Carillion Family Practice will be "prescribing" visits to the garden for patients that meet certain income requirements and are living with lifestyle diseases such as obesity and diabetes. The goal of the Garden Prescription Program is to emphasize the importance of diet and moderate physical activity as vital components in a patient's wellness plan. Doctors will



Kelli Scott presenting about the Farmacy Garden. L-R Dianne Blount, Connie Helm and Beth Umberger listen intently.

recommend patients to the program and put them in contact with the project coordinators. This "prescription" model is based off of the Fruit and Veggie Rx program pioneered by Wholesome Wave." (<http://blogs.lt.vt.edu/afpblog/2014/05/07/farmacy-garden-project-in-montgomery-co-virginia/>).

Volunteer to get involved with this fantastic MG Project!

Photo Album of Death Valley by Nina Templeton, MG Class of '14

Tom and I went camping in Death Valley for a week the beginning of March. We were incredibly lucky in that it had just rained before we got there, and the desert was blooming. In the week we were there, we actually got to see some plants flower and go to seed; just amazing. Also saw buds on cacti, but never actually saw any in flower; our theory is that they have deeper roots so they didn't have to be in as much of a hurry as some of the other plants, but don't know if we're right or not. Some of the streams that are dry most of the year had water in them, and also came to life. Pollinators showed up too, as you can see from one of the photos. I've attached 21 pictures, 20 flowers (a couple of duplicates of the same kind) and one of the fish that were hatching out and presumably laying eggs on a short schedule.



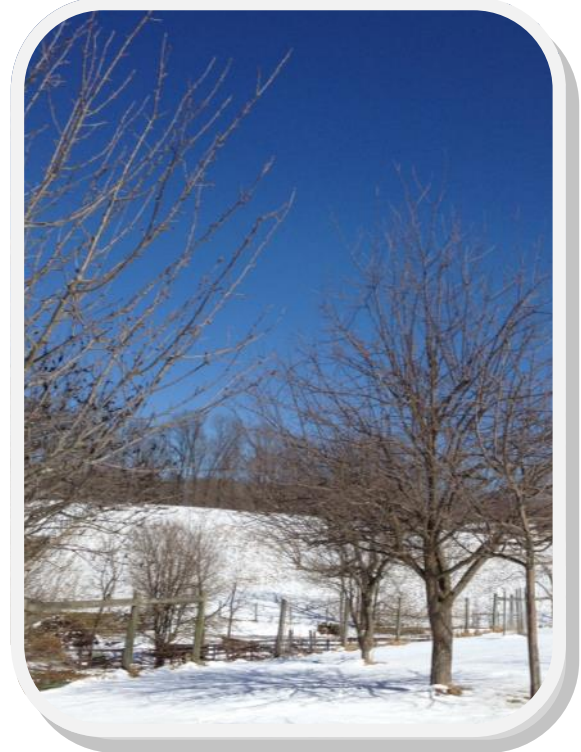
The Pruning Lesson by Gwen Douglas MG '15

Saturday, March 7th was a clear, breezy day with several inches of snow still on the ground. It was time to prune the fruit trees. Jeannie Dudding with Giles County Extension had organized the day for us. We met at a farm near Newport on beautiful Spruce Run Road. The landowner has a variety of about twenty fruit trees on a slope above the farmhouse, in various stages of maturity. We were able to learn about the essential pruning of two-year old plants, as well as how to continue to maintain the shape of older trees. Pruning encourages maximum fruit production, and minimizes disease and wind damage. This workshop exceeded my expectations, and gave us all a chance to actually do some pruning. We also received a binder with a detailed handout, and we enjoyed an entertaining afternoon of valuable advice from our speaker.



Horticulturist Barry Robinson worked with us for almost three hours, discussing the objectives of managing apple, pear and cherry trees, while applying selective cuts to the trees in this orchard. He also pruned some grape vines for our small group. He showed us how to trim limbs to open a tree for sunlight and air circulation. He demonstrated on a pear tree how to influence the leader - the dominant central branch - by subordinating other limbs to promote the strong framework- the scaffold - of a mature, productive tree. Barry talked about the factors affecting site selection and how to care for the grounds of an orchard. Other topics in his tutorial included choosing varieties for adaptability, pollination and disease resistance.

Barry's detailed instructions gave this Master Gardener Trainee the confidence to believe she could probably develop a home orchard, with a fair chance of success. Apples and pears need the winter chill we have in this area to be fruitful, and cherries also do well here, whereas apricots do not. If you've ever thought you might like to cultivate a home orchard, and reap the fruits of your efforts, I'd recommend also attending the fruit tree grafting workshop that may be offered this year. It will be as useful as this pruning lesson, which was a great learning opportunity for gardeners.



Photos: Gwen Douglas

Apples and pears need the winter chill we have in this area to be fruitful, and cherries also do well here, whereas apricots do not. If you've ever thought you might like to cultivate a home orchard, and reap the fruits of your efforts, I'd recommend also attending the fruit tree grafting workshop that may be offered this year. It will be as useful as this pruning lesson, which was a great learning opportunity for gardeners.

Spring Forward with Knowledge!

PROJECT HIGHLIGHT: Montgomery Museum Garden

The Montgomery Museum Garden in Christiansburg serves as a demonstration garden for the public in the use of native plants and non-invasive non-native plants in the home landscape. The wide variety of plants in the Montgomery Museum Garden provide habitat for native insects, birds, flora, and the like. MG Beth Umberger leads this project and works with volunteers to maintain the garden; she helps teach community service workers to garden. Beth also helps plan children's activities for Heritage Days.



Beth Umberger (in maroon sweater) shares information about the garden with fellow MGs

Goals for the Garden in 2015 include:

- Provide habitat for insects and birds.
- Provide host plants for insects.
- Provide nectar and pollen plants for insects.
- Identify and label all the plants in the garden.
- **Provide a garden guide for the upper garden that includes non-native non-invasive plants, native plants of the United States and cultivars of native plants. Provide a garden guide of the lower garden that has plants native to our area. *Educational Components!**
- Plant annual theme gardens, such as ornamental vegetables, plants used for fabric and dying.
- Lead visitors through the garden.
- Keep a journal of activities and insect sightings in the garden.
- Build limestone sand scree gardens for small natives and non-natives in the upper and lower garden.
- Work with an Eagle Scout planting native shrubs and cultivars of natives around the gazebo.
- Replace the wood mulch paths with brick and discarded pavement in the upper garden.
- Remove all the plastic that lies under the paths and beds.
- Establish paths and retaining walls in the lower garden.
- Remove the remaining invasive plants including trees and replace with natives.

Note that Beth takes special care to follow the Master Gardener project guidelines by focusing on providing habitat for native animals as well as creating an educational component.



PROJECT HIGHLIGHT: Continued Montgomery Museum Garden Update by Project Leader Beth Umberger

This spring during a field trip to Montgomery Museum fifth graders from Belview Elementary planted cut leaf toothwort and spring beauty that I had collected with permission in a woods on Christiansburg town property. Many bare root plants ordered from Prairie Moon Nursery and Arrowhead Alpines were planted in the garden this spring with the help of a community service worker and Gwen Ewing. I potted up some as well to sell at the Mountain Music Event on June 13.

Ellen Burch, a Master Gardener, has helped with weeding and planting the ornamental vegetables that I started under lights in my basement. She guided the Virginia Tech students that come help during the Big Event to move shrubs and plant tree service berry trees. This week I harvested the lettuce and took it to the Spare to Share program at the Christiansburg Farmers Market.

Gwen Douglas, a new Master Gardener, rebuilt the arbor and painted it with Williamsburg blue. It sets off the garden and will once again provide a place for birds to nest in the rose vine at the top of the trellis.

All of these activities support the goal of providing a garden with many educational opportunities, such as providing habitat for insects and birds and a place for the community to observe nature and most of all to show how they too can transform their gardens to support our native flora and fauna.

Caterpillars are critical to the survival of baby birds and I will be adding oaks to the lower woods as oaks and black cherry trees provide the most species of caterpillars.

Removal of invasive plants such as privet, burning bush, garlic mustard, bishop weed and multiflora rose is an ongoing project and makes more room for native plants. My husband, Fred Umberger, helped this winter and during the Big Event to remove the variegated privet. Gwen Ewing stayed with him at the emergency room while he got 17 stitches after tripping over privet branches with a chainsaw running. Luckily, Connie Helms, a new Master Gardener and nurse was there that day and attended to Fred until the ambulance arrived.

I would be remiss if I did not mention the contributions of community service workers. Some of them give up to 50 hours of time to the garden. The major changes that I have made to the garden have been with the help of these young men.

I keep a journal of the insects I see in the garden and hope this summer to be able to identify more of the pollinators that come to the plants. When I go to nurseries, I am always looking for the plants that have the most insects on them to add to the garden. **All of us at the museum hope you will come and stroll through the garden or sit and have lunch. Contact me at fredandbeth@verizon.net if you would like to be a weeder, or help with a visitors in the garden.**



Photos by Gwen Douglas

Gardening Events In & Around the New River Valley

JUNE

- 13 Garden Gala at the Hahn Horticulture Garden
- 13 Plant Clinic, Mountain Music, Montgomery Museum
- 18 NRV MGA General Meeting, Riverstone Farm, Floyd
- 24-28 **Annual Master Gardener College**
- 27 Pulaski Town and Country Garden Tour

JULY

- 9 NRV MGA General Meeting, Debra Graff's home
- 11 Montgomery Floyd Friends of the Library Garden Tour
- 18 Pearisburg Farmer's Market AG Day
- 20-25 NRV Fair

AUGUST

- 7-8 Newport Fair
- 22 Montgomery Museum Heritage Day

Event Highlight:

NRVMGA General Meeting

Here is information about our **June 18** site visit to Riverstone Organic Farm. We will meet at their farm store at 6pm and are looking forward to a great program. The owner is Woody Crenshaw, former owner of the Floyd Country Store.

Check out website if you'd like at www.riverstoneorganicfarm.com

Mark Your Calendars!

Master Gardener College is coming up on June 24-28. Register today at <http://www.cpe.vt.edu/reg/mastergardener/>



MG Steve Hale shares: "The Pulaski county chamber of commerce posted a pic last week on their Facebook page of **Claudia's memorial garden** [Master Gardener project he leads]. Please take a look. One of the chamber employees helps me with daily watering since it has been so incredibly dry as of late. This little garden gets a lot of attention. I really enjoy this project." See photo to left.

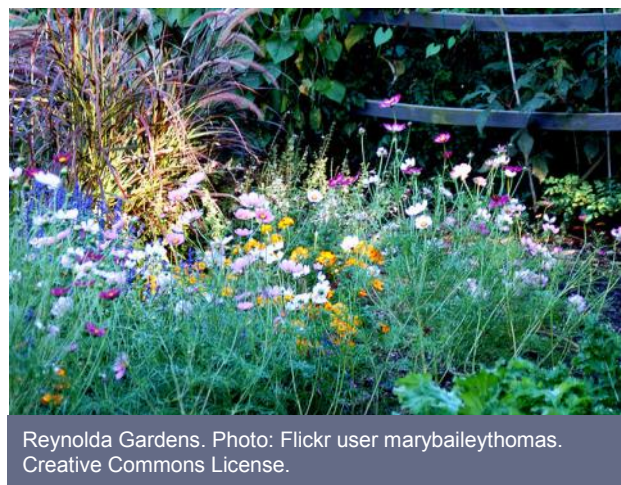
Charles-the-dog has been staying home, but his person has been out and about. I've been frequenting Winston-Salem lately (about 2.75 hours from my house) and found a nice stop in my travels; even for a definitively rainy spring day.

Adjacent to Wake Forest University are the Reynolda Gardens (100 Reynolda Village, W-S, NC.) (about 10 easy minutes Rt 52 which is a limited access highway). Construction of was started in 1913, and the formal gardens for the once 1067 acre estate the garden was designed by Thomas Sears in 1917 and 1921. The grounds and house were donated to the school in 1958. There is no charge for admission.

When you first arrive there is a small gift store in front with a really nice collection of house plants for sale. Behind that is the original palm house with attached newer production house on each side. The palm house had one of the better collections of resident orchids I've seen in a while along, with tropicals and some succulents. Most plants were labeled, too (rah!). For such a small space it was a well thought out collection of not-the-usual-stuff. The production houses were gearing up for the spring plant sale and they were producing bedding plants (vegetables and flowers) and "hardy" bananas (can we say zone-envy??). This greenhouse had a definite educational theme and there was a flock of slightly damp school kids inside to prove it.



Exit the palm house out the rear and you are at the bottom of the formal garden which extends up the slope in front of you surrounded by walkways and hedges. The formal gardens are of seven parts – four square areas in the front (two by two), and three long rectangles behind those. Being early spring, the color themed and rose gardens in the front squares were asleep, but the longer, uphill back rectangles had some luscious looking soil and were perking right along with spring vegetables – peas and lettuce in particular.



The annual vegetables/ flower bed and the "display and children's" gardens were divided into manageable sections for ease of working. Not a weed to be seen and the lettuce was looking extremely edible. Outside of the formal area is lawn and trees, multiple ponds, forest, a boat house on the now silted up lake, two trails, and a cute "play house" built in 1920 resembling an English cottage. The former residence is now used as a museum of American art. From this area you can hoof right over to the Wake Forest campus, or stay in the adjacent area for shopping and lunch.

Some garden rules – no sleeping on the grass(!), no food and drinks, and (sorry Charles!) no dogs.

One of the activities that was part of the initial need for a state-wide MG association was the VCE-MG booth at the State Fair in Richmond. VMGA has supported the State Fair booth financially and with staffing assistance for 25 years. VMGA pays for materials given to the public and conduct an activity specifically for youth. The VMGA State Fair Committee Chair takes the lead on scheduling volunteers from all over the state to staff the booth. The Hanover MGs play the important role of filling open hours as well as creating activities and setting up the booth.

Initially, VMGA ran a Master Gardener State Conference and continues to provide education events around the state. Last fall, the Permaculture Symposium featured field expert Dr. Will Hooker and practitioners from around Virginia. When VMGA was first founded, we funded the publication and mailing of the newsletter produced by the State MG Coordinator's office. Years later, realizing that VMGA could help promote the value of VCE and Master Gardeners, VMGA produced annual reports of impacts gathered and compiled from local units. VMGA had the report printed and distributed it through Unit Reps to be delivered to elected officials.



VMGA also publishes its own newsletter that shares local unit program successes and lessons learned. Budget cuts were constant in the mid-1990s. Did you know that at one time, ALL funding for the VCE Master Gardener program was cut? Agents were not allowed to train or manage volunteers. It was a dark time in the history of our program. VMGA sent out talking points to MGs so that they could voice their opinions to elected officials on behalf of VCE.

VMGA's educational events offer a discounted registration fee for members. The VMGA Report, our newsletter, is distributed to members every-other month. It is jammed full of news from VMGA, local unit and association news, gardening topics and so much more.

While nominees for VMGA's MG College scholarships are not limited to members, members will receive a preference when all other criteria among nominees are equal. VMGA relies on volunteers to carry out its mission, and this offers members positions of leadership and ways to contribute that improve personal skills and knowledge.

Lastly, individuals can be proud of the fact that they are members of an association that does so much for our statewide, Extension Master Gardener program. As has been said, VMGA supports the Extension Master Gardener program run out of the State Coordinator's office at Virginia Tech.

When the State Coordinator's Office needs funds or activities conducted that benefit MGs all over the state, VMGA has been there. Probably the most significant effort that VMGA has undertaken is the State Coordinator Endowment. When fully funded, this endowment will provide funds so that **NO MATTER WHAT THE STATE OR UNIVERSITY DO TO OUR FUNDING**, the MG program will always have a faculty position to run the program.

We've talked already about the State Fair – where more than 8,000 Virginians learned about Extension last year. Without VMGA, would an individual unit come up with the money and staff the booth by itself?

VMGA is also a perennial sponsor of MG College. We conduct the popular Silent Auction and other activities which make the experience all that much better.

When the State Coordinator's Office asks, VMGA gets it done. VMGA serves as the voice of Virginia's MGs, advocating on behalf of each and every VCE-Master Gardener. If you are or have been a member of a professional society, you understand that there are benefits to these associations that have real value to the membership but that may not be tangible to an individual member.

Professional associations, like VMGA, are nonetheless important to the field they represent – and that includes our volunteer efforts. VMGA raises issues to the Director of Extension, the Dean of the College of Ag and Life Sciences and to the Director of the Department of Horticulture.

When salary money for the State Coordinator was two weeks from running out, VMGA asked that the Department of Horticulture find the money – they did! Background checks and the need for educational materials such as those on wildlife, have also been elevated to VCE and VT leadership.

The State Coordinator and the Assistant State Coordinator (Dave Close and John Freeborn) represent VCE on the VMGA Board of Directors. Anyone who attends VMGA bi-monthly board meetings has face-to-face access to the leaders of our program. Attendees at meetings hear directly about what's coming next from the State Coordinator's office, and have a chance to give input. You've heard about the positive impact that VMGA has had over its 25 year history. When you join VMGA, you can take pride in the fact that you are a part of VMGA's efforts.

VMGA members can participate in many ways, and even non-members can join in. Unit Reps play an important role as liaison between VMGA and the local unit. Unit Reps and their alternates are appointed by the local agent or association. Often, both the Unit Rep and the Alternate will attend meetings – because our meetings are fun and we get stuff done!! While attendance at meetings is the best way to give and get information, all that is required is that the Unit Rep communicate with VMGA's board and to their local unit.

Our committees depend on volunteers and there are lots of opportunities to contribute on a state level. Participating as a Unit Rep or as committee members frequently prepares those who become officers. And that could be you!

Whether a member or not, all VCE-MGs can participate in VMGA's successes. Donations are needed for both the State Coordinator Endowment and the College Scholarships program. Purchasing MG-logo merchandise benefits our charitable activities with all proceeds going to the Endowment. And donating items or helping out with the Silent Auction while at MG College is yet another way to contribute to the Endowment.

A lot of MGs don't know what the State MG Coordinator and his office do for us. It's handbooks, the state record keeping system, service awards, MG College, new publications, leadership training... AND LOTS MORE

Virginia MGs went for months, even more than a year at a time without someone doing the job of the State Coordinator. VMGA started the Endowment to make sure we'd always have a faculty position at VT to administer our VCE-MG program.

Funding for the positions of the State Coordinator and Assistant Coordinator (Dave Close and John Freeborn) is stable right now. Should it remain that way, our vision for the Endowment is that it will one day fund additional staff in the State Coordinator's Office. Dave and John do so much to accomplish the administrative tasks. Think about the possibilities of new materials and programs and training to enhance what we do in our communities! We're only about one-quarter of the way to fully funding it, but the Endowment has already acted as leverage!

The Deans and Directors of the University and Extension realize that Master Gardeners are serious about our program and that what we do is a valuable service. They are certainly less likely to cut Dave's or John's positions knowing that we are putting our proverbial money where our mouths are! Your state association works to benefit you, local units and associations and the VCE-Master Gardener program statewide.

—

Pat Reilly is from Stafford Virginia and her email is Pat@TheReillyGroup.net. She is treasurer of the VMGA and would welcome any follow up questions.

Looking for Volunteer Hours? There are many new and existing projects that need you!

Reminder to our new MG interns and our seasoned veterans!

We have many great new projects as well as some existing projects that could use your help and extra hands! If you have a project that you would like to have featured in the Grapevine, contact NRV Master Gardener Coordinator Leslie Mathews at lesliem2@vt.edu.

New Projects:

- Christiansburg Farmer's Market Share the Spare Booth (profiled on page 4)
<https://www.facebook.com/ChristiansburgFarmersMarket>
- Pearisburg Farmer's Market Plant Clinic booth and kids' activities
<https://www.facebook.com/pearisburgcommunitymarket>

Existing Projects that could use your help!

- Montgomery Museum Garden (profiled on page 8)
- Stadium Woods

MGs in the News: Sarah Smiley '14 profiled in *The Patriot*



Cindy Kolb (left) and Sarah Smiley - also known as the 'Sassy Sisters' - of Syncope Falls Farm in Hiwassee.

'Sassy Sisters' operate Syncope Falls Farm

By JENA HARDY
Special to The Patriot

acres shared among the Sassy Sisters and their parents (the late Paul Smiley and their

Pulaski County's own Sarah Smiley, Master Gardener 2014 graduate, was recently profiled in the local newspaper *The Patriot*. She and her sister run a family farm called Syncope Falls Farm where they raise Tennessee Fainting Goats as well as Swiss dairy goats. With the milk from the Swiss dairy goats, Smiley and her sister make their own all natural "Southern Sass" soap. All of the profits go back into the farm. To check out the Southern Sass products, which include lotions and animals treats as well as soaps, go to ssfainting-goats.com.

Smiley leads a Master Gardener project at the Fairview Home in Dublin, an assisted living facility where she works with the residents to promote community gardening and educates the new gardeners about sustainable practices. Volunteers help lay out plots, provide education through classes and workshops, and serve as resources when questions arise.

Grants News

NRVMGA just finished awarding our “community” garden grants. The grants for 2015 are listed below. In past years we only gave these out every other year but recently we switched to an every year system. Admittedly that means that smaller amounts are given, but we thought the publicity would serve us better doing it every year.

If you are a member of NRVMGA (remember; some folks are master gardeners without belonging to NRVMGA) you are eligible for what we call “Mini Grants”. These are good for amounts up to \$100 (or less). The same criteria apply with the same basic application process. With all our grants we like to emphasize education. If you want to do some landscaping for a garden, you had better figure out how to include some education in the process if you want NRVMGA to grant you the money. Our website has a page - <http://civic.bev.net/nrvmgagrants/GrantApplication.htm> on hints for writing a grant application.

Follows is a list of our Community Grants for 2015 for a total of \$3567.00 We try to get these finalized early in the year so the grantee can start planning. BUT NRVMGA still needs a “liaison” for some of these grants. Being a liaison can consist of two visits a year up to digging vigorously in the soil on a regular basis. NRVMGA has found in the past that some groups have many good intentions but for assorted reasons do not get around to actually spending the money where they said they would. Also, photographs are very nice (be sure to get waivers if you have pictures of identifiable children).

If you want to apply for a mini grant and need some help/ideas; OR want some hours and are interested in being a liaison please feel free to contact anyone on the grant committee – Steve Hale, Sharon Eifried, Sherry Walker, Maureen Fallon, and Donna Fern. Contact Donna Fern vafern3@gmail.com for more information.

Pulaski 4-H Programs	Purchase of bedding plants and potting mix for gardening programs at three elementary schools, community garden,	\$550
Radford City Schools	Plants and soil to aid new Agriculture Program in Radford City Schools; Plans include vegetable and fruit gardens.	\$400
MarketKids, Blacksburg	Potting soil and starter plants for gardening and marketing program for 6-12 year olds	\$250
Fairview Home, Dublin	Funds for two raised vegetable beds and an herb garden for residents of financial need with intellectual, mental, and	\$422
Plenty, Floyd	Materials for four raised beds at Willis Elementary School for curriculum integrated gardening program	\$275
Pulaski YMCA Gardens	Plants, labels, soil, compost, and supplies for children’s gardens and classroom activities at the Child Development	\$437
Radford University, Selu Conservancy	Funds to purchase water storage tanks and compost for student volunteer-run garden; Educational speakers hosted and produce given to local meals program.	\$400
Harding Elementary, Blacksburg	Supplies to build additional raised beds at the elementary school as part of a community garden with VT involvement	\$350
Juvenile Detention Home, Christiansburg	Funds for topsoil, peat moss, fertilizer, and four solar-powered vent openers for use in projects teaching horticulture and business skills	\$483

MINUTES BOARD NRVGMA MARCH 11, 2015

The meeting was called to order by Co-President Erica Jones at 6:35 pm. In attendance: Erica, Beth Kirby, Maureen Fallon, Sherry Walker, Kelli Scott, Wendy Silverman, Nina Templeton, Sharon Eifried, Annette Perry, Lynn Brammer, Bob and Susan Lockwood, Gwen Douglas, Evelyn Meila.

Treasurer's Report: There is \$3189.99 total in both accounts. All checks from the Ameriprise account have now cleared, so Sharon will proceed with closing of that account and consolidation of both accounts to BB&T. Maureen moved to approve—passed. Sharon wanted clarification about the Ruritan's \$200 donation. Lynn said it is a donation from the Ruritan from their fish fry dinners.

Minutes from February 5 Board Meeting: In treasurer's report, correction to Ameriprise account. Time changed for March 19 meeting to 5:30 pm. Sue moved to approve—passed.

Old Business: Plant Sale—Beth reported on an attempt to have the sale divided into departments so the volunteers will be more familiar with the jobs they are doing at the sale. Price stakes have been made. A plant sale committee meeting will be held following the board meeting. Currently, the time for the sale has been put in the Grapevine as 10-2 on May 9.

Membership Directory: Discussion surrounded whether or not to print the directory this year. There were many left over from last year, and in an attempt to reduce association costs could a new member list be printed to be stapled into the existing books? Should project lists be included? Kelli asked that they be included to be used for government related talks and presentations. Kelli and Leslie are planning to make a list of grants for public visage so it was decided to not put a project list in the directory. Nina moved that 30 be printed, with Evelyn (as directory leader) able to make a decision if there is a price break with slightly increased number. The membership directory will be emailed to all members in electronic form. Members will also be able to access this information on the MG website.

New Business: Officer change/by-laws—Kelli noted that with Erica assuming the presidency as of the January board meeting, there has been some membership conflict/concern. Since no-one in the membership stepped forward at the time of nominations/election in November, Maureen agreed to stay on as President until someone was found who would be willing to serve. At the January Board meeting, Erica volunteered and the Board voted to accept her as the new President with Maureen staying on a couple of months to ease the transition. There was a proposal to open the election process again to the membership for any other nominations for President and have the membership vote at the April meeting. An email would be sent out to the general membership stating this proposal to see if anyone would step forward to run. It was suggested to send out a survey in which the paid membership could vote anonymously. Lynn will send out inquiry to the NRVGMA membership for nomination for President. Wendy will send out membership forms to encourage dues payment. Maureen moved that an online vote be taken once the membership has been notified of the process at the March meeting. Approved. The by-laws were last updated in 2011. This was discussed at the February meeting. Changing the by-laws requires a quorum (50%) board and 20% of membership. Before the printing of the directory, the committee chairs will need to be updated. Evelyn will check with those currently listed on the committees to make sure they are still willing to serve.

Mini-Grant Application: The Grants committee submitted a mini-grant application from Erica Jones for the Christiansburg Library project with recommendation to approve. Nina moved to approve—passed.

Speaker Gratuity: Speakers are currently given a \$15 gratuity. Susan said that in the past, any increase in the gratuity was provided by the Vice-President. Recommended increasing to \$25. Would add up to an additional \$80 for the remainder of the year. Nina moved to increase the gratuity to \$25. Approved.

Lock Box: Kelli said that the association will need to provide a lock box to continue to receive mail or payments. It would be kept in the filing cabinet. Would have a slot in the top. Lynn moved to obtain a lock box—approved.

Membership Forms: From Leslie via Kelli—who gets them? Evelyn gets the forms, Sharon gets the money.

Scholarship for Financial need: Wendy noted that there were a few members who would be financially stressed to pay for the background checks currently required by Extension. Also applies to membership dues for a few members. Could money be designated out of the treasury to cover this? Beth and Nina offered to fund a scholarship fund for financial need. Maureen moved to establish a Scholarship Committee to determine those in need. Approved. Wendy was appointed to head up this committee, Sharon will hold the funds in the association treasury, but the funds will not be restricted to members. Funds will be available to all NRV Master Gardeners.

Virginia Master Gardener Association: Erica wondered if we should be more involved with the state organization. Lynn will forward membership information to our members. Wendy moved to table any further discussion until April meeting—approved. **Grapevine:** Kelli brought up that it may not be appropriate for Leslie Mathew, the MG coordinator, to be the editor of the Grapevine. The board approved her taking on that job at the January board meeting. It was felt that since she had a lot of experience with graphics and writing, she would be much appreciated in the role. Lynn currently mails six copies to members who prefer a hard copy. The rest are electronic. **Intern member of board:** Kelli will bring it up at the next trainee class. Meeting was adjourned at 8:00 pm.

Minutes NRVMGGA Board Meeting, VT Greenhouse classroom April 9, 2015

The meeting was called to order by co-President Erica Jones at 5:50 pm. In attendance: Erica Jones, Beth Kirby, Maureen Fallon, Nina Templeton, Annette Perry, Leslie Mathews.

Treasurer's Report: Submitted earlier in week by Sharon Eifried. March activity: Deposits of \$210. Scholarship fund expenditures of \$25. Mini-grant awarded--\$100. Total balance: 4066.99. Ameriprise account has been closed and funds transferred to BB&T account. Approved.

Secretary Minutes: Many changes were made to the minutes since the last meeting. Maureen moved to approve the currently amended minutes. Approved.

Grants committee: no new applications for mini-grants.

OLD BUSINESS: Directory: The grants project list will not be included in the new directory but can be sent to all members. It will also be available on the MG website. Maureen, Evelyn Melia and Leslie are working on updating the membership list. The new membership roster will be sent to paid members.

By-laws Committee: Maureen and Kelli Scott would like another member from the general membership on the committee. Jon Freeborn will be helping with the approval process. This is on hold until after the plant sale.

Nominations/voting: There are 53 paid members and some unpaid members coming in from the new trainee class. Once all have been added, the voting instrument will be sent out via email. 25% of the membership must vote to be valid. No other members have been nominated for the office. It was suggested to put on the email that the Board recommended the vote for Erica.

Plant Sale: Beth reported that there were two meetings last week to update the department leaders. Linda Harris had good suggestions for presentation in the Annuals Department. Vendor solicitations are going well. We are hoping to have the plants in our possession a few days prior to the sale so pricing can be coordinated. Beth asked for board members to be aware of the local plant prices.

There is a conflict with location at the Govt Center. There is a concurrent meeting in the facility that morning which will necessitate moving the sale to the grassy area in front of the building. Parking may be compromised early in the sale. Beth is going to contact neighboring businesses to see if we can use their parking lots for a couple of hours at the beginning of the sale.

NEW BUSINESS: Board meeting location. It was discussed that the VT Greenhouse classroom may be an easier venue, with few date or time limitations. We will approach those Board members to see if there is major conflict with moving to the classroom from the Govt center.

Committees: Discussion about the History/Records committee. Gwen Ewing was in charge last year. Erica felt that it is important to maintain old newsletters, directories, information.

Outreach committee: Getting our information out in to the community, Facebook, etc. Leslie noted that she had been approached by local AARP to display a table/booth at the upcoming AARP seminar at the Inn at VT in September. They want a \$25 registration fee. It was decided that having a table would be a good idea but only if we could do at no charge. Beth moved that we pursue this project as long as it can be done with no expense. Approved.

Maureen is working with Brenda Drake to have an article in the Roanoke Times to highlight the community involvement of area students with the Master Gardener program. We suggested that a letter be written to each student who helps with the painting of the rain barrels thanking each for community service.

Fund Raising committee: Maureen and Beth and will approach Stan Stanley since he is instrumental in the Rain Barrel workshops.

The next board meeting would normally be scheduled for May 7. Since the graduation/potluck is the next day, and the plant sale is on the 9th, the plan for the meeting was left open pending upcoming necessity. We may hold a meeting at the end of month that would serve as both May/June information.

The meeting was adjourned at 6:30 pm.

Respectfully submitted, Beth Kirby, Secretary

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 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 Leslie Mathews at lesliem2@vt.edu.

Webmaster and List serve Administrator

Erica Jones emjones@vt.edu

Grapevine Editor

Leslie Mathews lesliem2@vt.edu

Contact Us

Executive Board

President

Erica Jones emjones@vt.edu

Vice President

Susan Lockwood svlockwood@aol.com

Secretary

Beth Kirby cattailspring@hotmail.com

Treasurer

Sharon Eifried seifried@towson.edu

Members at Large

Evelyn Melia meliano@comcast.net

Nina Templeton ntemplet@verizon.net

Annette Perry

Lara Miller laras.soaps@gmail.com

NRV Master Gardener Coordinator

Leslie Mathews lesliem2@vt.edu

New River Valley Master Gardener Association
Virginia Cooperative Extension
Montgomery County Office
755 Roanoke St., Suite 1G
Christiansburg, VA 24073
(540) 382-5790

nrvmastergardeners@googlegroups.com

Find us on the web at www.civic.bev.net/nrvmga



Virginia Tech • Virginia State University

www.ext.vt.edu

Virginia Cooperative Extension programs and employment are open to all, regardless of race, color, national origin, sex, religion, age, disability, political beliefs, sexual orientation, genetic information, marital, family, or veteran status, or any other basis protected by law. An equal opportunity/affirmative action employer. Issued in furtherance of Cooperative Extension work, Virginia Polytechnic Institute and State University, Virginia State University, and the U.S. Department of Agriculture cooperating. Edwin J. Jones, Director, Virginia Cooperative Extension, Virginia Tech, Blacksburg; Jewel E. Hairston, Administrator, 1890 Extension Program, Virginia State, Petersburg.

**New River Valley Master Gardener Association
Virginia Cooperative Extension
Montgomery County Office
755 Roanoke St., Suite 1G
Christiansburg, VA 24073**