

# GRAPEVINE



New River Valley Master Gardener Association Newsletter

June/July 2016

## It's Summer in the New River Valley!

There are lots of things going on in the New River Valley! Here are a few highlights of this year, so far, and some things to look forward to!



Monarch on Echinacea. Photo by Deanna Reid

- ◆ The **Annual NRVMA Plant Sale** on May 7th was a success due to lovely donations from local businesses, Master Gardeners, and community members! Kevin Crispin's lawn mower and wagon made set up and tear down fast and easy. Thank you to all who volunteered before, during, and after the sale!
- ◆ **Share the Spare** is still going on at both the Blacksburg and Christiansburg Farmer's Markets!
- ◆ The **Help Desk** at the Montgomery County Extension Office has been kept busy this spring and summer! Lots of horticultural questions have been answered!
- ◆ The **May Plant Clinics at Lowe's** in Radford, a new project for 2016, were a huge success! Marianne Pagington answered plant questions, handed out information, and talked to over 85 people during her Plant Clinics each Saturday this past May! Lowe's wants Master Gardeners to do this again next year!
- ◆ The **Montgomery Museum** has had several workdays to get the gardens in shape for the summer. In addition to Master Gardener help, the Cub Scouts spent an evening helping Beth Umberger get things looking nice. The museum's **Heritage Day** is coming up in August and Master Gardeners will be there with a Plant Clinic booth!
- ◆ The **21st Annual New River Valley Garden Tour** was a success! It was held July 9th and featured 7 gardens in and around Blacksburg.
- ◆ The **Eastmont TomatoFest** in Shawsville is August 20th! Master Gardeners will have a tomato-themed Plant Clinic and the day will be "ripe" with fun!
- ◆ Watch Deanna's **Weekly Update Emails** for more upcoming events and information!

"And so with the sunshine and the great bursts of leaves growing on the trees, just as things grow in fast movies, I had that familiar conviction that life was beginning over again with the summer."

— F. Scott Fitzgerald, *The Great Gatsby*

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2016 Plant Sale Fairy Gardens, Photo by Maureen Fallon

## NRVMGA Annual Plant Sale, Christiansburg, May 2016

Project Lead: Beth Kirby MG, photos by Deanna Reid, MG Coordinator

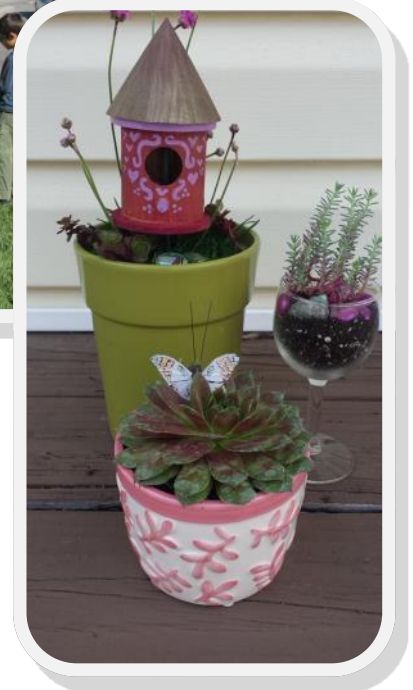
New for 2016!

Fairy Gardens made by Gwen Douglas, Maureen Fallon, and Deanna Reid added a bit of imagination to the plant sale.



'In the spring, at the end of the day, you should smell like dirt.'

-Margaret Atwood





## From the Coordinator's Desk

By Deanna Reid, NRV MG Coordinator

New River Valley Master Gardeners are busy! Between plant clinics at Farmer's Markets and fairs, educational trips and seminars, gardening projects, and meetings, I'm not sure how you all have time to sleep! Needless to say, you're keeping me busy, which is great! Keep up the good work!

In the relatively short time that I have been the Coordinator, I have greatly enjoyed working with you, the NRV Master Gardeners! I've noticed a few things about your group that I wanted to share.

First, immediately upon my arrival at VCE, it was clear to me that NRV Master Gardeners have an insatiable hunger to volunteer and to be part of the community. Braving the elements: sun, wind, rain, snow, you, the Master Gardeners are present in community events. If something needs to be done, I know that all one has to do is ask and it will happen. In the same way, when someone has an emergency or can't make it to a scheduled event, another Master Gardener will fill in and the show will go on. It is obvious that Master Gardeners are a dedicated community of volunteers working to better the greater New River Valley Community.

Second, there are so many different talents that make up this organization! We have artists, teachers, presenters, builders, mathematicians, helpers, thinkers. I list these characteristics not as specific trades, but as pieces of the NRV Master Gardener Association puzzle. These unique pieces allow Master Gardeners to impact the community in many positive ways. As the coordinator, I am very excited about all of the things that we are currently part of and also about future opportunities because I know that, put together, all of the talents that the NRV Master Gardener Association members possess do great things and make a difference!

Third, the NRV Master Gardeners are diverse. Not only do we have different backgrounds, we all have different interests and hobbies and our program reflects that diversity. Since we span four counties and have so many areas of interest, this helps us reach out to and give the opportunity for learning to many people.

We're almost halfway through the year now and we've already done so much, but it's not over yet! We still have the Newport, Montgomery County, and Floyd County Fairs, the Montgomery Museum's Heritage Day, the Eastmont TomatoFest and much more to enjoy!

I am grateful to be able to work with all of you and look forward to continuing to help build and strengthen the NRV Master Gardener Program and Association!

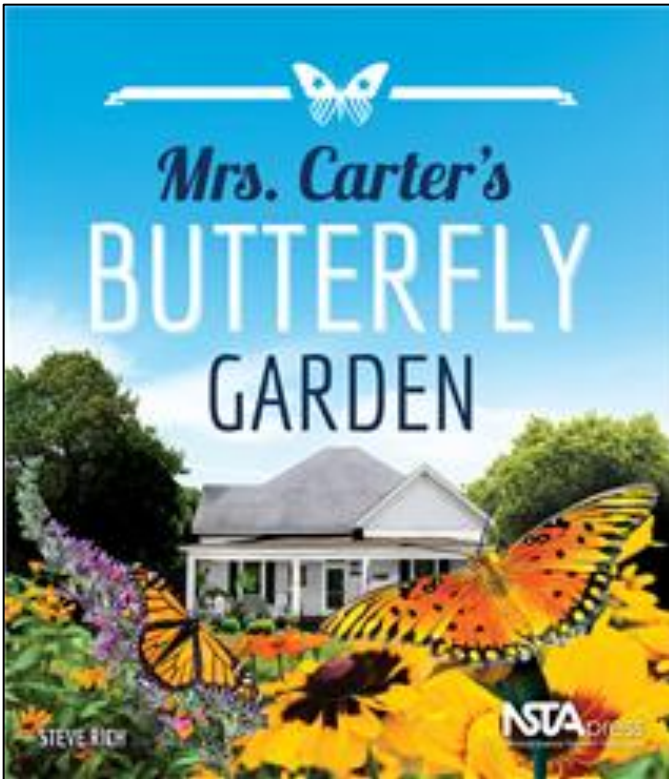
Sincerely,



Deanna Reid



## Book Review for Master Gardener Youth Projects



### **Mrs. Carter's Butterfly Garden** By Erica Jones , MG

This book is based on former first lady Roselyn Carter's work with gardens. It tells about how her own butterfly garden grew into a whole trail of butterflies in Plains, Georgia. The story points out that butterflies are good for people and details how a school might grow butterflies.

This book, fourth grade and under reading level, has been awarded "The Outstanding Science Trade Book" from the National Association of Science Teachers (NSTA).

If you have a book review or children's activity that you would like to share with other Master Gardeners or if you are in need of an activity or book idea, contact Deanna!



# Travels With(out) Charles

By Erica Jones, MG

## Downtown Lynchburg –

Charles-the-dog has been grounded lately, but the rest of us have been out and about. We got to spend a couple of hours in downtown Lynchburg one lovely Saturday early this spring (we got there by steam train but that is another story).

Lynchburg, for us has definitely been a neglected place. I frequented the downtown years ago when I was trying to get a very large piece of lumber planed down to make a mantel piece but past that I have zoomed past. But this April we got to poke around for a couple of hours.

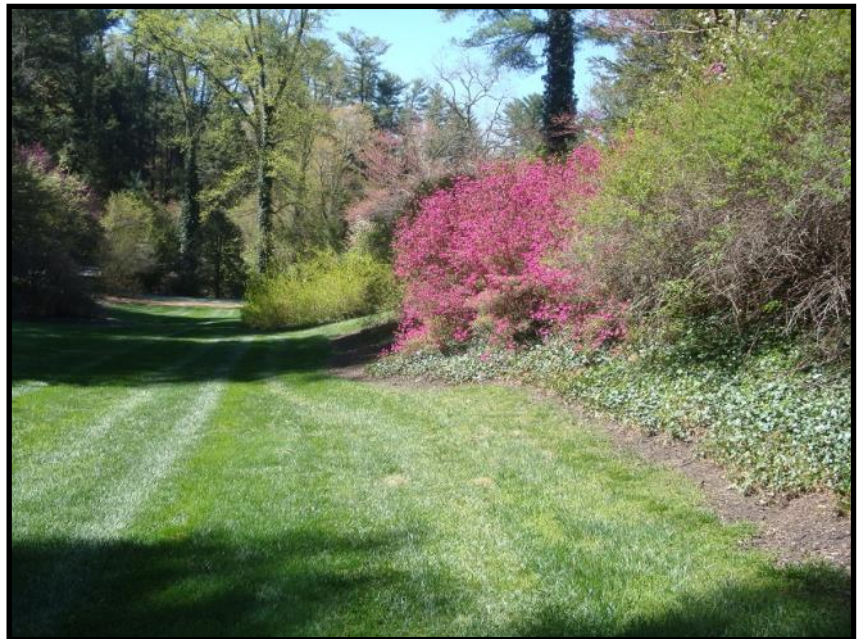
Lynchburg is right along the James River. If you park along the James River at “Amazement Square”, you can zigzag up a sidewalk going up the steep river bank past some urban sidewalk gardens on your way to the current location for the community/farmer’s market on 1219 Main Street. The market is closed Sunday and Monday. As markets go it is a nice one; especially since their second “mission” is to “celebrate the regions food tradition”. Good idea.

If you continue walking uphill, you can get to the Lynchburg Museum at 901 Court St. which is a small but very well done museum. When you exit just keep going and you will see Monument Terrace – the memorial walk going down the (very steep) hill. In front of you. Each landing celebrates one of the wars we participated in. The landscaping is well done for such a steep slope.

## Biltmore, Asheville NC

Part of the NC spring garden bus tour organized by Robert McDuffie was a stop at the Biltmore estate. Truthfully Biltmore was down on my list of reasons why I went on the tour - having been there a bazillion times; BUT I have never been there during azalea season.

To get to the “house” (a mere 250 rooms) Olmstead laid out a three mile ambling drive through forests and along waterways which is called the Approach Road. In itself it is extremely nice. Do note the woven wire fencing around some of the roadside plantings (esp. the rhododendrons). The estate grounds are surrounded by deer fence complete with cattle guards in places. You can hike/bike/ride on trails over much of the 8,000 acre grounds.





We got delivered by our small bus just inside the entrance (and the deer fence) but at the far end of the esplanade in front of the house. So we tromped up the Rampe Douce which forms a diamond shaped walkway up the bluff. The ramps have one turn back in them before it ends at the base of the large grassy expanse leading up to the statue of Diana (goddess of the hunt). Our enthused leader wanted us to have our first taste of the estate probably as it was really meant to be seen - from that fairly far away location in front of the house. Then he tortured us by talking landscape architecture before we got turned loose in the gardens. Phew.

The Biltmore gardens are a collection of some six different gardens of different styles, greenhouses and a small sales area. The aforementioned azaleas are very much cultivars of our native wild varieties, which was a nice addendum to our previous tour stop at a wildflower (mostly shrubs) nursery. If you were to totally tour the gardens all the way down to the Bass Pond you could easily spend four hours. Bring your lunch; food is available but tends to be mobbed (and, I think, pricey).

Asheville is a fun place to visit, also; to quote Wikipedia it has a “strong tradition of street performance.”



*Robert McDuffie can be spotted in the tulips.*

*Visitors just went wild over the tulips (which I am pretty sure were grown in pots and stuck in the ground).*



*We stopped in to visit the solitary Carriage House resident.*

## Touring Private Gardens (The NC Spring 2016 trip, continued)

Before I went on any of Robert McDuffy's trips I was not real keen on the idea of visiting the garden of a private house. How could they be better than a big public garden? Well, here is where you can get ideas that you can apply to your own yard and not just say "ooo" and "ahhh" over a display of plants you could never duplicate at home.

When we were in NC this spring we got to stop at two houses tucked at the base of a mountain range outside of Asheville. Needless to say their climate looks to be very much like ours in this neck of the woods.

The first house was owned by a landscape architect which was a tad intimidating until we got the house and she started talking about how many times she had redone major parts of the yard. So no, even the professionals do not always do it like they want it to turn out. This house was on a south slope, and the second one was on a north slope. What they could easily grow definitely varied.

To get to the first house we got to hike into the property along the old construction road, past her detached workshop and into the side yard. This entrance gave us a real feel for "yes, this is mountain property." The front yard was quite sloped and heavily planted with a fairly wild feel and not a blade of grass to be seen. The back yard had sun, grass, places to socialize and the all-important fenced raised beds on one side.



I was particularly intrigued with what she did in the area where lawn met woods. She planted an in-between step of shrubs to graduate the height and, I bet, to make maintenance easier. Odd things can show up growing in woods edges; the shrub have enough height to discourage some of that.

The second house was on an even steeper lot which was mostly north facing. This homeowner also had a fenced area for growing veggies and tree fruit which was near the entrance road (so had motorized accessibility) but was a bit of a distance from the house. The location was selected

where they could find enough sun in this generally north sloped lot.

The part of the landscape that really struck me was how the boxwoods were treated next to the house. What a fun idea! (See photo). Growing right beside the house there was an example of how plant labels lie. Some "shrubs" will gladly grown into "small trees"; the owner had kept it pruned around the girth to keep the shrub somewhat in bounds in this fairly shady yard. This shrub acted as shade and flower interest for the second level deck. You need to read a reputable source such as "Manual of Woody Landscape Plants" for the real scoop on plant height. For example, Rose of Sharon (*Hibiscus syriacus*) gets up to 12 feet tall, and *Taxus* can get 50' and much more.



## Some Rambling Thoughts on PI

By Erica Jones, MG

My current beef on common names is related to a resident of my garden of which I have way too much of – *Toxicodendron radicans*. The previously mentioned Wikipedia does not even mention what some folks around here call it – poison OAK (which is *T. diversilobum*). So, neighbor, got that?!! The stuff we have is NOT OAK. *R. rybergii* is mentioned as “western poison ivy” in Wikipedia.

In any case, this seems to be a banner year for Poison Ivy (PI), even outstripping the other native groundcover of which I have plenty - Virginia Creeper or *Parthenocissus quinquefolia* (which I saw once being sold at a local garden center).

A good friend of mine sent me this photograph (right) taken at the NC Arboretum.



Yes, I am all for educating folks but we both giggled. She wanted to know how they kept it contained. I suspect submerged container. They would have to do SOMETHING. But golly gee, my PI looks better than that!

This is *T. r.* (left) in a much more people friendly format, taken 12 hours after being cut at the base. It still has not given up completely I don't think.



Now THIS is a better specimen, would not you agree? Nice shine here. (pictured right)

In all seriousness I have met lots of people who do not know how to identify poison ivy. If I am having any outdoor session of any sort where there is PI present I like to start with a short ID session.



## Planting Time at the YMCA in Pulaski

By Sharon Eifried, MG



The advent of spring welcomed a bevy of activity for the children enrolled in the Child Development Center at the YMCA of Pulaski County. Enriched soil and compost were added to four raised beds just in time for planting seeds and celebrating Earth Day. Rain did not interfere with the fun related to gardening because on Earth day the children participated in indoor activities related to gardening. First, there was a lesson related to a plant's need for sun, healthy soil and water



in order to grow.



Next, the children created plant markers for the seeds that would be planted on a future sunny day. With the help of special visitors from AmeriCorps and Beans & Rice, Inc., the morning class of preschool children joyously painted 16 wooden spoons to be used to label rows of radish, carrot, beet, lettuce and snap pea seeds. At least most of the paint

ended up on the spoons! Luckily, the spoons were dry by afternoon when the after-school children were ready to decorate the spoons and label them with the names of the plants.



The following week the children celebrated a sunny Arbor Day by planting an apple tree in a garden in front of the YMCA. This was also the day the children happily placed their wooden spoon plant markers in the raised beds and sowed their seeds.

The children love watering their garden and harvesting the produce. Recently the children enjoyed snacks of radishes and snap peas and were even able to harvest enough lettuce for their salads! In May, the children added pepper, cucumber, zucchini, basil, dill, sage and parsley plants to the

beds. Luckily, the rain barrels are full and the school age children are enjoying their watering responsibilities.



## Teaching Kids [Some] Horticulture

by Erica Jones, MG

I got a mini grant this year for an afterschool garden program at McCleary Elementary School in New Castle for second through fifth graders. The schedule was limited by the principals' worries about SOLs (do NOT get me started) so we were given 4 days total or 2 hours per day over an 8-day span. Two hours is, I think, way too long a time span, but the 4-H agent insisted. OK ,OK.

The Craig 4-H agent wanted an herb theme. The 4-H agent and I split up who was going to bring the snacks, which were all flavored with herbs. The ham/cheese/oregano quiche was a total hit with adult types but a bit foreign for a lot of the kids. She also had them fill out an evaluation form each day.

Obviously one week is not a long enough time span to really grow anything, but here is what we did anyway. On the first day I had them plant seeds in some existing, pretty much full sun beds which I had previously weeded. To my horror, the beds had been lined with landscape fabric with about 3" or potting mix on top. The landscape fabric came out. The seeds I picked were okra and cilantro - - both large seeds and I thought, if push comes to shove, the cilantro would come up, which it did. I had hoped that the okra might germinate before the eight days ended but they did not. (My attempt at presoaking some seeds backfired, alas).

While some children were planting seeds in short rows I supervised unpotting and transplanting some purchases, and home grown herbs. I also had them put on 2 Rainbow Swiss Chard. We discussed "annual" and "perennial" and "herb" and Swiss Chard. No one admitted to having eaten okra before.

The second day they mixed a large batch of potting mix and planted about one gallon sized pots with marjoram, dill, basil and a smattering of other herbs to take home. I also printed up, in adult language, one page of information on Container Care.

The third day they potted up small dish gardens with assorted sedum, much of which I had grown, and one purchased variety. This was their favorite hands-on activity. The containers came from Goodwill and were enhanced with the application of a 3/8" glass/stone drill bit, a drill press and a squirt bottle of water. The kids had a pick of some (purchased) shiny round rocks for a more desert effect. Our 4-H agent also had a "real" soil sampler so we had some discussion on soils.

The fourth day was what the mini grant paid for – a trip to the Hahn Horticulture Garden. I had poked around there the previous week to see what was "out" (or in?). It was also suggested I have a treasure hunt with the kids. The young man who got "green flower" obviously thought I was nuts but begrudgingly admitted that yes, there were several. They were pretty well behaved but we also had three adults with the 12 kids. They had about 90 minutes at the garden which was about enough. I tried to talk about the different micro climates but I am not sure that was particularly appealing.



**Notes from the 2016 Virginia Master Gardener Association Annual Meeting**  
by Erica Jones MG, NRVMGGA President

Our “parent” association has an annual meeting at Master Gardener College; this year it was on Sunday evening, along with a live auction. [Past years there has been a silent auction]. It was my impression that donations were down. Next year I think we need to encourage donations from NRVMGGA. In 2015, the silent auction brought in \$4200.

Money from the auctions goes to the endowment that VMGA has started to support the position of state coordinator. Having someone (or several people) to help keep things running smoothly is a big plus for us down in the trenches. And then “college” happens, also. The scoop is that donations go into the endowment (which is currently up to \$317,000), and any income from that endowment can be used for current projects. Last year the endowment earned some \$24,000 which is being spent on on-line training “modules” (it was not clear that any of them are up and running at this time); there are three currently done and the state office hope to have six finished by September.

VMGA always has booth at the Virginia State Fair. I talked to a couple of MGs who had fond memories of running the booth. At the booth they use “QR” (quick response) codes for accessing information for people that own a mobile device. They are always looking for fairly quick activities (two minute!) for visiting children at the booth. Last year the visitors made paper houses for pollinators. VMGA is part of a series of educational booths that some younger attendees have to visit before they get to go to the fun stuff like the rides. State fair this year is Sept 23-Oct 2 which means there a lot of person hours are needed, and a there will be lot of educational opportunities for visitors to the booth.

The scholarship committee gave a report on scholarships to the college. They had some 13 applications and acknowledged the five recipients at the meeting. They do give preference to VMGA members.

The “brag board” winner was from Virginia Beach. These are always impressive to view to see what MGs can do in more urban areas.

VMGA currently has approximately 560 members including a smallish number of “life” members.

And finally, their annual education event will be September 17<sup>th</sup> this fall in Richmond. They are sponsoring tours of Maymont and the Lewis Ginter gardens (two tours per location). Participation is limited to 60 total; 30 per group. They are setting up a speaker who is knowledgeable about that garden at each of the sites. Maymont requires a lot of walking. More information will show up soon on this tour; hopefully at [www.vmga.net](http://www.vmga.net).

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

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 Deanna Reid at [drreid@vt.edu](mailto:drreid@vt.edu)

### Existing Projects that could use your help:

- Christiansburg Farmer's Market Share the Spare Booth  
<https://www.facebook.com/ChristiansburgFarmersMarket>
- Christiansburg "Farmacy Garden (WIC Community Garden)  
<https://www.facebook.com/The-Farmacy-Garden-701610999960624/?fref=ts>

### New Project Opportunities:

- Claytor Lake State Park: *Pollinator Garden, Cabin Planter Boxes, Rain Barrel installation*
- Hale YMCA Community Garden & Food Forest Garden

### Create your own Master Gardener Project!

- If you have an idea for a Master Gardener Project, contact Deanna! Master Gardener projects must be horticulture related and must have an educational component that benefits the community. A project application form is available to be filled out and turned in to the Master Gardener Coordinator, Deanna Reid, by email or at the Extension Office.

## Project Highlight: Lowe's Plant Clinic—Fairlawn

NRV Master Gardener Marianne Fox-Pagington started a Spring Plant Clinic at Lowe's in Fairlawn in May and it was a huge success!

She set her booth up each Saturday during the month of May and answered all kinds of plant and plant pest questions as shoppers with Spring Fever purchased flowers and vegetables.

"Lowe's is begging us to come back next year!"

If you are interested in setting up Plant Clinics or volunteering at the Fairlawn Lowe's in Spring 2017, please contact Deanna Reid, NRV Master Gardener Coordinator, to set it up.



Plant Clinic Booth at Lowe's in Fairlawn—May 2016

## Gardening Events In & Around the New River Valley

### AUGUST

- 12-13 Newport Fair
- 13-14 Montgomery County Fair
- 15 NRV MGA Educational Meeting,  
Riverbend Nursery
- 20 EastMont Tomato Fest
- 27 Montgomery Museum Heritage Day

### SEPTEMBER

- 14 AARP-VCOM Health & Wellness Fair
- 17 Floyd Livestock & Country Fair
- 17 VMGA Education Symposia, Richmond, VA

### Event Highlight:

**Montgomery County Fair August 13 at 10:00 AM. The Montgomery County Extension Office is proud to put on the Montgomery County Fair at the Alphin-Stuart Arena at Virginia Tech!**

**Contact Deanna Reid to volunteer at the MG Plant Clinic & Children's Activity Booth!**

### Upcoming NRV MGA Meetings:

Plants with Fall Interest Talk & Tour by Thomas Buckley  
Tuesday, August 15, 6pm at Riverbend Nursery, Riner

**Bloomin' Bucks**  
with Brent and Becky's Bulbs

Thank you for choosing to support  
**New River Valley Master Gardeners**

Brent & Becky's Bulbs is a proud supporter of the Master Gardener Program in Virginia! Their Bloomin' Bucks Fundraising program allows 25% of a purchase to go to an organization of your choice. The NRV Master Gardener program is a registered organization! If you are making a bulb purchase, remember to go to [www.bloominbucks.com](http://www.bloominbucks.com) and select "NRV Master Gardener Association," then continue your shopping!



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Website: [www.nrvmga.org](http://www.nrvmga.org)

#### NRV Master Gardener Coordinator

Deanna Reid

New River Valley Master Gardener Association  
Virginia Cooperative Extension

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 NRV MGA 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 Deanna Reid.

#### Webmaster and List serve Administrator

Erica Jones

#### *Grapevine* Editor

Deanna Reid



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