



# The Grapevine

December 2011

## New River Valley Master Gardeners Association

### ***New River Valley Master Gardeners***

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

*The Grapevine* welcomes news, articles, questions, editorials, and comments. *The Grapevine* is published monthly and provided to all active members of the NRV MGA. Non-members may subscribe for \$15/yr. Please submit all items to the Newsletter Editor **by the 25th** in order to be included in next month's issue.

#### **Officers**

President – Connie Lawson 674-6127 [conniel@vt.edu](mailto:conniel@vt.edu)  
Vice president – Helen Young – 392-2292 [helen.young@verison.net](mailto:helen.young@verison.net)  
Vice president – Ini Beckman – 552-2873 [inibeckman@yahoo.com](mailto:inibeckman@yahoo.com)  
Secretary – Rosemarie Sawdon – 540-953-0379 [sawdon@msn.com](mailto:sawdon@msn.com)  
Treasurer – Erica Jones – 544-7359 [emjones@vt.edu](mailto:emjones@vt.edu)  
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Past president – Gwen Ewing – 382-9566 [ewinggr@vt.edu](mailto:ewinggr@vt.edu)  
Open Position, Trainee Member-at-Large

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#### **Contact Us:**

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On behalf of the New River Valley Master Gardeners Association I would like to offer our sincere condolences to Connie Lawson and family on the death of Buddy Lawson, Connie's husband. In lieu of flowers, Connie is asking to please donate to the retirement fund at Fairlawn Baptist Church, Radford, Virginia.

## **Season's Greetings!**

### **2011 Year in Review...**

**50 Projects** - Most of them successful, with the big ones being a new garden project at MACY in Giles, Share the Spare, the Juvenile Detention Center, Junior Master Gardener Program, Pulaski Library Plantanimal Zoo Garden, Louis Gale Cancer Care Compass Garden, Floyd talks at the library, and Hahn Gardens just to name a few.

**85 active Master Gardeners**

**16 trainees**, most of have earned full MG status

**Fantastic NRV MGA Meetings**

**Launched the NRV Extension Master Gardener Helpdesk**

**To date... a total of 5,479 hours of service and training**

It has been a great year and I look forward to the 2012 NRV Master Gardener year of giving, fun, and friendship. Have a great holiday, may everyone who is traveling be safe.

Wendy Silverman, NRV Master Gardener Coordinator

## **MINUTES OF THE NEW RIVER VALLEY MASTER GARDENER ASSOCIATION BOARD MEETING November 14<sup>th</sup>, 2011**

Location: Government Building, Christiansburg, Extension Office

In Attendance: Connie Lawson, Helen Young, Erica Jones, Wendy Silverman  
Lynn Brammer, Ini Beckman, Rosemarie Sawdon,  
Keith Mileski, Gwen Ewing

Meeting called to order by Connie at approximately 5:35pm.

Minutes from October 17<sup>th</sup> meeting approved, with correction of date for annual Potluck on Friday, November 18<sup>th</sup>.

Erica presented Treasurer's Report which was accepted.  
Summary \$3430.63 in Checking - \$4670.44 in Grants

Treasurer's Report will be presented at general meeting on November 18<sup>th</sup>.  
Keith suggested that there be a breakdown of grant money, showing outstanding

balance, if any.

Rosemarie closed post office box, at Wendy's request, and gave Erica refund check.

Mailing address to be changed in 2012 Directory to:

Virginia Cooperative Extension  
Montgomery County Office  
755 Roanoke Street, Suite 1G  
Christiansburg, VA 24073

All mail will be in Wendy's office, drawer on back wall.

Lynn gave names for 2012 Board Members which will be presented to members at general meeting, November 18<sup>th</sup>, for approval.

Connie Lawson, President; Ini Beckman, Vice President; Rosemarie Sawdon, Secretary; Bob Lockwood, Treasurer. Additional names may be presented at meeting.

Members at Large, appointed, are: Lynn Brammer, Gwen Ewing, Donna Fern, Erica Jones.

Board reconfirmed the \$10.00 per person dues to be charged for 2012.

Two forms will be available at the general meeting, namely, dues form and membership form.

Copy of revised By-Laws will be presented for approval. 1000 bookmarks have been printed and will be available per Ini.

Supplies, drinks, table decorations, etc., were mentioned and will be arranged by members at large. Also mentioned was dish and serving spoon for the potluck to feed members and guests, estimated to be approximately 50-60.

A 50/50 raffle will be held, as well as, drawings for the door prizes. Erica is arranging for tickets.

There will also be a book/magazine exchange on the honor system.

Pins for previous awards will be presented by Wendy.

Wendy will also give a brief review of International Master Gardener Conference she attended in West Virginia.

#### **NEW BUSINESS:**

Wendy said she has received 9 applications for the 2012 class. Applications will be reviewed at Board Meeting, Monday, December 5<sup>th</sup>, 5:30pm.

It was suggested that Delbert Jones be asked to be Historian.

Ini suggested a booklet or flyer of the different activities and involvements of our “educational” organization. This will provide a clear understanding of the various projects, grants, officers, job descriptions, etc.

Ini outlined her thoughts on this in a November 15th email to the committee members, Lynn, Gwen, Wendy, Rosemarie.

A meeting has been arranged to continue this work on *Monday, December 12<sup>th</sup>, 5:30pm at the Extension Office.*

Board Meeting scheduled for Monday, January ? To be confirmed.

Meeting adjourned at approximately 6:55pm.

Submitted by: Rosemarie Sawdon

**MINUTES OF NEW RIVER VALLEY MASTER GARDENER ASSOCIATION  
ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING & POTLUCK  
November 18, 2011**

Government Building, Christiansburg Meeting began with potluck supper enjoyed by all.

At 6:40 pm Connie began general business meeting.

She introduced new By-Law revisions which were accepted, and approved, by majority in attendance.

Wendy presented certificate awards for volunteered hours to: Evelyn Melia, Sylvester Stanley, Micky Balconi, Patti Hall, Connie Lawson

Wendy announced that out of the 16 trainees for the 2011 class, nine have completed 50 volunteer hours. Also there will be new forms for future projects.

Wendy also thanked the 2011 Board members for their cooperation and work and presented them with a lovely jar of local honey.

Lynn gave an update on “Share the Spare” project and how it has grown from the first year. Three food banks receive the donations, namely, Plenty in Floyd, Dwelling Food Ministry and Fieldstone in Christiansburg.

She stated the project is on FaceBook and encouraged everyone to check it out and click “like”.

Lynn also talked about our Plant Sale fund raiser scheduled for next May and asked folks to think about donating plants from their garden. Also send pictures to David Helscher. who is our official photographer.

Another topic is "Stadium Woods", on the Tech campus, a portion of which has been chosen as the location for a new football athletic practice facility. Lynn encouraged everyone to write letters to the Board of Visitors, and others, to protect this historic old growth forest, a complete ecological system, and suggest the facility be built in another location. There is also an on line petition.

Connie resumed by introducing the nominees for the executive board, as well as members at large. She asked if anyone would like to add a name for nomination. No further names were presented, and the nominees were approved by the members.

President, Connie Lawson; Vice President Ini Beckman; Treasurer, Bob Lockwood; Secretary, Rosemarie Sawdon  
Members at Large: Lynn Brammer, Gwen Ewing, Donna Fern, Erica Jones

Connie also thanked the outgoing Board members, Helen Young and Erica Jones for their dedicated service.

NRVMGA Annual General Meeting & Potluck

Next, Gwen introduced Grant recipients who gave a presentation of their respective projects.

Belview Elementary School Garden  
Harding Elementary  
Global Buckets, 20 People grow Global Buckets in Shawsville area  
Christiansburg Public Library Water Garden  
Heritage Hall Courtyard  
Christiansburg Museum Native Plant Garden  
Pulaski County Public Library Zoo Garden  
Eastern Montgomery Elementary Butterfly Garden

Connie then brought attention to membership forms on each table, namely New River Valley Master Gardener Association Membership 2012 and VCE Master Gardener Continuation Contract 2012. A \$10.00 per person membership dues has been reinstated for 2012, payable to NRVMGA; approved by membership.

Something new in 2012, a new database where members will fill in their volunteer hours. Training on this is scheduled early 2012.

Business meeting concluded; followed by door prizes and raffle drawing.

Submitted by: Rosemarie Sawdon

**NEW RIVER VALLEY MASTER GARDENER ASSOCIATION  
BOARD MEETING  
December 5<sup>th</sup>, 2011**

Government Office Building, Christiansburg, Extension Office

Members in attendance: Erica Jones, Helen Young, Ini Beckman, Gwen Ewing,  
Rosemarie Sawdon, Lynn Brammer, Bob Lockwood,  
Donna Fern, Wendy Silverman

Meeting began at approximately 5:30pm.

Purpose of meeting was to review applications for 2012 class. Wendy provided the applications to those present for suggestions and confirmation. Twenty applications, with a possibility of one more sent by email, were received. Jon Vest and Wendy suggested that all applicants be accepted and the Board members agreed.

Wendy will now follow up with a phone call to emphasize the commitment involved in taking the course, such as attendance and volunteer hours, and to say "come hungry" as food is provided..

First class to begin January 17<sup>th</sup> as an orientation meeting and mixer with NRVMGA members who will provide the food.

Also discussed was the parking issue, and it was decided that there is usually not a problem, except for possible times two basketball games are being played on the same evening. For the first meeting members may consider parking in areas farther away from the Hahn Pavilion to accommodate the trainees.

Ini then brought up the subject of programs for 2012 with some suggestions and asked for additional ones.. Many were given, and Lynn will help Ini in completing the task so that the programs are arranged for the entire year.

The general monthly meetings, with a program, will continue on the third Thursday of each month, 6:30pm - 7:30pm with one half hour dedicated for educational credit. Programs have to be approved by Jon in order to receive educational credit.

Ini also talked about the manual which will be produced outlining specific duties, grant programs and projects. This pamphlet will help new members become oriented more easily, and provide for a smooth transition of officers. The committee will meet on **Monday, December 12<sup>th</sup> at the extension office**

to continue this work.

Also discussed was the **fund raiser Plant Sale on Saturday, May 5<sup>th</sup>, 10<sup>00</sup>am.** location to be determined. Gwen will be in charge of tagging with different color stickers according to price. Other members volunteered to help. Erica suggested plants be arranged according to category, perennials, annuals, herbs, etc..

Helen who organizes the participants and other duties, such as signing in attendees, will not be in town for the Master Gardener College the week of June 18<sup>th</sup>. Rosemarie volunteered to help with this project.

Meeting adjourned at approximately 6:45pm.

Submitted by: Rosemarie Sawdon

### **New Project Beginning By: Jeanne Roper**

The Community Foundation of the NRV recently awarded \$500 to a project called "Gardening With the Very Young." This project, a joint effort of the Master Gardeners, the New River Community Action Head Start program, and the Valley Interfaith Child Care Center, can involve a lot of MGs, and is eligible for service hours.

The project will involve clearing a site at the Head Start Center in Christiansburg, and preparing a raised bed so the children can begin gardening in the spring. A raised bed already exists at the VICCC site, at the Church of the Brethren on Prices Fork Road, Blacksburg, and VICCC's three-year-olds recently planted tulip bulbs for next spring. Grant money, to be used at both sites, will purchase a stock tank for the raised bed, seeds and vegetable starts to be planted next spring, and child-sized garden tools. The plan is for children to raise some of their own vegetables, and to learn the fun of gardening at the same time.

This project should be a lot of fun! For further information, email MG Jeanne Roper, at [roperj@vt.edu](mailto:roperj@vt.edu).

### **4-H Project After School Garden Club Craig County By: Erica Jones**

I did 4-H meetings last spring and this fall; basing activities loosely on the Jr MG Manual (for grades 3-5). Meetings are for 60 minutes once a week. I have had anywhere from 1-4 girls come on Thursdays (4th-8<sup>th</sup> graders); last fall had 2 -3 boys and 1-2 girls. Regardless of sex, they all seem to enjoy working in their little garden area (about 10' by 10') which, amazingly, has very nice soil and almost

full sun! The bed is in an enclosed courtyard area which does not get a lot of people traffic.

This fall I have done a "Plant of the Week" (hint - if it is not blooming, forget it!), leaf cuttings, 2 -3 days of insects (one of the girls is a squealer which never went away completely), flower parts, worm compost, how to transplant, painting bird house gourds, mixing potting mix, annual vs perennial, what is a bulb, paperwhites, how to pull weeds (certainly everyone has met a "gardener" who only pulls the tops off and leaves the roots), and some fruit tasting of pawpaw and persimmon. They wanted to know why the local grocery does not carry pawpaws! The persimmons were not as popular, truthfully.

I've had fun making an insect net for next to nothing (I used row cover for net part) and dug up some of my daffodils to move to the school. I also snuck in some newspaper and straw after one of the sessions and mulched things myself, and weeded twice over the summer. The mulch lesson just was not happening....

The Jr. MG manual does not really have any lessons based on a long term outside plot, interestingly. Working outside takes a lot of time (if you are a 4th grader). I think some of the lesson plans in the book have a lot of froo-froo; but that can be countered nicely by getting dirty if you have access to dirt to play in.

One of the girls seems less interesting in gardening than the other two and must be there for the socialization. She was the one who parked her pot of paperwhites outside, but did not seem very upset when they froze. The more avid gardener was horrified ("you killed it!"). Apparently real gardeners of any age, get upset with people who murder plants.

Next spring I want to grow some green peas and maybe lettuce.

### **Recipe of the Month Cabbage Soup**

Its' that time of year to cook up some great soup using your root vegetables. This tasty soup was served to us several times in Portugal and hope you enjoy. Ingredient amounts are at your discretion. I have made it twice and you cannot go wrong.

Enjoy!

Susan Lockwood

Medium pot half full of hot water  
half pound of sliced/cubed potatoes  
1 leek, white part, chopped  
1 carrot chopped  
1 garlic clove chopped  
4 Tbs. olive oil

Boil potatoes, leek and carrot until tender. Puree. If too thick add more water. Back on stove. Add chopped cabbage and bring to boil and cook about 8-10 minutes (cabbage should not be completely



done). Cabbage can be replaced by spinach, kale and the leeks can be replaced by onions. Salt & pepper to taste.

## **Christiansburg Library Water Garden**

**By: Erica Jones**

The Christiansburg Public Library got a grant for 2011 to put in a “water garden”, and to hold classes in how to put one together and maintain one.

Free standing patio type water containers are fairly difficult to find; or at least one that you can afford. I ended up getting a fiberglass, round one about 12” deep. I was really concerned about getting a traditional shaped “container” – bigger at the top than the base – for fear someone would try to sit on the edge and tip it over. The purchased container is about 3’ across. I figured the bigger the better – less temperature fluctuations and enough room to hold at least 3 plants. Size was important since electricity was not an option to run an air pump; less circulation means less overcrowding needed. No fish; and much to my surprise, no fish appeared in it.

I also decided to get a water garden for my south deck so I could grow a few more things that I could not stuff into the garden in Christiansburg and try more plants. I also figured if the public garden really flopped I would have a backup, or backup plants.

Plant selection was the easy part. The head of the library staff wanted a water lily, so I got a “dwarf” one in red. (Why else have a water garden??). A more standard size lily would have covered most of the water surface. Besides that, you can put in bog plants (marginals) (shallow water), other submerged plants, and surface floaters.

My experience was that the bog plants are the hardest to keep looking good. I tried variegated bamboo, cardinal flower, lizards’ tail (this plant is easy and blooms in the spring), and a pitcher plant. The pitcher plant was my favorite but it is supposed to be hardy only to zone 7 and I live in a cold 6. We will see if it survives the winter, planted out. The cardinal flower bloomed but did not keep good foliage after that. The bamboo was the least satisfactory – the whole middle of the pot died out. Wrong container for it? The lizards’ tail got repotted into flexible window screening and grew with gusto. The pitcher plant stayed in its original container I got it in (from the Hahn Horticulture Garden spring sale) (never know what you will find there!). It faded some from its original red foliage, I think due to the slight shade on my deck and was fairly short at about 12” tall. Look at the specifications for bog plants - they vary in suggested depth (in the water) planting.

Floaters gave me mixed results. We got a donation of water hyacinth in Christiansburg, and it grew with great gusto. By midsummer I had to park it in the corner of the container as it was shading the water lily. The tiny little duckweed did not do well in either container. They spread a little, but not much. I thought that would be a pest if I had it in the “ecosystem” but apparently not.

The other submerged plants were Anacharis and Echinodorus. Both of these did well, but they were infested with hair grass when I bought them, which proceeded to spread really badly in my deck container. Too much phosphorus is rumored to encourage growth of this algae. Both of these are

inside for the winter; we will see if they survive.

Maintenance was pretty easy for both containers. Both of them got barley straw stuffed into a net onion bag to help reduce algae, and BT dunks for mosquitoes. Truthfully I was expecting major algae blooms but they did not happen. Too much plant competition? The Christiansburg container was probably under fertilized so there was not an excess of NPK floating about. Both containers overflowed some during our spring rainy season but not too badly. I did not get any complaints about it.

Most of the plants came from Springdale Gardens which is near Greenville. Don't go there unless you have good self control. I also got the two submerged plants (and the hairgrass) from a pet store in Christiansburg.

The library got many favorable comments both written and verbal on the garden. And the librarians



got to enjoy it; undoubtedly improving their work experiences too!

## December Garden Chores

### The Whole Garden

- \*Save wood ashes from the fireplace or woodstove for soil amendment.
- \*Continue to weed until the first snow falls.
- \*Apply winter mulches after the ground has frozen.
- \*Bring clay pots and statues made of clay, and some resins indoors.
- \*Stock up on sand or kitty litter to cope with icy paths.

### Trees and Shrubs

- \* Water evergreens, especially newly planted ones, when the ground is not frozen.
- \*Arrange for winter tree pruning.
- \*Prepare for a live Christmas tree now.
- \*Protect shrubs planted under your roofing from snow damage.
- \*Check for mole tunnels and fill them with soil before the ground freezes.

### Flowers and Grasses

- \*Continue starting paperwhites every few weeks for nonstop indoor bloom.
- \*Start seeds of biennial flowers that you want to treat as annuals.
- \*Water houseplants thoroughly, but not too frequently.
- \*Stop feeding houseplants.

### Fruits and Vegetables

- \*Mulch strawberries to insulate them from cycles of freezing and thawing.
- \*Cut fall-bearing raspberries to the ground.
- \*Harvest indoor herbs.

These monthly garden chores have come from a book titled Garden Almanac, A Month-By-Month

Guide published by Country Living Gardener. I do not believe this credit was given when I first began putting them out, but want credit to be given. It is a great little book!



This has been a lot of fun for me to do the Grapevine this year and I very much appreciate all the informative and fun things people have sent me. Let's keep the pace for the coming year. I want to wish all of you a wonderful holiday season and look forward to seeing you in the coming months.

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**New River Valley  
Master Gardener Association  
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Blacksburg, VA 24063**