



The Grapevine

February 2012

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
Vice president – Ini Beckman – 552-2873
inibeckman@yahoo.com
Secretary – Rosemarie Sawdon – 540-953-0379
sawdon@msn.com
Treasurer – Bob Lockwood-639-5982
svlockwood@aol.com
At large – Erica Jones—544-7359 emjones@vt.edu
At large – Lynn Brammer – 449- 6621
lbrammer@vt.edu
At large – Donna Fern—336-380-5242
vafern3@gmail.com
Past president – Gwen Ewing – 382-9566
ewinggr@vt.edu

Communications

Website: <http://civic.bev.net/nrvmga>
Erica Jones: Webmaster and Listserv Administrator
(emjones@vt.edu)
Printed/Mailed Newsletter - Lynn Brammer
lbrammer@vt.edu

Membership and Directory – Evelyn Melia
meliano@comcast.net
Newsletter Editor – Carol Moates
745-4782 cymoates@gmail.com

VCE Master Gardener Program

Wendy Silverman, Coordinator 382-5790

Contact Us:

NRVMGA

NRV MGA Website:
<http://civic.bev.net/nrvmga/>
(Membership Dues, Grants and General
Correspondence) 755 Roanoke St.,
Suite G, Christiansburg, VA 24073
Listserv: nrvmga@listserv.bburg.bev.net

Virginia Cooperative Extension – Montgomery County Office

Website: www.ext.vt.edu
(MG Coordinator and Timesheets)
755 Roanoke Street, Suite G,
Christiansburg, VA 24073
(540) 382-5790 Fax: (540) 382-5729

**MINUTES OF GENERAL MEETING
JANUARY 17TH, 2012
HAHN HORTICULTURE CENTER**

The first general meeting of 2012 was a social, pot luck celebration welcoming the 20 trainees of the 2012 MG class. It was exceptionally well attended with lots of good food and social interaction.

Connie Lawson, President, welcomed the trainees and asked everyone to introduce themselves. MG members joined in the introductions by explaining their prior involvement and how they obtained their volunteer hours sharing their enthusiasm, fun and satisfaction. Connie encouraged everyone to become a member of NRVMGA and to participate in our monthly general meetings. This is an excellent way to earn volunteer hours and in some cases educational hours. She mentioned that everyone is always welcome to attend the Board Meetings held the second Monday of each month at the Government Office Building.

Linda Harris explained many volunteer opportunities are available including working for the Jr. Master Gardener Program, the Hahn garden, school and library gardens, Share the Spare at the Blacksburg Farmers Market, and many others. Many members encouraged the trainees to begin their volunteer hours while they are taking the classes which helps in accumulating the required hours.

Ini Beckman explained that the General Meeting program generally takes place on the third Thursday of each month, however, there are exceptions. The General Meeting in February is Saturday, the 18th at Connie Lawson's apple orchard from 10AM-4PM. This will be a tree pruning session with guidance from Jon Vest and Charlie Elgin. Please bring gloves, pruners, loppers, if you have them, and a brown bag lunch.

March 15th, Thursday, 6:00PM, also at Connie's location when a lawn establishment program will be presented by Jon Vest at 6PM.

Our "fundraiser" will be a plant sale on Saturday, May 5th 10AM-4PM at the Government Office Building, Roanoke Street, Christiansburg. Since this is our main source of revenue to support our Submitted by: Rosemarie Sawdon, Secretary

NRV MGA Minutes Executive Board meeting Jan 2012

Present: Evelyn Melia, Erica Jones, Bob Lockwood, Lynn Brammer, Wendy Silverman, Donna Fern, Connie Lawson, Ini Beckman, Gwen Ewing

Erica explained the Treasurers Report, grants committee will meet Wednesday.

Jan 17 was the first Trainee Class, 20 are expected. 6:30 - 8 pm for our social, introductions. Parking available on Washington Street and behind the Food Science building, would be nice for members to park there and leave the closer spaces for the trainees.

New business; Evelyn Melia reviewed the (treasurers) books, she suggests that the Ameriprise account be changed to a savings account. Evelyn asked about the PO Box being dropped, we have no permanent address, Barry didn't accept mail for NRV MGA. Wendy got PO change approved w/ Jon Vest and Michele Dickerson, Our mailing address is now in the VCE office.

Bob Lockwood, will turn in the state tax form for our Association by Jan 20, 2012.

Wendy, and Ini brought us up to date on events and meetings.

Feb 18 - Pruning Party at Connie's Apple Orchard. 10 to 4 pm Jon Vest, Wendy and Charlie Elgin will explain how to prune the apple trees and we will prune them. Bring loppers, and pruners and food for lunch potluck.

March 15 - Soil n Lawn Establishment @ Connie's, 6pm, Jon Vest will educate us on this topic. There will be on the job training to finish a project.

March 31 - Big Event (VT student volunteers) and MG's at Connie's to help w/ various gardening activities. 11 to 3 pm bring snacks.

April will be Plant Clinic Training w/ Jon Vest.

Rosemary excused, sick. Minutes were taken by Gwen Ewing

New Volunteer Management System is Here!

Keep checking your e-mail for a welcome message and a password to the new system. **That password can only be used once!** Therefore, on the first time you log into the system you will have to change your password. When you log in your hours, be sure to enter your travel time separately. In other words, travel is a separate activity. Also, please keep a paper copy of your hours for yourself. This is an electronic system only which concerns me... (Call me old fashioned).

If you have any questions, please don't hesitate to ask Tom Alston (he is in the Montgomery Co. office on Monday mornings) Dave Orcutt (He is in the office on Friday afternoons) Peter Macedo, Elizabeth McCormick, or myself. We will be continually adding new things to the Volunteer Management System like calendar events, approved programs, and announcements. We are trying to get a computer lab available to us for a training session for using the Volunteer Management System. Therefore, please let me know if you have trouble using this system, I will put you on the list for that training.

Thank you for your patience while we transition from the old Database to the new system.

Wendy Silverman

Recipe for this Month Easy Oreo Truffles

1 8 oz. package cream cheese, softened

1 15.3 oz. package of Oreo cookies, finely crushed (about 4 1/2 cups), divided

2 packages (8 squares each) Baker's semi-sweet chocolate squares, melted

Mix cream cheese and 3 cups cookie crumbs until well blended. Shape into 48 1 inch balls. Dip into melted chocolate; place on waxed paper and sprinkle with remaining crumbs. Refrigerate 1 hour or until firm. Store in tightly covered container in refrigerator.

Tips:

Melt chocolate in microwaveable bowl on high 2 1/2 minutes or until chocolate is melted, stirring every 30 seconds.

To coat truffles add in small batches to the melted chocolate using two forks to roll balls around until evenly coated. Remove with forks, holding over bowl to allow excess to drip back into bowl. Sprinkle with crumbs before chocolate cools and hardens.

****Will the contributor of this recipe please contact me so you can get the credit next month?*****

Children's Zoo

This article has been patiently waiting for an appearance in the Grapevine. I am pleased to have such a great piece, complete with excellent photos to share with the MGs. This should give us all a boost to know that there are such wonderful projects out there and encourage us all to work this year on our chosen projects and to share the progress in word and photos with the MGs through the Grapevine.

Carol Moates

Children's Zoo Garden

By Mickey Balconi

Tigers, ostriches and zebras in Pulaski? Oh my!! Well, the real creatures are not to be found here, but the plants named after various creatures can be found in the Children's Zoo Garden to the right of the front door of the Pulaski County Library.

With a grant from the New River Valley Master Gardeners Association (NRVMG), the planting of the children's garden took place this past summer. The liaison to the NRVMG Association is yours truly, Mickey Balconi. Early in the summer, with the help of new Master Gardener, Sharon Eifried, the Children's Librarian, Jenna Hardy, and the children's Wednesday Storytime group of Preschoolers, the planting of Baby Duck Petunias took place coordinated with stories about baby duck adventures. Each child received a Lamb's Ear plant to take home to maybe start a garden of his or her own.

Beginning a theme garden like this one starts with a little research on the theme. Luckily the computer can spit out information on almost any idea you can conceive and give a list of plants that could work. I went to a site for a beginning list of plants with the names of creatures.

The next step was to look for the plants in various nursery catalogs. My next parameter was that most of the plants should be able to grow in full sun. Only a few are around the side of the library in the shade. Some of the desired plants were only available as seeds, so there was a little

more time required for the garden to fill out and bloom. The more common plants I knew would be easily found at local nurseries.

Hiding under the Japanese maple is a Mouse Ears hosta. In the shade on the side of the library behind the bench are the ostriches—both red ostrich plume astilbe and ostrich fern. Some Solomon Seal hovers near the corner of the post with white flowers drooping from the leaves not unlike a ball balanced by a circus seal! Towards the front of the bed is a blue butterfly bush which will attract some other living creatures of the winged variety to the zoo garden.

The large zoo creatures of the plant variety are the zebra grass, elephant ears, tiger lilies, and wild horses' day lily. There are both an orange butterfly plant and a blue butterfly delphinium. Monkey magic flowers, foxglove, snapdragons take us to the imaginative jungle, woods and world of fantasy.

Back home we will find teddy bear sunflowers, hens and chicks and lamb's ear. The hummingbirds and spiders are also represented. Each of the plants is identified with a plant marker for your travel to our zoo.

The fun part of creating a theme garden is the enjoyment of the children. Here at the library we continue coordinating animal stories with some examination of the plants named for the animals. Expanding on the children's imagination with their new knowledge of plants will be ongoing. We hope to write a short story of the zoo with input from the children in future story hours.

Stop by the library and visit the zoo garden. The "plant-animals" are not dangerous!





The photos were taken by Carol Smith who is the Technology Coordinator for the Pulaski County Library System.

In the above photo, Mickey is on the left and Sharon Eifried is on the right.

Gardening on my Mind

Here it is February, I have already memorized my seed catalogs and sent off orders. I feel like I must get busy on these days of 50+ degrees, just because of general principal. Things we can do in preparation of the actual gardening season can really help us get ahead. Find all your tools, hand and larger tools. Clean them and sharpen the ones that need that edge to make the work easier. Make sure you know where the gloves are from last year; personally I only like gloves after they are broken in well and headed for holes. Sit down with your seeds you have and your list from the seed order and draw out a master plan for this year's garden. Remember to change location of your plants so they can get a new plot of soil. Many plants take a good bit of nutrients from the ground so you need to rotate the planting scheme from year to year to keep from depleting any one area. This time of year you will find my husband, Tom, on the tractor carrying in and spreading our composted horse manure to amend the garden soil and piling the moldy hay we did not feed outside the garden fence for easy access to mulch this year. It is a great time to start your cold frame with lettuces, spinach, greens of various kinds. You'll be harvesting fresh salads before long. Prepare poles, string, or trellis for climbing plants like peas or beans so they can be in place. I saw a great idea here in Floyd last year for that. The folks put in tall posts and ran a cable across the tops of the posts. Before the cable went up they tied long strings about every six inches apart all the way down the row of cable. The

string was there waiting for the plants to grab and climb when they were ready. That method worked well as I was able to watch the progress through the growing season last year. Then in fall, just drop the cable down and cut off the strings with the tangled masses of vegetation and tie on new for the coming summer. It seemed to work so much better than the pieces of fencing or chicken wire I have seen that end up a real mess after the climbing plants are dead. This was very efficient, affordable, and easy to maintain. If you use tomato cages, clean them up and get them pulled back into shape if needed. The tomato cages that I have seen for sale most often are not very usable – or so I have found in my garden. The tomatoes grow up and then the weight of the fruit pulled the plants over the cage and resulted in breaking them. A better mode of caging them is a woven wire fence cut and bent into a circle with stakes through the wire at different levels to hold the plant and tomatoes up. That way the plant is not just dependant on a slim wire, but a lattice of wooden stakes from top to bottom.

Carol Moates

February's Tasks

The Whole Garden

- *There's still time to look through catalogs and place orders.
- *Order bulbs and plants for Spring planting.
- *Thoroughly clean any flats or pots for seedlings.
- *Set aside a potting area for seed starting and gather the necessary equipment.
- *Sow those seeds that will need 10 to 12 weeks before they can be transplanted outside!
- *Make sure your bluebird boxes are clean.
- *Beware of a February thaw.
- *Continue looking for plant damage in the garden.

Trees and Shrubs

- *Continue removing excess now – not ice – from shrubs.
- *Prune off broken twigs and branches on shrubs.
- *Prune trees, except for birches, flowering cherries, maples, horse chestnuts, lindens, and walnuts.
- *Cut stems of Spring-flowering shrubs for forcing.

Flowers and Grasses

- *Bring potted bulbs inside for forcing so they will flower by Easter.
- *Continue inspecting houseplants and outdoor plants overwintered indoors for pests and diseases.
- *Continue keeping houseplants in topnotch shape by pinching, turning, and cleaning them.
- *Water indoor plants sparingly – and avoid fertilizing them altogether – until you see signs of active growth.
- *Wrap houseplants carefully if you have to take them outdoors.
- *Propagate geraniums by cuttings for late-Spring planting.
- *Avoid excessive salt use on icy paths.

Fruits and Vegetables

- *Plan your vegetable seed-sowing strategy.
- *Begin sowing leek seeds indoors.
- *Prune fall-bearing raspberries in late February.

The month's are rolling by fast and I have almost come to a full year of writing the monthly tasks as outlined in Garden Almanac, A Month-by-Month Guide published by Country Living Gardener. I have heard from several people that you enjoyed this and am looking for something to take its place after April. Does anyone have suggestions as to what they are interested in hearing about? Would anyone enjoy taking responsibility for putting in a monthly blurb? Please email your comments.

Carol Moates



My green thumb came only as a result of the mistakes I made while learning to see things from the plant's point of view. H. Fred Dale

**New River Valley
Master Gardener Association
755 Roanoke St., Suite G
Christiansburg, VA 24073**