



### **Notes from Our Co-Presidents**

Well, our plans to start the New Year with a bang ended with the snow that came on the 17th when we had our monthly meeting planned. Below is a listing of the current activities we have going on within the next month. It's as complete as we could make it, but does not include some of the notices Wendy sends from the office about upcoming events. We would love to hear your ideas about what goals we could set this year to make it easy for everyone to find those perfect projects that make volunteering so rewarding. Our Association can be only as successful as the members choose it to be. So please commit to giving the board feedback, making suggestions and getting involved. If you have a favorite project, please write up a notice send it to Carol, our newsletter editor and see if it doesn't recruit some new volunteers this year. For example, the Montgomery Museum Garden in Christiansburg managed by Beth Umberger (see below) will be on this year's NRV Garden Tour. We would love for it to look its best and reflect the work and impact our team makes. Beth has been working hard removing invasive plants and creating a native plant garden. Each time you volunteer you will be amazed at all you learn and accomplish. If that is in your neck of the woods and your cup of tea please let Beth know that you would like to be added to her list serve for upcoming work days. Every member should be able to easily find those perfect projects that bring them satisfaction and HOURS.

Maureen Fallon and I had the honor of representing our Association on the on the 7th of February at a meeting of the Mt. Tabor Ruritan Club. We have two members from our group that also belong to theirs, Allen Bame and Phyllis Eschenmann. The Mt Tabor Ruritans are regionally famous for their Fish Frys as well as their apple butter, but even more so for contributing to local causes. The club presented a check in the amount of \$200 to our association. The evening was spent listening to other recipients share their group's good deeds in the community. We accepted the generous donation on behalf of our group. A note of thanks has been sent for the wonderful evening and the kind spirit of giving back that this fine group of folks represent.

We would also love to expand our activities to include more outings, possibly hosting a seminar day and more.

Last spring we had our first annual plant sale on the grounds of the Montgomery County Center. It was a miserable rainy day but we had a tremendous turn out! It padded our treasury nicely to help with our grant programs. This year the sale will be on Saturday May 11<sup>th</sup>. We hope to make it even more of a

success. But not without your help. When you get spring fever and start dividing your plants or sowing some seeds, keep this sale in mind. We did have plants generously donated from local nurseries but many of our sales were of our own garden extras, even houseplants sold well. So put this big day on your events calendar and plan to join in the daylong fun of interacting with those in the community that share our passion of gardening. We host a plant clinic at this event as well.

There is something for everyone to contribute in some way.

For our new trainees that have questions about our Association and it's function, don't hesitate to contact any of the board members or Wendy and we will make sure we get you an answer. We encourage you all to get your feet wet at some of these upcoming events and remind you that there will be a MG by your side to introduce you to our role in that particular project. The first big public opportunity would be the NRV Home Expo at the Rec. Dept in Christiansburg listed below. We host a booth with all our educational pamphlets and information (soil test kits!!)

Let's keep the communication open so we all feel connected and start the year with a bang!

Lynn Brammer

### **NRVMGA 1/28/2013 Board Minutes**

January 28, 2013 at Amelia's Restaurant

Present: Gwen Ewing, Evelyn Melia, Bob Lockwood, Carol Moates, Maureen Fallon, Donna Fern, Lynn Brammer, Susan Lockwood, Elizabeth McCormick, and Wendy Silverman.

A. Maureen called the meeting to order.

Discussion followed on the responsibilities of officers and committee assignments:

- Volunteer time management system: Tom Posten
- Communications committee: Carol Moates will continue to be responsible for the newsletter with assistance from Erica (web,) Tom Alston, Susan Lockwood (photography) and Lynn Brammer (mailing).
- Grant committee: Erica Jones chairs with Donna Fern, Bob Lockwood and Maureen Fallon.
- History & Record Retention: Gwen Ewing will chair.
- Nominating committee Lynn Brammer, with Evelyn Melia and Rosemarie Sawdon
- Finance: Bob Lockwood.
- Programs: Donna Fern, chair, with Carol Moates, Wendy Silverman, and Allen Bame.
- Fund-raising: Linda Harris and Maureen Fallon will chair (pending Linda's approval of this nomination) Erica Jones volunteered to serve.
- Members at Large: Elizabeth McCormick, Evelyn Melia, Susan Lockwood and a MG trainee to be announced (intern volunteer)
- Evelyn Melia stated that other members have also volunteered to serve on committees and will be added.

B. Bob Lockwood presented the treasurer's report.

As of December 31, 2012 all outstanding bills have been paid. There was \$2900.97 in the operating account of which \$260.00 was earmarked for shirts, leaving a current working balance of \$2,640.97. As of December 31 all of the 2012 grantees had received their full awards leaving a balance of \$4,587.38 in the grants account. For 2013 the grants committee has earmarked \$2100 for grants and additional \$1,000 for individual mini-grants. The state ST-9 sales tax has been submitted in addition to the federal form 990n (e-postcard) has been submitted for 2010 and 2012 (2011 completed previously).

\*Bob requested that all chairs send him an e-mail for proposed 2013 expenditures after the committees meet and establish anticipated activity budgets.

- C. Following a lengthy session on the best time to have board meetings, a motion by Evelyn, seconded by Bob passed to hold board meetings on 2<sup>nd</sup> Thursday of each month through May, with the exception of February, ***the board will meet on Feb 22<sup>th</sup>, at 6 pm, before the start of the general meeting.***

The full membership meeting ("Meet & Greet") will be February 22 at the government center at 7pm with member-provided desserts in lieu of a pot luck dinner. The new assistant state MG Coordinator will be invited to speak. Future general membership meetings will continue on a monthly basis on the third Thursdays at 6:30pm.

- D. Lynn announced that the Ruritan Club will be making a donation on Feb. 7 and she and Maureen will be at the meeting to accept the check on behalf of the NRVMGA. Any interested members are invited to be present as well. The new display board completed by Donna Fern will be shown to the group.

Lynn also announced the March 3-day Home Expo and encouraged everyone to sign-up for one to two hour sessions to sit at the NRVMG booth for the plant clinic at the expo. She will send an email out to the list serve with the time slots for sign up ASAP.

- E. MG trainees begin Feb 5<sup>th</sup> at the Hahn Pavilion 9:30-noon.

Wendy announced that monitors are still needed for the MG classes and to contact Allen Bame [abame@vt.edu](mailto:abame@vt.edu) if interested.

Lynn and Maureen will attend the first meeting for the trainees to go over the committee responsibilities and ask for volunteers.

For the class monitors, either service hours or education hours may be counted (education hours apply if it has been 3 years since attending a class on a particular topic). Wendy will be culling the list of projects and sending e-mails to project chairs and then updating listings on the volunteer management system by the February membership meeting. Suggestion was made that someone could receive service hours by helping Wendy with the update.

- F. Wendy announced that the graduation for the 2013 class will be Friday, May 10.

G. The annual plant sale is scheduled for the following day, May 11. Those volunteering to help with the sale are: Evelyn Melia, Carol Moates, Susan Lockwood, and Donna Fern.

Respectfully submitted,

Susan Lockwood (substitute secretary)

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Ongoing Trainee Classes: Contact Allen Bame to assist [abame@vt.edu](mailto:abame@vt.edu)<mailto:[abame@vt.edu](mailto:abame@vt.edu)>

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February 20: Junior Master Gardener Program begins, MG volunteers welcome to assist [vtgarden@vt.edu](mailto:vtgarden@vt.edu)<mailto:[vtgarden@vt.edu](mailto:vtgarden@vt.edu)>

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February 21: Hahn Garden Seminar: "Seed Starting and Saving"  
[vtgarden@vt.edu](mailto:vtgarden@vt.edu)<mailto:[vtgarden@vt.edu](mailto:vtgarden@vt.edu)>

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February 22: Board Meeting at 6pm

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February 22: Monthly NRVMGGA meeting at 7:00 Government Center details to follow from Donna Fern

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February 23: Kids Tech at VCOM 12:30 until 3:30 contact Elizabeth McCormick  
[bluecatmoon2@gmail.com](mailto:bluecatmoon2@gmail.com)<mailto:[bluecatmoon2@gmail.com](mailto:bluecatmoon2@gmail.com)>

\*

February 25: Abundant Mini Gardens Seminar with Deb Graff: 6:30-7:30 Christiansburg Library  
SquareFootAbundance.com [Debra.graff@hotmail.com](mailto:Debra.graff@hotmail.com)<mailto:[Debra.graff@hotmail.com](mailto:Debra.graff@hotmail.com)>

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February 27: Abundant Mini Gardens Seminar with Deb Graff: 6:30-7:30 Radford Library see above

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March 2: Hahn Garden Seminar: "Gardening for the Health of it with Stacy Best"  
[vtgarden@vt.edu](mailto:vtgarden@vt.edu)<mailto:[vtgarden@vt.edu](mailto:vtgarden@vt.edu)>

\*

March 8, 9 and 10: NRV Home Expo: Plant Clinic: contact Lynn Brammer  
[lbrammer@vt.edu](mailto:lbrammer@vt.edu)<mailto:[lbrammer@vt.edu](mailto:lbrammer@vt.edu)>

\* March 13: Abundant Mini Gardens Seminar with Deb Graff: 6:30-7:30 Blacksburg Library see above

\* March 21: Monthly NRVMGGA meeting: TBA

\* March 23: Hahn Garden Workshop: "Faux Garden Baskets with David Pippin"

[vtgarden@vt.edu](mailto:vtgarden@vt.edu)<mailto:[vtgarden@vt.edu](mailto:vtgarden@vt.edu)>

\* Ongoing Workdays (TBA) at the Montgomery Museum: contact Beth Umberger to be put on her list  
serve [fredandbeth@verizon.net](mailto:fredandbeth@verizon.net)<mailto:[fredandbeth@verizon.net](mailto:fredandbeth@verizon.net)>

Please note Deb Graff's seminars are all the same topic, pick your convenient location.

**Title: Gardening with Public Housing Kids in Danville, a VT Nutrition Education Project**  
**Author: Lorien MacAuley**



“Look! I found strawbabies!” squealed one very small little girl as she ran up to me clutching several green-red, hard-as-a-rock, strawberries with the stem still attached this past summer. As a Virginia Tech master’s student, I was involved in a project to teach school children how to garden in two separate housing projects in Danville, Virginia. The idea is that by teaching them gardening, they will learn how to be more self-sufficient, more self confident, and eat healthily.

The fact that gardening is good for children is intuitive for most gardeners. There is no measure for the magic in a child’s eyes when they pick their first tomato, and it dawns on them that this is the same as the tomatoes that they’ve seen in the store, and realize, *food grows out of the ground (who knew?)*. With mounting issues of childhood obesity and more children on food stamps each year, gardening with youth offers a fresh and promising way to get kids eating healthy food. However, although it seems intuitive, surprisingly little scientific research has actually set out to prove that kids can learn healthy eating from gardening. This past summer, our small band of Virginia Tech grad students were out to do just that. We wanted to know, if kids learn to garden, does it make them more likely to choose healthy foods in the future? To answer this question, we went to one of the lowest-income, most at-risk youth in rural Virginia, in the public housing neighborhoods of Danville. We soon realized we were teaching more than just nutrition.

One of the most surprising days was when we found out that there was a teenager shot just in sight of the garden on the previous day. We found this out after we had conducted our normal education program, which consisted of a 30-minute gardening and nutrition lesson indoors to frame the gardening session, and a 45-minute gardening maintenance and upkeep session outdoors. I realized then why some of the students had looked so glum at the outset (I had just thought they were bored with the indoor lesson!). Their moods had picked up later, when they were happily outside, playing with

the garden hose, running around picking ripe vegetables, and oogling at the wasp that was systematically sucking the life out of all of the squash bugs. Thinking about it later, I realized that for just that moment, those kids had been allowed to “just be kids,” shedding the cares of the everyday rough life in the neighborhood.

At our other garden site, also in a Danville low-income housing project, we attracted attention not just from the children but from the adults, many of whom also started showing up with their children at our educational session. One of the best days was towards the end of the summer, we were making English Muffin Veggie Pizzas with the children, to teach them one way to use the garden veggies. We tried to provide food at every gardening session, because many of the children came hungry to the lessons, and children can't learn when they are hungry (heartbreaking when you realize that many of these students also often must go to school in that state). One mother kept insisting that her 9-year-old daughter did not like vegetables, and would not let her daughter put vegetables as a topping on her pizza – the mother did not want her child to not eat the pizza and thus go hungry that day. In the young girl's eyes, I could often see fear of irritating her mother by going against her, and showed signs of potential violence in the home. So I pressed, and finally convinced the mother to let her daughter decide. The young girl enthusiastically topped her pizza with a myriad of garden vegetables, to the surprise and bewilderment of her mother. She ate all of her pizza with childlike relish. At the end of the session, her mother was exclaiming how she needed to have more vegetables around the house, which was a victory, albeit a small one, of independence in that troubled mother-daughter relationship. Also, this young girl, like many of the other students, asked for many more vegetables than necessary to top the pizza, because the kids wouldn't stop eating them raw! So, when I think about the successes of this past summer in getting the kids to eat more vegetables, I think of that day, and I know we made a difference.

Back at Virginia Tech, Felicia Reese and Karissa Grier, the two lead researchers, grad students of Human Nutrition Foods and Exercise with Dr. Jamie Zoellner, have now had time to analyze the surveys we had administered to the students and their parents both before and after the program. The project found a significant increase in self-confidence in asking for fruits and vegetables, and, of course, a significant increase in gardening knowledge (a big success!). Most importantly, we can conclude that students' expectations for positive outcomes from eating fruits and vegetables increased, so we know the kids really absorbed that eating fruits and vegetables will be good for them in the long run. Overall, this study showed that, as every gardener knows, gardening really is good for kids.

Perhaps our findings, when combined with results from other garden researchers, will add up to a very convincing logical argument for having more youth garden programs in schools and places like the Danville public housing projects. I hope that this research brings to others what we brought to the Danville Public Housing kids this past summer – fruits and vegetables dished up with a little bit of learning!

### Speedy Ambrosia, Sent in by Susan Lockwood

Combine halved fresh clementines with either fresh or canned pineapple chunks, add coconut and voila!! It's clementine season and the Spanish ones are especially good. It's so refreshing and light. Optional: add sliced bananas and/or seedless grapes for variety.

Enjoy!

### Roasted Kale (delicious!) Sent by Ini Beckman

1/2 head kale  
2 T. extra-virgin olive oil  
1/2 t. minced garlic  
1/4 t. (sea) salt  
1/4 t. ground black pepper

Rinse the kale. Dry thoroughly and chop into bite-sized pieces. Place in a baking pan. Add the olive oil and garlic. Toss the kale leaves to make sure all are coated. Bake at 375\* for approximately 8 minutes or until crispy. The leaves should be lightly brown. Sprinkle with the salt and pepper mix.

Trees and Shrubs for Fragrance, by Glyn Church, Garden Art Press, 2002

Review By: Hazel Beeler

It was a spring evening two decades ago, and my husband Michael and I were sitting on our west deck watching the sun go down and dusk falling around us. "What is that wonderful fragrance?" we suddenly asked each other, and we climbed down off the deck and walked around sniffing until we located the source, a snowball viburnum, probably *Viburnum x carlecephalum*. My mother had given it to us right after we built the house, and by sheer luck, I had planted it directly to the west, where the prevailing winds would bring the scent to the house. Several herbaceous perennials in bloom at that time, such as native blue phlox (*Phlox divaricata*) were also fragrant, and we were so enchanted by the scentscape that I embarked on a campaign to put in as many fragrant plants as I could. This effort continues to this day (although space in the landscape is becoming scarce), and so I was pleased when I saw Trees and Shrubs for Fragrance, by Glyn Church, in a catalog.

I'm particularly fond of woody plants, which generally require less maintenance than herbaceous perennials, so I expected this book to be right up my alley. The author includes some woody vines, such as honeysuckle and wisteria, and groups the plants by genus, with a description of each genus and each fragrant species or cultivar within the genus. I like the author's addition of etymology/meanings of the scientific names: *Viburnum* is from the Greek *vieo*, to tie, because the shoots are flexible. Don't know the scientific name, only the common name? No problem—the index lists both. There are many luscious illustrations, although the descriptions of fragrances really shows the poverty of the English language in terms of adjectives applicable to aromas. I got really tired of "honey-scented", but this reflects the few word choices available to the author. More problematic is "may-scented", which refers to the may-tree, a European hawthorn not familiar to many North Americans.

Of course this book lists many familiar plants with scented flowers: roses, daphnes, magnolias, jasmines, gardenias, honeysuckles, lilacs, mockoranges and wisterias, to name a few. I was interested to learn that many plants I'm quite familiar with have fragrant blooms: hawthorns, catalpas, serviceberries, witch-hazels, butterfly-bushes, some hydrangeas, mountain laurels, tree peonies and some rhododendrons and azaleas, including our native flame azalea. But where is silktree (*Albizzia*), clematis 'Mayleen', and our native black locust (*Robinia pseudoacacia*) all of which are fragrant? The clematis has a fabulous scent; there's one on the west end of our house that sends its perfume in through the windows every year in mid-spring.

A bigger drawback for the gardener in southwestern Virginia is the book's focus on the British Isles, Western Europe and regions around the Mediterranean. The temperature ranges for the hardiness zones are the same, but most of those regions have relatively mild maritime climates due to prevailing west winds from the ocean. Much of the weather in eastern North America comes from the continental interior, which means greater temperature extremes—hotter summers and colder winters. How frustrating to look at pictures and read wonderful descriptions of plants not hardy north of Zone 7! While I have some alleged Zone 7 plants (nandina and crepe myrtle) growing in my yard, detailed maps of the hardiness zones in Virginia show my valley in Craig County to be in Zone 5 (we are about 1000 feet higher than Blacksburg and Christiansburg). The book has many examples of plants native to Australia, southern Asia or northern Mexico that really are suited only to the subtropical garden, Zones 9 and above. The author suggests helpfully that marginally hardy shrubs could be planted against a wall for protection, but how many walls is one house and garden likely to have? I also know that espaliering tender plants on a wall does not provide all that much protection. My brother in central Alabama, Zone 7, tried espaliering a citrus tree on his house, but the first winter killed it right down to the ground.

All the same, I have been making a "wish list" of fragrant trees and shrubs that should be hardy in Craig County. I want to try Fothergilla, yellowwood (*Cladrastis*), Carolina allspice (*Calycanthus*), winter hazel (*Corylopsis*) and... Hey, Michael! We need a bigger yard!

### **Gardening Tips by Mickey Balconi**

This week I am going to give you some more gardening tips to consider. A few of them need to be instituted right when you plant in the Spring. This will give you time to get any materials during the down-days of winter.

This tip is a "two-fer"--when you get two ideas that work together. Cut a 5 foot length of 2 inch PVC pipe and make a mark 1 foot from the bottom. Before planting a tomato plant, use a small piece of 2x4 to pound the pipe into the ground up to the 1 foot mark. Plant the tomato plant near the pipe. I like to attach the pipe to a tomato cage with small zip ties to make both sturdier. The wind here often will topple a cage by itself. Then use the pipe to water the tomato plant. You may need to fill it several times. When the tomato stops absorbing the water, put a PVC cap over the end and the water will more slowly soak into the plant.



Since I had problems with late leaf blight on my tomatoes last year, I will cover the soil with red plastic which is supposed to increase ripening. This plastic also should keep water from splashing any fungus on the plant. The PVC tube will be my main source of water. I would love to know how this tip works for any of you!

Another tip using PVC pipe will keep those cute shepherd's crooks with a plant on them standing straight and tall. Use about 18 inches of ½ inch pipe and dig a hole with only about an inch sticking out. A bulb drill will make the job easier if you have one. Backfill the hole and keep the pipe vertical as you pack the soil down around the PVC pipe. Then slide the shepherd's crook into the pipe. Check your shepherd's crook to make sure the diameter will fit into a ½ inch pipe before you buy it! At a garden walk I saw a number of these lining a walkway with beautiful hanging baskets. It brings the flowers up to eye level and is great if your soil is rocky or full of roots.

If you have any empty hanging baskets with dead flowers in them, take out the flowers and put some black sunflower bird seed on top of the soil for the birds in winter. The cardinals, blue jays and chickadees will bring some color into your garden.

Where you have berry bushes or fruit trees you may want to discourage birds there. Old compact discs or the ones you sometimes get with promotional material in the mail are ideal. Simply tie the CD to a branch with the shiny side facing south so the sun will glint on it and the motion should keep the birds away. One tip said to use wire, but I do not like to use that on tree or shrub branches since the branch can grow over the wire and be harmed. Garden twine is better for this use.

I tend to lose track of time when I am out in the garden because I am having too much fun! I usually do not wear my watch since dirt and water are not good for it. Happily I read a tip that I intend to use this year. I have a kitchen timer I got as a gift and thought I would not use it since the oven has a timer on it. Eureka! The kitchen timer will go out with me in the garden with my tub of tools and go off when I have to leave. I also can use it to time certain jobs so that I do not get too involved with one thing and overdo my back or my energy level. I find that switching out activities when I have more time in the garden is better for me.

I hope you are enjoying the "rest" time from garden chores. There is always next year to plan for and look forward to. I hope some of these tips will work for you. If you have a problem or a solution, drop it off at the Patriot office in an envelope with my name on it.

## Try Something a Little Different by Erica Jones



Cerinthe



Tassel Flower

Reading seed catalogs in January is the time honored cure for the mud/snow/sleet/slop blues. Here are some field tested annuals that I have grown, that are easy to grow from seed that you might spot in some of your catalogs. As an added bonus you are likely to never see them as bedding plants. These are definitely not the tried and true petunia/salvia/begonia/geranium type plants. These four are pretty straightforward to grow from seed. The oddest of this group is Cerinthe major, Honeywort. Most varieties I've seen are medium in height (about 24"), fairly resistant to cool spring, and the blossoms are exotically shaped blue, pink and purple. It is hard to tell where the foliage ends and the floral parts begin; not that that is a problem. My plants last year did fade some when it got beastly hot. I've not seen any reference to them re-seeding. Another blue (and pink and white) flowered annual is Nigella damascena (Love in a Mist). These totally easy to grow vigorous reseederers go back to the 1600's. If you want to extend the flowering season you will need to sow twice; or you can use the area for a fall display.

An added bonus are the exotic looking seed pods. These are fairly medium height at a little one foot. A third plant to go with all this blue is Tassel Flower (*Elimia javanica*). These were my favorite last summer and they also self sow. In fact, I got a second late summer crop come up around the original planting. These are a little taller (about two feet), little red paint brushes on top of thin curvy stems. The red color of the scarlet varieties is about the 'reddest' flower I've grown. These are a more recent introduction only dating back to the early 1800's. Even though the individual flowers are not very large, they bloom in small clumps and the electric shade of red makes up for the lack of petal volume. If you want some height, I've got the plant for you. I first tried this at the roadside garden I take care of where anything under two feet tall just gets lost (under all those weeds). Kiss-Me-Over-the-Garden-Gate goes by the Latin name of *Polygonium orientale*. It gets to six to seven feet tall, and is a bit later to get going. It also re-sows. It produces deep pink danglers of about 4" long which make very amusing additions to flower arrangements. It is not terribly picky about culture besides wanting full sun (as do the other three varieties). We have a passel of native *Polygoniums* but these have larger flowers than the natives and big exotic looking heart shaped leaves.

## **Note from your Editor**

An idea for you for upcoming editions is to ask folks to submit their favorite garden blog site or go to site for information and why. I would like to hear from anyone either having seeds or bulbs to offer or wanting them. Also, in this case remember to make starts or replant things for our annual plant sale in May. I am loving the book reviews, recipes, and articles - please continue. This is what makes our newsletter a success, your contributions!

### **Officers**

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