

# January 2013 Grapevine

## New River Valley Master Gardeners Association

### Greetings and News from Wendy, our Coordinator

I hope everyone had a great winter holiday. Now that the New Year has begun, I would like to extend a warm welcome to the 2013 Master Gardener trainees. Twenty two people will be taking the Master Gardener training this year in our first daytime class. All four counties are represented in the class; 2 are from Floyd, one is from Giles, 6 are from Pulaski, and 13 are from Montgomery. Welcome aboard trainees!

*The next set of announcements are for certified Master Gardeners only (not the trainees)....*

If you are interested in being a moderator for any of the training sessions please contact Alan Bame at [abame@vt.edu](mailto:abame@vt.edu)

All Master Gardeners must fill out the Continuation contract form and the VA114 form to continue in the Master Gardener program. Please let me know if you need a copy.

A few changes have been made to the volunteer contract form. One is that of the 20 required hours of service, 2 of those (10%) will need to be in the form of a plant clinic, or volunteering at a county extension office at a horticulture help desk. Plant clinics are one of the major projects we do each year. It gets our face "out there" sharing sound, scientific based horticultural knowledge to the community, and we had to cancel too many of these types of events last year because of lack of volunteers.

You are still required to do 8 hours of educational (training time). However, this year one of those hours will be watching the Equal Access Assurance presentation by Virginia Cooperative Extension. This presentation is only 20 minutes long and you get **a whole hour** of training credit for it. When you complete the presentation, please enter it into the VMS system. There is a separate project line for it so don't put it under "Educational Hours". The web address for the equal access assurance presentation is [http://connect.ag.vt.edu/vce\\_vol\\_cr\\_training/](http://connect.ag.vt.edu/vce_vol_cr_training/)

Update on a new agent for the Montgomery County Office: Hopefully by the end of March, we will have a new Ag and Natural Resource agent in the Montgomery office. This will free up some of my time so I can be there for you and your projects. I will be sending out 2013 project forms to all of the existing projects, and if you are interested in starting a new project please let me know and I will be happy to send a form out to you.

We do so many great things, and I am excited to see that this year may be even better with more and higher quality projects.

I look forward to a Fantastic 2013!!!!

Wendy Silverman, NRV Master Gardener Coordinator  
(540)382-5790      wss@vt.edu

## **Treasurer's Report January 17, 2013**

As of December 31, 2012, all outstanding bills had been paid. There was \$2900.97 in the operating account of which \$260.00 was earmarked for shirts, leaving a working balance of \$2640.97 for 2013 in the operating account.

As of December 31, all of the 2012 Grantees had had received their full awards and there was \$4587.38 in the Grants Account. The Awards Committee has earmarked \$2100 for grants in 2013 and an additional \$1000.00 for individual member mini grants. The grants account has a working balance of \$1387.38.

The state St-9 sales tax report has been submitted.

As of December 31, 2012 all outstanding bills had been paid. There was The Federal form 990 n (e-postcard) has been submitted for 2010 and 2012.

Respectfully submitted, Robert Lockwood, Treasurer

## **Minutes of NRV Master Gardener Association General Meeting & Potluck November 30, 2012**

Location: Government Office Building, Christiansburg, 6PM

Connie Lawson opened the meeting by thanking everyone in attendance and introducing guest speaker, David Close, Dept. of Agriculture & Extension Education. Dave Close is the State Master Gardener Coordinator and oversees the Virginia Master Gardener College held in June of each year.

He started by describing the Association as a unique program started at the University of Kentucky. It has since spread to every state and has been in existence in Virginia for 30 years with approximately 5000 members in 52 chapters. The program is now spreading internationally and is in several European countries and South Korea.

Dave Close stressed the quality of the Virginia program and that the handbook has been copied by other states. He paid tribute to Diane Relf, the Editor of the handbook.

The Master Gardener Association involves community relations encouraging community planning, supporting local farmers, providing horticulture information, and protecting our natural resources, through plant clinics, educational programs for adults and children.

In view of the many responsibilities and diversities Dave Close announced that he has hired a full time Assistant Master Gardener Coordinator who will concentrate on day to day office work, record keeping, administrative work, review and update publications and work as a liaison with the State.

Dave Close's vision for the future is a strategic plan to include a 4H program in all high schools with technical and horticulture programs and to include more students. He also wants to work with green industry, and promote community gardens, as well as revise the training manual. Another goal is for the Extension Agents in 107 localities to be equipped to give programs on cutting edge technology and promote locally based food production.

The volunteer program has an attrition rate of approximately 5 - 10 years with many members actively engaged for over 20 years. He is also interested in attracting young people to serve our citizens as volunteers.

Dave Close emphasized that in addition to membership in the local NRV chapter, there is also a Virginia State Master Gardener Association, Inc, which encompasses chapters statewide. The purpose of the organization is to foster communication, education and fellowship for those involved in the Virginia Cooperative Extension Master Gardener program. The yearly dues are \$12.00. The Association works as the voice of the program to the State as well as State political coordinator. Meetings are held at various locations throughout the State.

Dave Close closed by expressing his appreciation to all of the volunteers who make the program a success, and he looks forward to strengthening the program through consumer marketing.

Connie also introduced guests, Scott McElfresh, Extension Agent in Pulaski County and his new wife, and Michelle Dickerson, Unit Coordinator, Extension Agent, 4H Development in Montgomery County.

Next Wendy announced that the 2013 class has 19 applicants, and classes will be held Tuesday & Thursday, during daytime hours, 9:30am to 12:30pm. The following year classes will revert to evening hours.

Also, there are two applications to be completed for active membership in 2013. One, the normal application, and secondly, Volunteer Application Enrollment, Long Form VA 114. This is a new form that must be completed in order to participate as a volunteer, mandated by the State. All information is kept confidential

Wendy announced a change in volunteer service. An annual commitment is 20 hours of volunteer service and 8 hours of continuing education training to remain an active Master

Gardener. However, **10% or 2 hours of volunteer service must be used for a plant clinic or working the horticulture desk.** This decision was made because of lack of volunteering for plant clinics. Several clinics had to be cancelled in 2012 because of lack of volunteers.

Polo shirts are now available and may be ordered. Order form is on line, two colors, Maui Blue and Stone, are available, the cost is \$20.00.

Lynn Brammer announced names for nomination of officers, with a request for nominations from the floor. Since none were forthcoming, the following officers were nominated and approved.

President/Co-President (Shared position)	Lynn Brammer	Maureen Fallon
Vice President	Donna Fern	
Treasurer	Bob Lockwood	
Secretary/Co-Secretary	Linda Harris	Rosemarie Sawdon

Lynn gave a brief update on the "Share the Spare" program at the Blacksburg Farmers Market which continues to receive more donations not only from Market shoppers but also the vendors. The growth of the program has been very encouraging with expectations of continued growth in 2013 when community gardens will be donating excess produce. Also fruit is being picked and donated from local orchards. If one needs help in harvesting trees, volunteers will pick, and if desired the homeowner may keep 1/3 of the harvest with the remaining fruit distributed to needy families and 1/3 to the pickers. Volunteers are always needed for picking.

Wendy presented an award to Debra Graff as Master Gardener Emeritus for her many years of volunteering and sharing her extensive horticulture knowledge.

Erica Jones reported that she had received 9 grant proposals for 2013. The Grant Committee will meet and determine which will be accepted.

Shana Maron-Kennedy mentioned other programs associated with Virginia Cooperative Extension, namely, Master Nutrition Program & Personal Financial Management Program. An \$8000 grant was received with 27 volunteers reaching 200 residents. New programs will be introduced in 2013.

A lovely basket filled with gardening items was raffled with proceeds going to the Grant Fund. Everyone enjoyed wonderful food, and one lucky member of each table had the winning number for the table decoration.

Nonperishable food items were collected for food pantry.

Meeting adjourned approximately 8pm.

Submitted by: Rosemarie Sawdon



## AMARYLLIS ENCORES By: Hazel Beeler

Potted amaryllis bulbs are popular as Christmas decorations or presents. Do you throw yours away when it's done blooming? Don't waste a perfectly good plant! You can enjoy it again next year. There are various recommendations for keeping an amaryllis and getting it to bloom again, and what follows is what works well for me.

An amaryllis is a bulb, like a daffodil or crocus, and like those plants, it has a period of blooming, followed by a period of active growth, and then a period of dormancy, which is necessary for it to re-activate and bloom again. Our familiar spring bulbs also have a chilling requirement, which isn't needed for the amaryllis, a frost-tender subtropical plant. You're probably aware that after daffodils and other bulbs bloom, they put up leaves, and the leaves must not be cut off until they die back naturally. These leaves store up food and energy for the plant to bloom again. After your amaryllis is done blooming, it puts up leaves too. Cut the old flowering stalk off, stick the plant in a sunny window, and keep it watered.

After the last frost date, I plant my amaryllises directly outside in the ground, give them a good dose of compost, and mulch them well. My husband sets aside a half-bed in the vegetable garden for them. (You *could* plant them in the ornamental garden, but the leaves don't have much to recommend them.) They stay there all summer. I dig them after the first killing frost smokes the leaves (mulch protects the bulbs from damage), cut the tops off, and lay them somewhere indoors for a week or so to dry, so I can knock off the dirt and cut off the roots. Then they can be stored like any other bulb, in mesh or paper bags (for ventilation) or boxes, in a dark, cool place. Mine go into the pantry with the onions. I usually leave them there until after Christmas, so we can enjoy the flowers in the bleak days of January and February after the Christmas decorations are gone. I have not determined exactly how long a dormancy period is needed before the plants will re-activate and flower, but some varieties have their own ideas about that. If I don't take them out and pot them when they feel like they're ready to bloom, they valiantly start putting up flower stalks in the dark pantry. When they do that, you have to bring them out and pot them. If you don't, the stems will be weak and the flowers won't open properly.

If you don't want to plant the bulbs outside, you can get potted ones to reflower by keeping them in good light, fed and watered all summer, then shutting them down in the fall. Some directions say to repot the bulbs every year, and others say to let them get potbound, but it probably doesn't make much difference, as long as they get adequate nutrition and water. Sometimes the leaves will die back on their own, but if they don't, just stop watering the plant and allow the soil in the pot to dry out. The leaves will die back, and then you can store the bulb in the dark for a few months.

But in either case, bring the plants out of dormancy by putting them in light and watering them. Some varieties stick flower stalks up almost immediately, but others take their time. The stalk may get too tall if the plant is in dim light; you might want to put it in a well-lit place, turning it regularly to keep it from getting lopsided, until the flowers start to open. As an added benefit of recycling your amaryllises, you'll get more of them. Like daffodils and other bulbs, they form smaller side bulbs that become independent plants. One of the varieties I have is exceptionally prolific and cranks out lots of new bulbs I can give or sell to friends and colleagues. They sometimes take a second year's growth to reach blooming size. Fancy amaryllis varieties from upscale catalogs can cost more than \$20. You don't have to spend that same money year after year. With minimal effort, you can keep your amaryllises happy, and they will reward you with lovely flowers for many holidays to come.

**RAINWATER HARVESTING FOR DRYLANDS AND BEYOND**  
**VOLUME 2: Water-Harvesting Earthworks**  
**By Brad Lancaster**  
**Rainsource Press, Tucson, AZ, 2008**

When Brad Lancaster and his brother bought a house in Tucson, Arizona, in 1994, it was surrounded by parched shrubs and bare dirt. Runoff from the property drained into the street. Today, rain that falls on the property stays there, the house is surrounded by shady trees, and the example set by the Lancaster brothers has spread to the entire neighborhood. And this was done in an arid region where average annual precipitation is 12 inches a year, less than a third of what we normally get in southwestern Virginia.

This book, the second in a series by Brad Lancaster, covers techniques for harvesting rainwater and decreasing, slowing or eliminating runoff (especially necessary for rainfall in arid regions, which, when it does occur, tends to be torrential). The book's cover art and numerous hand-drawn illustrations give it a misleading "hippie-dippie" look, but this volume is anything but flaky. It's packed with practical advice, "how-to" directions, and recommendations for difficult situations, and includes extensive appendices of additional resources the reader can consult. Facts in each chapter are footnoted.

The book begins with a preface that lists and illustrates the eight successful principles of rainwater harvesting and an introductory chapter that gives a thorough background on the basics of earthworks and their advantages, with a reference guide to each type. Then come chapters on assessing your site and determining what it needs, berms and basins, terraces, French drains, infiltration basins, imprinting, mulching, reducing hardscape, diversion swales, check dams, vegetation and grey water harvesting. Each chapter begins with a definition of the term, explanation of its benefits, and how to determine where it's appropriate. Then come detailed instructions on how to set it up, with tables, figures, cautions, etc., where needed. For example, the chapter on French drains includes cautions on instances where the EPA might consider a French drain to be a Class V storm water drainage well; the chapter on infiltration basins has a table for calculating the volume of a basin; the chapter on reducing hardscape has a table of the volumes of water that run off impermeable pavement. The step-by-step instructions are lavishly illustrated, and there are explanations of how to use the necessary equipment and

what types of materials are useful for what kinds of applications. Within the instructions are photographs of real-life examples, and each chapter closes with a success story from some part of the world.

In our relatively rainy part of the world with its cold winters, some of Lancaster's advice would not seem to be useful; for example his recommendations for plants for different locations nearer or farther from water-collecting basins reflect his location in dry Arizona, with its mild winters, where they can grow citrus trees (*with* supplemental harvested water, we'll note). But the principle remains the same—make sure the plant is suited to its location. And some techniques are specifically for reclaiming large areas of overgrazed, denuded, eroded land. But much of his information is potentially useful anywhere. Got a little gully starting to form? He'll tell you how to stop it. Soil drying out? Mulch will do wonders. I'm with him on mulch—my household uses tons of it (literally—we buy shredded-wood mulch from the Montgomery County landfill by the dump truckload). Yard plants languishing from drought, while runoff from your downspouts drains to the street and thence to storm drains, and watering with city water runs your bill up? Move some dirt and direct that free water to thirsty roots. (See Appendix 3, pp. 353-354, to calculate the volume of water that falls on your roof.)

And in these days when dry summers seem to be more and more common (my household's rain gauge recorded only a quarter inch of rainfall for the entire month of August 2011), we should all be conserving water as much as we can. Water that runs off causes erosion, runs into storm drains that go into waterways, contributes to flooding, and is lost forever. Water that infiltrates into your soil replenishes groundwater and supports vegetation that shades the surroundings, cools the air through transpiration, releases oxygen and takes up carbon dioxide, and supports wildlife (and possibly you, if you grow a garden). Better still, earthworks are *cheap*. Many types of earthworks require only labor, with minimal materials needed, or only free materials, such as brush. Now, where's my shovel?

For a copy of this book: Rainsource Press, 813 N. 9<sup>th</sup> Ave., Tucson, AZ 85705, or [www.HarvestingRainwater.com](http://www.HarvestingRainwater.com). Or you can borrow my copy, but if I don't get it back, I will turn you into a frog!

**Submitted by: Hazel Beeler**

### **My Seed Packet Passport By Matt Hart**



On gloomy, overcast days when I can't convince my normally hyperactive dog to go outside, I avoid the winter doldrums by getting out my tin of seed packets. The cheerful, brightly-colored pictures of nasturtiums, morning glories, zinnias, sunflowers, and moonflowers never fail to lift my spirits. I find myself rattling the seeds and daydreaming about the upcoming growing season – where and how I will sow the seeds come springtime.

So what if the sky outside is gray and the wind is a mournful howl? In my mind, I am watering my barrel gardens and hanging baskets and thinking of sunshine. I am harvesting nasturtiums for an edible garnish. The abundant basil will make a great pesto! I'm so glad I amended the soil with bone meal – haven't seen the first sign of blossom end rot on my tomatoes! This is my fantasy world with ideal growing conditions; no blight, blossom end rot or aggravating insect damage here.

Oh sure, I have to come back to the reality of a world that smells more like wood smoke than honeysuckle, but I am momentarily transported (transplanted?) to a land of spring and summer temperatures and that makes the reality of gray sky seem less harsh and depressing. All that respite from a few bright and sunny seed packets. Quite a small investment for a mini-vacation I can easily repeat whenever I want. I wonder if the people at the travel agencies know about this? Let's keep it our little secret – for now!

## **Bringing Your Outdoor Style Indoors**

### **By Matt Hart**

Houseplants are great addition to your home and help bring the outdoors in, but what if you want something a bit more architectural, and – dare I say it at the risk of being de-frocked as a newly reactivated Master Gardener – needs less watering? Yup! Get those garden ornaments out of storage and use them to enhance your indoor décor! Holy Southern Living and Better Homes and Gardens! Am I being serious? Yes, I am!

Even if you do not possess a decorating gene in your body, you can do this! Just like your outdoor garden, your indoor living space can benefit from your Master Gardener style, class and sense of whimsy! (Yes, I used the word “whimsy” in a sentence!)

When I'm looking for whimsy, nothing does it for me quite like a garden gnome. Let's say I want to show my Hokie Pride – Hokie Gnome, do your thing! Hokie Gnome really knows how to tailgate! Maybe I'm throwing a Bon Voyage party or just looking forward to my next vacation – all aboard, Travelocity Gnomes! They come in two convenient travel sizes and can rock a party – photo op, anyone?





How about St. Patrick's Day? Gnomes, leprechauns...is there really that much difference? Use your Halloween kettle filled with plastic gold pieces and shamrock necklaces to add some Irish pride to your home. Your corned beef, potato soup and soda bread will be even tastier under the watchful eye of a wee gnome posing as a leprechaun! Everyone is Irish on St. Patrick's Day! It doesn't have to be a special occasion or holiday, a gnome can make any day a little more special, woodland, and whimsical.



So you want something a little more serious, Zen-like and serene? Put a temple bell or representation of the Buddha near your jade plant and you are ready for enlightenment...or a light Asian meal with family and friends to celebrate the lunar new year!

If gnomes and Asian-inspired themes are not your thing, use a garden element that is. Engage your imagination and the possibilities are limitless. Use a sundial or outdoor plaque in place of a picture. Try a garden statue or architectural remnant in place of a centerpiece on your buffet, sideboard or dinner table. Experiment and have fun – the growing season will be here before you know it...and the garden décor can take its rightful place once again. Of course, you may like it so much inside, you will want to leave it where it is!

## **From Your Editor**

First and foremost I want to apologize for the tardiness of your newsletter this month. I am trying to make some changes and have not gotten them right yet. Erica is helping me and neither of us have had loads of time to designate to it. It will be done—and don't worry. Your grapevine logo will still be with us!!!! We are trying to make it green! Sounds easy but it's not!!

I'd also like to thank you for so many contributions, many of which are yet to be included yet. I am happy to see improvements with us having more to say as a group in sharing our ideas, recipes, projects, photos, and reports. It takes us all to make a full and interesting newsletter.

Please remember, I always am looking for recipes, profiles, book reviews, new ideas, places to go, photographs, project updates, questions and answers to come in the next month, just to give some examples of ways to contribute. The contribution time counts for you as well.

I look forward to 2013 being even more inclusive and informative in our Grapevine!

**Carol Moates**

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