



# The Grapevine

July 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)  
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Past president – Gwen Ewing – 382-9566 [ewinggr@vt.edu](mailto:ewinggr@vt.edu)  
Open Position, Trainee Member-at-Large

#### **Communications**

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#### **Contact Us:**

#### **NRVMGA**

NRV MGA Website:  
<http://civic.bev.net/nrvmga/>  
(Membership Dues, Grants and General  
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#### **Virginia Cooperative Extension – Montgomery County Office**

Website: [www.ext.vt.edu](http://www.ext.vt.edu)  
(MG Coordinator and Timesheets)  
755 Roanoke Street, Suite 1G,  
Christiansburg, VA 24073  
(540) 382-5790 Fax: (540) 382-5729

## Treasurer's Report, Erica Jones

May activity:  
Checking Account: No activity  
Balance: \$4828.97

Grants: \$5035.15  
Grants awarded have been paid only 50% -  
Eastern Elementary, Montgomery Museum,  
Heritage Hall

### Some thoughts from the Treasurer

Folks, if we are going to keep being able to fund out grants projects every other year we are going to need some more/better sources of income. I talked to some folks at the "College" and the two common sources of money for other clubs seems to be a PUBLIC plant sale (not just in-house), and bringing in speakers and charging admission. I talked to one club and they grow all of the plants they put into their annual spring sale themselves and made about \$5,000 on the sale last year. We have competition in both of those areas (sales and speakers) with Virginia Tech but both of them have potential. For one thing, I do not know of any other plant sales with "homegrown" plants; especially in the Christiansburg area. In the past we have gotten donations from local businesses too; I do not see anything wrong with that, but with a little planning ahead and certainly some effort put out by more of our members I think we could expand the "homegrown" part of our annual sale. Making more money off the sale, I think, mostly requires a bit more advertising, and giving serious consideration to making it less "in house" and much more "public." Speakers; well if anyone wants to hear someone, contact a board member!!!! Rates can be negotiable. We would need to coordinate with Stephanie and Holly so as to not overlap.

Another on-going money raising effort is the set up with Brent and Becky's bulbs for non-profit groups. If you order online, log into [www.bloomingbucks.com](http://www.bloomingbucks.com) FIRST and select "New River Valley... ." Then you can complete your order. Do note; you will not get a quantity discount; we get 25% from the sales (which is quite generous in my opinion). I have had good luck with orders of both summer bulbs and early spring bulbs. Now is a great time to start planning your fall planting. If you have too many bunched together, dig some up and give to friends. If you want to extend your tulip/daffodil/other small spring bloomers season, take a look at what is available. One thing I really like about Brent and Becky's is they seem to be totally honest about growing season hardiness, unlike some commercial growers. Take a look at plant tags sometimes; the same "variety" can be hardy to zone 6 by one grower, and hardy to zone 7 by another. We are planning to use our bulb money to spend in-club; a bus trip is one suggestion. Other suggestions are welcome!

### Message from Wendy Silverman

I have been in charge of logging in the Data from Master Gardener's timesheets for the past 6 weeks and I am amazed on the amount of volunteer time we have put in, and the diversity of projects we are doing. It is now time to toot our own horns. In the first 3 months (January – March) we

logged in a total of 1009 hours and 328 contacts. In the Second quarter (April – June) we logged in a total of 1448 hours and 1457 contacts.

Just to compare to last year, for all of 2010 we had 3002 hours and 890 contacts. We already surpassed our contacts (almost double) and are getting close to beating our total hours from last year. How did we do that? My guess is 2-fold. We have almost double our membership from last year and we are doing better job at documenting our hours. So... A big THANK YOU goes out to all of your efforts both in the field and for documenting them on paper. You are a great group to work with and I look forward to beating our total hours of last year in our next quarter. With that... Guess what?... Time sheets are due!!!

MINUTES OF NEW RIVER VALLEY  
VIRGINIA MASTER GARDENER BOARD MEETING  
JULY 13TH, 2011

Location: Government Building  
Extension Office

In Attendance: Connie Lawson, Gwen Ewing, Lynn Brammer, Jack Selcovitz, Keith Mileski, Erica Jones, Wendy Silverman, Rosemarie Sawdon

Connie called meeting to order. Minutes from June 13th meeting approved.

Erica submitted the financial information.

Checking Account: Balance: \$3619.07

Grant Money Balance: \$4518.18

Discussion about remaining monies to be paid to several projects; such as, Montgomery County Museum and Heritage Hall where only 50% has been distributed. This subject led into fund raising, and the need to tackle this issue, since we have lost our funding from the Friends of the Library Garden Tour, a fairly substantial amount.

At the last Board meeting it was suggested that we should consider charging dues after a two year hiatus. We are the only Master Gardener group that does not charge dues. This subject will be presented to the entire membership with a vote at the next Potluck in November. A membership fee of \$10/single and \$15.00/couple was mentioned and is open for discussion. Also at the Potluck, Gwen will invite all grant recipients to give a presentation of their project.

Other suggestions for fund raising are a plant sale, next spring, with the membership supplying the plants for sale.

Other ideas are a "Farm Tour" which would involve visiting some of the Blacksburg Farmers Market vendors. This is a great way to educate the public about the trials and tribulations of farming, of which there are many, and the time and cost involved, which supports the prices they have to charge. Anecdote: "nobody gets rich family farming". Lynn is looking into the possibilities for such a tour for 2012.

Another option is a yard sale, tentatively scheduled for September 10th. Various locations are being explored for a Christiansburg location since the largest percentage of the membership lives in the Christiansburg/Blacksburg area. We will ask those members living in Floyd, Giles and Pulaski counties to gather their items, and one of our members with a truck will arrange to pick up the items. Gwen has volunteered to chair this project and Rosemarie will assist. If you have one item or several items email Gwen at ewinggf@vt.edu or call and leave a message at her home 382-9566.

Gwen displayed signs that were made to be put in the various locations where grant money was made available. Message on Sign:

“ The project was funded in part by a grant from the New River Valley Master Gardeners” Everyone liked the attractive sign and the cost of just \$6.00 per sign. It was suggested that we need a photographer/historian and are asking for someone to volunteer.

Connie asked for last minute volunteers for the New River Valley Fair in Dublin per Wendy’s email message dated July 13th..

Wendy has purchased seed packets very cheaply at the Dollar Store, and she asked that we purchase additional seeds from “Free Seeds.us” The cost for 300 seed packets, including shipping is \$24.95, and this was approved. Giving out these packets at various functions is a great way to get people’s attention.

Wendy asked to put Virginia Master Gardeners Association on the agenda for discussion at our next Board meeting.

She also gave us a copy of the By-Laws for the James City County/Williamsburg Group which is a group without a Coordinator. By-Laws discussion was tabled until the next meeting when Jon Vest can be present.

Also mentioned was the disconnect about the present projects being carried out by various members and the need to coordinate and publicize.

Members of those projects receiving grant money will be asked to give a presentation/ slide show at the next Potluck Dinner.

Attached is a letter being submitted to Edward Jones, Director of Virginia Cooperative Extension by our President, Connie Lawson, regarding our need for an Extension Agent in Montgomery County.

And last but not least, we are asking members who may be interested in serving on the Board to please submit their names....we need you!

Next General Meeting, Thursday, July 21st in Floyd; car pooling to meet in Christiansburg.....(per Ini’s email).....we are looking for a great turnout! Meeting adjourned approximately 6:40pm.

Submitted by:

Rosemarie  
Sawdon

July , 2011

TO: Dr. Edward Jones: Direction of Virginia Cooperative Extension

FROM: Connie Lawson: President of New River Valley Association Master Gardeners

RE: Extension Agent for NRV Region

Dr. Jones, as president of the NRVMG Association, I, along with my fellow Master Gardeners here in the NRV want to take this opportunity to welcome you to your new position as Director of Virginia Cooperative Extension and express our excitement in working with you in the future as our program grows. Also we would like to invite you to speak at one of our NRVMG monthly meetings at your convenience and possible cover what the future holds for Cooperative Extension.

We would also like to express our concern for the lack of an extension agent located here in Montgomery County (extension office in Christiansburg). Our four county area of Montgomery, Giles, Pulaski and Floyd Counties is home to a large and growing number of farm operations. Not having an extension agent located here in Christiansburg leaves a huge void for this area. Also with Virginia Tech being located here in Montgomery County and not having an extension agent gives the program somewhat of a "black eye" to the people of the area.

As you work to familiarize yourself with your new responsibilities we would certainly hope that you will take under consideration filling this position and restoring this need to our area. We certainly recognize the fine job that John Vest is doing operating out of Floyd County but as stated above, the area needs an extension agent in the local office to work with all the farmers and homeowners of the area.

As some of our fine Master Gardeners have worked Plant Clinics around the four countries, they always are asked why we have no agent and when will someone be placed in that position. The residents of our area are very concerned about the future of extension for the NRV.

Again we would welcome you for one of our meetings to meet and discuss the future of extension. Please contact me at: 540-231-4196 to set a date that would be convenient for your schedule.

Regards;

Connie Lawson  
President  
New River Valley Master Gardeners Association

## Web site news

Peter Macedo has been helping me with the web site (yeah!). My email address is [emjones@vt.edu](mailto:emjones@vt.edu) and Peter's is [pmacedo@vt.edu](mailto:pmacedo@vt.edu)

I found a way to store photographs online, so I've been starting to post pictures. Our web site space is run by BevNet (Blacksburg) and is extremely limited so this will get around that problem. The upshot is, TAKE PICTURES AND SEND THEM ALONG, PLEASE!!!!. There are a few currently posted on the web site under the grants link.

## Notes from the Board

A hardy round of applause for all those that attended Master Gardener College as a volunteer or a participant. It is such a bonus to have the college in our backyard and have the privilege of being part of this opportunity to advance our knowledge. We had a wonderful group that helped out with everything from driving tour vans to introducing speakers. Thanks to all for getting involved. It is a wonderful time to mingle with groups from all over the state and share ideas about how we can advance our program and its good deeds. If you didn't "play" this year please consider signing up next year if you are available.

Your board makes a concerted effort to plan monthly meetings that are educational and fun. Please remember most meetings earn you an hour of education time. Our upcoming meeting is in Floyd and features two Master Gardener gardens. Jane O'Keefe is a current member with an inspiring garden that you don't want to miss and her neighbor Pamela Cadmus went through the program many years ago and now runs a garden design business. Please see the mention in this newsletter about the details, but mark July 21<sup>st</sup> on your calendar. On that note don't hesitate to let a board member know if you are aware of a topic or location for a meeting in the upcoming year. We strive to vary the location and honor those that live outside of the Blacksburg/Christiansburg area. We are open to suggestions from our membership. Hope to see everyone on the 21<sup>st</sup>.

We are entertaining ideas about fundraising. Since we dropped dues for this year our treasury will obviously not be where it typically stands. We asked around at the MG College and got some great ideas, everything from a plant sale, rain barrel workshops, making and selling stepping stones, a hypertufa class to seminars open to the public. Please let us know if you have an idea that we should consider.

In the upcoming months we will be opening the floor for nominations for a slate of officers in 2012. All offices are open, although some of the current officers may consider continuing in that position if the membership approves. Please take a look at the job descriptions that are on our website. If you are interested or have questions please don't hesitate to discuss the position with any board member or Wendy. And on the note of the board...please understand that all board meetings are open for all

of the membership if you'd care to attend. The next one is one the 13th of July at 5:30 at the County Government building. If this date or time changes we will send out a list serve to announce the change information. This is an excellent way to get a feel for the role of your board and if you might want to consider a position. We need input from our membership to be clear we represent your ideas on the direction our association should take in the upcoming years. Thanks to all for your involvement in the various projects in the New River Valley. Please consider sending Carol information and pictures of any projects you may be involved with and their progress. We would love to start a "brag board" that includes all the ways we contribute in our communities. See you soon!

Lynn Brammer Member-at-Large

## Local - August

**8th -NRV MG Board** - Mont Co. Extension office, 6pm

**18th -Membership meeting 6:30 pm - Square foot and therapeutic gardens - 351**  
Rolling Hills Drive, Christiansburg. Contact Debra Graff 381-1470

## What's Blooming at Your House?

Blooming right now (7/4) Elderberry, spirea, some varieties day lilies. Going "out" - garden lillies (not oriental but the June blooming can not remember type), yucca. Pretty much all my annuals are blooming. Only one dahlia. Erica Jones

## Some Experiences of a Volunteer Coordinator

Some background here. The "Triangle" has been a project for the NRVMG'ers for years but is mostly maintained by yours truly with some help from other members of the Maywood Garden Club. The MGC is suffering from what I bet a lot of garden clubs are suffering from – aging (retired) members who do not bend as well as they'd like, and some younger types who work full time and really do have better things to do than pull weeds for recreation, and are not terribly experience gardeners. The "Triangle" is located about 13 miles from downtown Newport smack along RT 42 (now know in Craig as "Cumberland Gap Rd"). This article is somewhat tongue in cheek but all of these things really have happened to me while working with volunteers from MGC, NOT NRVMG. As an aside, I am continually impressed with the job Master Gardeners do at the Hahn Hort Garden (although as a spectator we might miss seeing the boo-boos).

So, if you want to exercise your self control and be educated in the mistakes people can make, just work with opinionated volunteers at a public garden which admittedly suffers from a lack of regular maintenance. Education for both parties hopefully occurs (at least some of the time). Here are some things I've heard over the years. One moral of the story is pruning sheers in the hands of unsupervised overly enthusiastic volunteers can lead to interesting results. Another might be label your plants better. Some quotes follow.

“You want me to wire these two branches together to fill this hole?” [After attacking a burning bush with a pair of loppers and making a large gap. The end result WAS an overall improvement on the 12’ monster the bush was, before the attack.] I am still wondering if she was kidding. The hole will fill in nicely, I’m sure.

“She does not like sedums so she dug them up when rousting out the grass” [The sedum was the creeping ground cover type which blooms yellow early in the year. Being almost indestructable sedums, they bounced back.]

“I weeded the upper bed for you.” [And took out all of the late blooming tall asters which are admittedly not much to look at in May. Luckily I did not see the bed until 5 days later.] I put mulch down in the gaps which were left, and hoped an aster would sprout back. Hey, the phlox needed thinning, too. Labels, labels....

“She wanted to prune the boxwoods so I let her even though I knew you would not like it.” [And turned the two 40 year old boxwoods into lollipops after having 39 years as beautiful, stately all-the-way-to-the-ground shrubs. No, I do not like lollipops.] Some MG types get bent out of shape over tree topping (not fun, either); I have an admitted “thing” about lollipops. Both are impossible to fix; lollipops seem to almost never grown their lower branches back out since those branches get the most shade and grow the slowest.

“I tried to prune back the (Pfizer type) juniper; I did not like the results so I had my husband pull out the whole bush with his tractor “ [and left a 6’ by 6’ hole in the back of the bed]. After this happened I’ve been pouncing on (OK, looking at) junipers growing in other places, and yes they ARE darn hard to prune. I think the moral here is give them enough space so you do not feel compelled to attack with sheers. When you take the growing tip off of a juniper arm, that seems to eventually be the kiss of death for that branch. Loosing that juniper made me appreciate the role evergreens play in the landscape during all four months. They are a great backdrop for most herbaceous material, and stand sentry in the winter when the other (plants) pull in for the winter.

Well, good luck in trying to tactfully educate your volunteers!

Erica Jones

## **EVENING GARDENS**

I first started thinking about gardens that could be enjoyed after dark while sitting with my husband on our west deck, watching the sunset. It was spring, and as the light faded, we continued to enjoy the delightful fragrance of a snowball viburnum (ours is either *V. x carlcephalum* or *V. carlesii*, I’m not sure which) which is only a few feet from the deck. And then we became aware that we were not smelling just the viburnum. We took a little “fragrance tour” of the garden, stopping to sniff not just the viburnum but lilacs and our native spring-blooming blue phlox (*P. divaricata*).

One of the points made by authors of books on evening gardens (more about those later) is that so many gardens are at their best in the daylight, while many gardeners have daytime jobs and thus a limited



opportunity to enjoy their gardens at peak viewing time. We humans, who lack night vision, can enhance the after-dark appeal of our gardens by planting fragrant plants and/or ones with light-colored flowers or foliage. With increasing interest in evening gardens, some seed catalogs now indicate plants that are suited to the evening garden or even devote a section to them (for example Jackson & Perkins and Select Seeds).

After my little sunset epiphany, I embarked on a campaign to plant fragrant shrubs, vines and other plants around our house. In addition to the lilacs and viburnum, we now have Daphne (*D. odora* and other spp.), mockorange (*Philadelphus*), rugosa roses and winter honeysuckle (*Lonicera fragrantissima*). Many annual and perennial herbaceous plants are fragrant; some examples include Oriental lilies, phlox, sweet rocket, sweet peas, and the old-fashioned light blue iris that you often see around old homesites and farmhouses. One of my favorite choices is *Clematis* 'Mayleen'. This vine's soft pink flowers aren't as big and showy as those of many *Clematis* varieties, but they are borne in profusion and smell just wonderful. Ours grows on a trellis that spans the entire west end of the house, so the prevailing wind can bring the scent indoors. As an added benefit, most of the abovementioned plants also have light-colored flowers that show up well in dim light. Many familiar plants, such as dogwoods, bridal-wreath spirea and viburnums, have white or light-colored flowers that remain visible as it gets dark even if they aren't scented.

Books on evening gardens always devote a considerable section to flowers that bloom only at night. Many of them are wonderful, but most of them seem to be hardy only in climates much warmer than ours. However, one of my favorite evening plants is a biennial evening primrose (*Oenothera*) which I do not know the species of. In early summer, the plants put up flowering stalks from their first-year rosettes, and in a normal year (i.e. one that is not as chilly and rainy as 2003), the flowers start to open in late June and are in full show by the fourth of July. The stalks are 3-4 feet tall, and each flower is about 3 inches in diameter and has four yellow petals. What makes this plant so neat is the speed with which the flowers open. At dusk, the petals start to unwrap from the pointed buds that look like little furled umbrellas, and they pop loose from each other and spread apart right before your eyes. As each flower opens it releases a burst of lemon-scented fragrance, and as it gets darker the flowers are visited by hovering hawk moths, some of them as big as hummingbirds, with tongues at least 4 inches long. Each flower lasts only a single night, and as the sun hits the show in the morning the flowers all wither, to be replaced by new ones at the end of the day. My household always tries to have friends over for a potluck dinner while the evening primroses are blooming (they usually keep going well into August and can sometimes be still cranking out a few flowers when the first frost hits). The first time we told visitors that we were going outside to watch the evening primroses open, we could see people surreptitiously rolling their eyes ("We're gonna watch *flowers bloom*? Why don't we just watch *paint dry*?"), but after the first viewing everyone was hooked. These plants self-seed lavishly, and I let them. The descendants of the original plant given me by a friend have spread to all sides of the house.

Other night-blooming plants I'm familiar with include angel's trumpet (*Datura* or *Brugmansia*, depending on what book you read) and night-blooming cereus, a cactus. Angel's trumpet can be grown as a houseplant or tender annual, and if planted outdoors will self-seed. It will sometimes put out a few fragrant, white, trumpet-shaped flowers in winter when grown in a pot, but it is much more prolific in summer. Night-blooming cereus can be cranky about blooming (like cacti in general, it's more likely to bloom if you don't lavish it with water and fertilizer), but the flowers, which open in June, are gloriously exotic, with many stamens and petals, plus a perfume that can be overpoweringly strong in a small room. It has to be grown as

a houseplant and tends to get inconveniently large, but is great if you have room for it. Another fragrant house plant is *Hoya* or wax plant. It doesn't bloom exclusively at night and not all varieties have light-colored flowers, but the dangling umbels release their scent after dark. It's an easy-care vine that does well as a hanging plant.

For those interested in making their gardens after-dark friendly, I can recommend two books. Evening Gardens: Planning and planting a landscape to dazzle the senses after sundown, by Cathy Wilkinson Barash (Chapters Publishing, Shelburne, Vermont) includes extensive and useful suggestions for plants with interesting silhouettes, fragrant and night-visible plants as well as recommendations for dramatic lighting. But for entertaining reading, you can't beat The Evening Garden: Flowers and Fragrance from Dusk till Dawn, by Peter Loewer (Timber Press). Here's the description the author (who is a horror-movie fan) gives of annual gourds (*Lagenaria siceraria*) growing on a trellis: "At dusk, the pods hung like the shapely sandbags that balance backstage theatrical scenery--with just a hint of the pods from *Invasion of the Body Snatchers*--while the opening blossoms became cellophane stars gleaming against the dark green of the leaves." Loewer, like Barash, has many recommendations for plants for the evening garden, and he even has a chapter entitled "Plants that Look Like they Should Bloom at Night" and another on insects and other creatures that may be active in your garden after dark.

After reading one or both books, you might be feeling overwhelmed by the prospect of constructing an evening garden. But you don't have to renovate your entire yard to make your garden more enjoyable after dark. A few strategically placed plants to augment what's already there are all it takes to make your garden a welcoming place at any time of the day or night.

Contributed by: Hazel Beeler

## July Garden Chores

### The Whole Garden

- \*Turn the compost pile.
- \*Keep up with weeds in garden beds.
- \*Water the garden during periods of drought.

### Trees and Shrubs

- \*Deadhead spring-blooming shrubs.
- \*Deadhead and feed repeat-blooming roses.
- \*Prune repeat-blooming climbing roses.
- \*Use good hygiene for rose health.
- \*Prune vines that bloom on old wood immediately after blooming.
- \*Prune birches, cherries, maples, horse chestnuts, lindens, and walnuts one the new growth if fully developed.
- \*Clip yew hedges and topiaries.
- \*Remove dead stems, branches, and leaves from trees and shrubs.
- \*Create beds around trees and shrubs to protect them from lawn mower damage.

### Flowers and Grasses

- \*Early in the month, finish transplanting annuals into the garden.
- \*Fertilize container plants regularly.
- \*Stake tall plants growing in windy sites.

- \*Pinch back asters, dahlias, cosmos, zinnias, salvias, and chrysanthemums.
- \*Cut perennials to the ground to encourage new growth.
- \*Deadhead flowers to prolong bloom time.
- \*Divide and replant bearded iris.
- \*Divide daylilies that have finished blooming.
- \*Dig and divide spring-blooming bulbs that flowered sparsely.
- \*Cut back daffodil leaves after they turn yellow.
- \*Watch your color scheme.

### **Fruits and Vegetables**

- \*Continue planting broccoli, cabbage, and cauliflower for fall crops.
- \*Continue direct seeding vegetable and herb crops.
- \*Beginning mid-month, direct vegetable seeds such as spinach for fall crops.
- \*Harvest onions and garlic after the tops yellow and die back.
- \*Harvest and dry herbs for the winter.
- \*Give your vegetable garden at least one inch of water per week during periods of drought.

I am going to be tireless in approaching you MGs (and I don't mean the ones that we always hear from) for contributions to the *Grapevine*. Please know that your hours will count in preparing a piece, taking photos and sending them, or writing an article about your project and what's going on. I have spoken to some of the ones who have been around a good while and we all are eager to get to know the rest of the group! Contribute in any way you feel comfortable – but that doesn't mean not at all! Bios, recipe favorites, what is blooming in your gardens, hobbies you'd be willing to share with us, it doesn't have to be about gardening. Get creative out there!! Have fun!!



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**New River Valley  
Master Gardener Association  
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