



The Grapevine

JULY 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

**New River Valley Master Gardener Association
General Meeting
June 14th, 2012
Location: Elissa Steeves Garden, York Drive, Blacksburg**

Connie Lawson welcomed members and guests in attendance. She mentioned several items which were discussed at the June Board Meeting. One being the NRV Master Gardener **logo competition** and encouraged members to submit a logo which can be used on letterhead, polo shirts, tablecloths and other items, which means it needs to be sized for the various items. The **deadline for submission to the extension office is June 30th**.

Connie talked about the 25th Master Gardener College June 19 - 24. Helen Young thanked those who volunteered as Moderators.

Connie also mentioned the need for members to talk with friends and acquaintances about the Association; what we do, our grant program, etc. She would like more people in the community to know about the Master Gardeners.

Lynn Brammer introduced the guests, Shelly Maycock and Eddie Boes. Eddie demonstrated his invention which is a chopper for compost waste. It has sharp blades on a long handle and is easy to use. It chops using the same method as a manual food chopper. By chopping whatever it may be, such as a watermelon rind, the smaller pieces decompose much faster in the compost pile. The tool comes with a bucket and sells for \$39.00.

Lynn also mentioned the upcoming 17th Annual New River Valley Garden Tour, 7 Gardens in the Blacksburg area, sponsored by Friends of the Montgomery-Floyd Regional Library. The date is Saturday, July 7th, and she is looking for volunteers who are willing to work at one garden, become familiar with the garden before the tour, and on the day of the tour mingle with the guests answering questions as needed.

Lynn talked about the "Share the Spare" program (collecting food for food banks) each Saturday at the Blacksburg Farmers Market. Anyone who has a garden may want to plant an extra row to donate. She is going to provide a list of locations where produce may be dropped off other than the Farmers Market. She also mentioned Neighborhood Harvest (picking fruit at various local orchards) for donations.

Next item is the selection of officers for 2013. Several positions are expiring and anyone who is interested in filling a position should contact Lynn; or perhaps suggest someone you think would be a good candidate. Each position runs for 2 years.

Wendy asked for volunteers for the New River Valley Fair July 23 - 29. She **needs exhibitors**.

She also needs volunteers for the upcoming Newport Fair and the Floyd Harvest Festival. Please contact Wendy if you can volunteer.

After the business meeting, Elissa Steeves gave a brief description and history of her garden to the group. We then walked the garden with Elissa as she explained the various plants and art work. It was a beautiful late spring evening, and everyone enjoyed a delightful stroll through her very lovely and creative landscape.

Future Meetings: Board Meeting - Monday, July 9th

General Meeting - Thursday, July 19th Holly Scoggins Blueberry Farm,
Newport (The view is fantastic)

Submitted by: Rosemarie Sawdon

Minutes of NRV Master Gardener Association
Board Meeting
June 11th, 2012
Location: Montgomery County Government Building

In attendance: Connie Lawson, Bob Lockwood, Donna Fern, Lynn Brammer, Rosemarie Sawdon, Erica Jones, Wendy Silverman

Connie called meeting to order promptly at 5:30pm

Minutes of May 19th meeting approved.

Treasurer's Report: Bob reported not much changed. General Account Balance: \$3629.88

All bills paid. Grant Balance: \$3737.37 (not a typo)

Erica reported grant for Juvenile Detention Center has been discontinued for now. Montgomery County Museum needs plant signs and brochure.

Connie suggested we need more publicity. Many people in our communities are unaware of our organization and what we do, such as, our grant program, Share the Spare, plant an extra row, etc. Putting out information at public venues and more articles in the newspaper were suggestions.

The logo contest was discussed. We have only one entry to date.

Lynn mentioned she still **needs volunteers** for the Friends of the Library Garden Tour.

Wendy reported on 25th Master Gardener College, enrollment closed on line. Contact Dave Close's office directly for late enrollment. Helen Young is in charge of Moderators who have to register as volunteers. Wendy is in charge of Transportation and she **still needs volunteers**.

Wendy also asked for volunteers for New River Valley Fair. She **needs exhibitors**. The Newport Fair is in August also need volunteers.

Future Meetings: General Meeting - June 14 - 6:30pm Elissa Steeves, York Drive, Blacksburg

Board Meeting - July 9th

General Meeting - July 19th - Holly Scoggins Blueberry Farm, Newport

Meeting adjourned approximately 6:15pm

Submitted by: Rosemarie Sawdon

July and August Fairs Needing Volunteers

By: Wendy Silverman

June is over along with Master Gardener College, and now we shift our focus to all of the area fairs. If you need to fulfill your volunteer hours, being at a plant clinic table at one of the area fairs will accomplish just that! You may also want to consider doing a small workshop at the fair as well! We are planning on doing a variety of small workshops at the NRV fair (July 23rd through the 28th), and the Great Outdoors Expo in Glen Lyn Park in Giles on August 31-Sept 1. Remember, all of your workshop prep and implementation count as service time!

Other fairs where we will be hosting a plant clinic table are the Newport fair August 10th and 11th, The Eastern Montgomery Tomato Festival in Shawsville on August 18th, the Floyd Harvest Fest in September 22nd and possibly the Prices Fork Fair.

If you are interested in volunteering for any of these plant clinic tables, please let me know.

Vegetable Garden Hints

By: Hazel Beeler

I saw the tip for tomato cages in the Grapevine...rather than use fence wire, use concrete reinforcing wire ("rewire") for those cages. You can buy rolls of it at Home Depot or other stores that sell construction materials. The rewire is much stiffer than fence wire and stands on its own. Cut out the bottom horizontal wire to leave spikes to go into the ground. When those spikes rust out, cut the next tier. We've been using our cages for years and some of them are more than 20 years old. They can blow over in VERY high winds, ie. hurricane. I lash the cages together in the bed to prevent this.

You can also use rewire to make trellises for peas, squash, etc. The wire is stiff and springy--it needs two people to handle it and heavy wire cutters to cut it.

The photo below shows a squash trellis covered by plastic for frost protection. You can see the wire under the plastic holding it up.



Donna Fern Master Gardener Profile

Master Gardener since 2011

Current MG Activities: NRVMGGA Board Member for Class of 2011; Volunteer for Master Gardener College; Work at the Hahn Garden

Occupation: Currently between jobs. I have worked at nurseries and garden centers and also as a licensed professional engineer.

Favorite MG Training Class and why: Trees and Shrubs with Dr. Alex Niemiera and Tree ID Walk with John Seiler. It was exciting to be able share in their passion and knowledge of woody plants.

Gardening History: My interest in horticulture was fueled by my employment at a garden center/landscape company while living in Vermont. I listened and learned from all the experienced people surrounding me.

Interests and Hobbies: Visiting family, Travel, Photography, Sewing, and Gardening

Favorite Plants: Japanese maples, conifers, any orange blooming perennial

Recent additions to my garden: Variety of canna lilies

I wish I knew more about: plant problem diagnosis and landscape design

Most important thing about gardening to me: Being able to share knowledge and experience and learn from others.

My favorite gardening books: Dirr's Hardy Tree and Shrubs and Dirr's Trees and Shrubs for Warm Climates, both by Michael Dirr. So much great information is provided with entertaining editorial comments.

Advice to other gardeners: Listen and you shall learn.

Favorite gardening quote: Regarding new plants; “First year they sleep, second year they creep, third year they leap” How true!

About me: I am new to the New River Valley as of 2010 after relocating from Central Virginia. My husband and I left Vermont in 2005 to escape the long cold winters. We live in a villa at Auburn Hills Golf Course where my ability to garden is limited therefore I love to volunteer. I welcome opportunities to help with garden design and rejuvenation. Physical work in the garden gives me pleasure. While raising my family in Vermont I was a quilt artist creating pictorial watercolor wall quilts for sale in shops and at shows. The quilts were created from many different fabrics, mostly florals, and the scenes created always included flowers. I am currently working on developing my skills as a photographer.

FOILING JAPANESE BEETLES

By: Hazel Beeler

How often do we hear, “Japanese beetle traps attract more beetles than they catch?” I regard this as a myth! If your house had a bad infestation of mice, would you expect one or two traps to be sufficient to control the problem? I sure hope not, and Japanese beetles are far more numerous than mice. The secret is to *use lots of traps*. “**WHOAA!**” you’re probably thinking, “that could run into some serious money!” It doesn’t have to. I avoid much of the expense by buying only the scent lures and making my own traps from bread bags and 1-gallon milk jugs. Here’s how:



Take a clean milk jug (if the milk was not fat-free, you may have to wash it with soap to remove lipid residue), cut off the bottom, and cut an arch out of each of the four sides, so there is a point at each corner. Cut backward-pointing barbs on each point, so it resembles an arrowhead (it takes some practice to get the right configuration; see photo series). With the lid in place on the jug, pierce the jug’s neck and put a wire through so you can hang it up. I like the type of Japanese beetle bait that has a sticky strip for attachment. Stick it to the inside of the jug (the flat place above the handle is ideal). If you can’t find the sticky-strip lures, other types can be hung inside from the wire in the neck. Use the barbed points on the jug to suspend a bread bag open (I usually turn several inches of the bag top in, to shorten the bag and make it harder for beetles to get out). You’ll need to punch through the bag

with scissors, as the points aren't stiff enough to make their own holes. Then, hang the whole apparatus outside. I save bread bags all winter for this very purpose. Because the points on the jug are flexible, bags slightly smaller than bread bags can also be used (ex. quart-size zip-lock bags that have lost their zipability), and larger ones can be used by taking a tuck in them. Interestingly, small bags work as well as large ones. I suspect that they're harder for the beetles to escape from. I've never been able to determine whether any color of bag is particularly attractive to Japanese beetles.



To avoid much of the disgusting decaying-beetle odor, put a few nicks in the bottom of each bag to allow rainwater to drain out. I change the bags weekly (being recycled, they're **free**), and a week's accumulation of beetles isn't overpoweringly funky. I leave the traps up until at least mid-September and continue to change the bags weekly until I go a week without trapping any beetles. Then I take the traps down, remove the wires from the milk jugs and recycle them, pack the lures into a zip-lock bag, and store them in the freezer over the winter. I've found that, stored this way, they are still reasonably alluring for a second season. For lures that are on their second summer, I use two per trap and stick them in with duct tape (the sticky strip does *not* last two seasons). Other than the lures, we do not buy any trap components. Everything else is recycled.

I'm sometimes asked if you could dump the beetles out and re-use the bags. You **could**, but there are a couple of problems with that. First of all, some of the beetles will still be alive when you take the bags down. You'd have to keep them from escaping. Second, the dead beetles, as mentioned above, smell truly horrible, especially if there's a large accumulation of them or water has gotten into the bag. Do yourself a favor and ditch the bags—you've done your share for the environment by re-using them in the first place.

The traps work because Japanese beetles are **really stupid**. The lures have a combination of floral and sexual attractants that smell, to the beetles, like a gigantic food feast and orgy. The first time I ever opened a scent lure, an absolute **cloud** of Japanese beetles rose out of nearby hollyhocks and started swarming around me like bees. If you or I were invited to a great big party and got there to find nothing, we'd say, "Aw, shucks" and go home. But the beetles are so programmed to go to that scent that if they don't fall into the bag on the first pass, they keep flying around the lure until they do. I take

advantage of the beetles' stupidity by going around regularly and shaking plants that attract them. Any beetles present will drop off when disturbed, and rather than returning to the plant they were on, they tend to fly to whatever has the most inviting scent, which is usually one of the traps.

On our 20 acres (far more area than we can afford to treat with milky spore), we protect about an acre, which includes fruit trees, an extensive vegetable garden, and flowering trees, shrubs and perennials including many plants that Japanese beetles find delectable, such as hollyhocks, roses, Chinese chestnuts, *Kerria*, peaches, cherries, and Hall's hardy almond. There are 10 of the above-described traps distributed around the fence that surrounds our protected acre. Do they catch **every single beetle**? No way, but compared to the infestations we had before I perfected my system, the difference is major. (If the traps were attracting more beetles than they caught, I'd have a **worse** problem, right?)

Admittedly, the bread bags flapping like wind socks on our windy hill are not terribly scenic. We live in rural Craig County, near the West Virginia line (which is two ridges over from our location) and we might not be able to get away with this if we lived in the suburbs and had close neighbors. We have made a point of positioning our traps where they aren't too visible from the house.

Pulaski Garden Tour

By: Erica Jones

I managed to escape our tree littered yard on Saturday June 30th after deciding that no one was going to care about my spotty "shower" to take the Pulaski version of the Library tour. The organizer, Mickey Balconi, was nice enough to include the NRVMG grants program as a recipient, along with the Pulaski Public Libraries. My compliments on not canceling the tour! I think it was quite the deal at \$10 a head.

The first house I went to was Becky and Charlie Smith's, just outside the town of Dublin, featured an amazing array of Gloriosa Daisies in full bloom. A few clumps had succumbed to the high winds, as did a resident Bradford pear which had split right down the middle. Can you say brittle? The front yard was more flower beds than lawn; then you zip through a gate and into the slopier back yard which did have more exposed grass. (Not trying to imply that grass is good, mind you).

Below – the back yard... The Bradford pear remnants are being loaded on a trailer to the left of the person with a rake with the bed of Gloriosa daisies and others in the foreground.



The second garden, Stan Stanley's, was maybe 15 minutes away and was a newer installation with less of the cottage approach with extensive outdoor living space and a dry gully rock garden. As you approach this house it looks very ordinary on first glance as most of the landscaping was in the back yard. But, speaking of spreading, I was totally impressed to see two in-control batches of Ajuga. My Ajuga does not stay in any sort of boundaries!

The third garden I went to was basically in downtown Pulaski and was partly included on the tour for ideas as to "what you can do with limited space." The helper offering comments

explained that the garden owner liked pink, and cut flowers so she tried to space the blooming seasons out throughout the year using, interestingly, perennials. Cut gardens are way easier with annuals (although as an aside it seems like a lot of the annuals for sale as bedding plants are too short for cutting or just not suitable for cutting – like fibrous begonias.) This garden employed the idea of digging a shallow trench around the mulched bed to reduce root invasions and to keep the mulch from tumbling out into the grass and it was very effective.



The fourth garden I went to was Mickey's. Hers is a long narrow lot on Claytor Lake. She did a fabulous job of diagramming and labeling the plants in her garden so I could spend some time identifying unknowns. She had some very productive looking vegetable raised beds as you entered her yard made from recycled wood. It was getting to be late afternoon and Mickey was starting to fade so I did not quiz her too hard but did ask about the containers holding lovely hibiscus with good sized pebbles as mulch. She said that the local chipmunks really liked burrowing in the pots and that did dissuade them (tasty roots?). She did quiz me about a shrub that she had bought and had not labeled. My best guess was a bush honeysuckle (opposite oval leaves on a very smooth stem with a single berry at the ends of the branches). My camera was hiding from me at that point so, no picture. Blast.

And the fifth garden had a nice expanse of grass, gazebo, water feature and fire pit and was designed for good sized crowds of outdoor visitors.

Even though I did not get to two of the sites on the tour, the places I went gave a full range of what you can do with your garden – grow flowers, impress the neighbors, entertain small, entertain large, try for a wide variety of specimens, and what you can do with a small in town lot.

Favorite Fast Summer Meal

By: Carol Moates

Using part olive oil and part butter, brown a good amount of chopped garlic and chopped sage or basil, depending on your taste. Be careful to use low heat so as not to scorch the plant, if it turns black it is bitter and is no good.

Choose the proportion of quinoa you want to prepare and measure out, cup for cup, equal amounts of quinoa and water. Bring the water to a boil, stir in the quinoa and cover tightly and let sit for 5 minutes. Fluff and pour over your oil mixture and continue to fluff/mix it together. I normally cut up black olives and tomatoes in mine although you can put squash or whatever you like in with the garlic and herb mixture and add any toppings of your choosing. This is a light but nutritious dish for summer nights that we have often.

Thank you!

I would like to commend Donna Fern for taking the plunge and doing the first profile this month. Would someone else please step forward so I don't have to go reaching into my jar of names? Remember, you get time for writing, and you share what you choose. I am excited to learn more about our group and watch us become more connected.



Should a tree write its autobiography it should not be unlike the history of a race.

Kahlil Gibran

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