



The Grapevine

March 2013

Newsletter of the New River Valley Master Gardener

Meeting Minutes NRVMGGA Board on Feb 22, 2013

Board met prior to the General meeting of the NRVMGGA on Feb 22, 2013.

1. We discussed several grants, agreed to allow Wendy to purchase two folding chairs for the plant clinics.
2. Plans for future programs – Lynn shared some information about the Habitat for Humanity having need for landscape plants and possible designs for two homes in Blacksburg. We look forward to finding out more about his program
3. Home Show at the recreation center – Lynn is going to have MGA members sign up at the meeting afterwards.
4. Social networking for the association, such as Facebook or Linked in was discussed and generally approved. Elizabeth McCormick will work on this.

The general meeting followed and we had a wonderful presentation from the new Master Gardener coordinator for the state, John Freeborn, new Assistant Master Gardener Virginia State Coordinator.

Wendy talked about T-shirt orders and the membership forms that are required for the Master Gardener volunteers for Extension volunteers.

Carol Moates gave out a personal profile for each member to complete, as this often highlights other areas of member skills or interests that she may want to use for future Grapevine articles.

Maureen offered an ice-breaker activity and a dessert and beverages buffet was open to the members.

Update- we now have a Facebook page thanks to Elizabeth McCormick! She did a great job.
<https://www.facebook.com/pages/New-River-Valley-Master-Gardener-Association/488502647889236>

Maureen Fallon

Treasurer's Report March 2013

The operating account has a current balance of \$3,977.75. Please keep in mind that more than a thousand of that amount is earmarked for shirts. Wendy can tell you how the shirt sales are progressing. All outstanding bills have been paid and we are up to date on state tax and federal reports.

The Grants Account has distributed \$1375.00 of the \$2100.00 the Grants Committee has authorized for grants and has earmarked an additional \$1000.00 for possible mini grants for members. The Grants Account will still have a working balance of \$1488.00 after meeting it's commitments.

Respectfully Submitted, **Bob Lockwood, Treasurer**

Grants awarded for 2013 By: Erica Jones

Pulaski County 4-H \$500. Money to Chris Litchy for purchasing starts which will be grown in one of three greenhouses located at 3 different elementary schools. These plants are then used to plant in the children's personal garden, sold for money raising, enter produce in the NRV fair, and used to beautify the school grounds and other landscaping projects. Chris is my hero; last year he sent pictures and a full report on 2011 activities. Steve Hale liaison.

Pulaski Co Visitors Center \$400 "Claudia's Garden" (in Dublin). Money for plants, labels and garden brochure. Steve Hale and Stacy Nichols are the liaisons.

Radford High School \$400 – "Ever Changing Garden". Existing garden needs work on borders, mulch and plant material. Bob Lockwood is liaison.

Seeds (at the Price house) \$250 – Native plants and soil additives for a butterfly garden. Liaisons Rosemarie Sawdon.

VICCC (NRV Head Start) \$250 Soil, seeds, plants and tools for existing "stock tank" gardens. Liaison Evelyn Melia.

Christiansburg Library Internal Mini Grant \$095 Plants and containers for a class in "making successful mixed annual containers" and annual or perennial bedding plants for work sessions by Christiansburg elementary students. Liaison Gwen Ewing.

Price's Fork Elementary \$650 Elizabeth McCormick, liaison. This is a fairly new school and they are working on beds for each of the grades and have gotten other money for some of the beds. The grant money is to go to plants, topsoil, tools for the 4th grade native shade garden.

NRV Home Expo Plant Clinic 2013

A round of applause for the Home Expo Plant Clinic Team that started our plant clinic season with a bang this year. We had the good fortune to have been able to inaugurate our beautiful new banner that was hot off the press. With free seeds to lure in the kids (young and adult), our team of volunteers got to share their knowledge and have fun as well. It was also the first public outing for our brag board that was a great conversation starter. Displaying everything from grant sites to educational meetings it served a wonderful role in sharing with the community our many activities. Over 18 of our finest NRV MGA members and trainees joined forces to take advantage of the interesting mix of attendees. To see the excitement in a child's eyes over the prospect of growing something from seed is what it's all about! Thanks for the dedication and commitment to each and every one that played a part in this three day event!

Now take the Plant Clinic challenge. Do you know of a venue that we could set up and be of service to our neighbors? We will be set up at the May 11th Plant Sale, but if you have a suggestion please let Wendy or any board member know. It would be wonderful to spread out and host one in each county we represent. And it goes without saying spring is the season for sharing our knowledge about gardening.

Once again thanks for taking part in these successful clinics! **Lynn Brammer**

Abundant Mini Gardens

Many of you took advantage of the opportunity to come out and support our very own Debra Graff as she spreads the word about the amazing success you can have with Square Foot Gardening. There is no way that anyone could speak with more knowledge and first hand experience than Debra. She has generously offered her free presentations at three of the local libraries, Harmony Organics and will speak again at the Hahn Garden on the 20th of March at their Wednesday noon educational session. Visit her website and blog www.SquareFootAbundance.com <<http://www.SquareFootAbundance.com>> to take a look at the wealth of information she has posted. It was a treat to see the house packed each time she spoke. We hope to talk her in to another show and tell day at her garden in Christiansburg if we promise to do some chores for her, which is a terrific payoff for us! Thanks Debra for your inspiration!!

Lynn Brammer

**March Profile:
Stan Stanley**

Master Gardener since: 2008

Current MG activities: Rain barrels, Hahn Garden (Monday session), Home Expo., MG College,
NRV Fair

Occupation: Retired Physical Education teacher – 30 yrs. middle school

Favorite MG class: Plant Propagation Class

Gardening history: Raised a vegetable garden for years. Just since becoming a MG I now have many flower gardens in my yard.

Interests and hobbies: Gardening, woodworking, cooking, stained glass

Favorite plants: All plants

Recent additions to my garden: Dry creek bed, wood fired pizza oven

Wish I knew more about: Names of plants

Most important thing about gardening to me: learning about gardening and working in the
fresh air

Favorite gardening books: Reference books

**Annual Plant Sale
May 11, 8AM – 2PM**

We are gearing up for our annual plant sale which is one of our main fund raising events. There is a need for plant start and rootings from any of your personal favorite plants that you could contribute. We are also looking for anything to do with gardening: books, tools, pots, bird feeders, garden decorations, etc.. Please be careful in potting up plants for the sale that uncontaminated dirt and pots are used. So far this is a small committee and we are still looking for more volunteers. Many of the tasks can be done over the phone, there will be a need for things to be picked up at different locations, we will be pricing the plants, lots of varied jobs to do. You can commit to as much or as little as is comfortable to you. Remember your contribution time will count as volunteer hours. Come help out! This is always a fun day!!

Carol Moates



Dried Plum Rice Salad

Sent by: Susan Lockwood

Instructions

Stir together all salad ingredients in a large bowl. Whisk together *all* dressing ingredients in a small bowl and drizzle over salad. Toss well to coat. Refrigerate for at least 1 hour. Makes 8 servings.

Recipe tip: Salad may be prepared 1 day before serving. Add spinach and almonds just before serving.

Ingredients:

Salad: 3 cups cold, cooked long grain brown or white rice 2 cups lightly packed chopped fresh spinach 1/2 cup Sunsweet® Plum Amazins™ 1/2 cup diced bell pepper (preferably red) 1/2 cup slivered almonds, toasted 1/3 cup sliced green onions 6 strips crisp cooked bacon, crumbled

Dressing: 1/3 cup extra virgin olive oil 1/3 cup rice vinegar (not seasoned) 1 tbsp each: sugar

Spring Cleaning

By: Mickey Balconi

Spring cleaning starts in my garden this year! The old wooden sided raised bed is rotting through. The self-seeding perennials have outdone themselves. Columbine and Lamb's Ear have spread rampantly, and the irises and day lilies have expanded their borders. The herb garden is being moved to make an herb walkway, and all plants are being reevaluated for their positions and emphasis in the garden.

The lovely spring weather has let me get a leg up out in the garden with the general cleanup. Old compost bins are being emptied and moved to different locations. The compost gets screened and placed in the raised beds for the vegetable garden and around the perennial plants to give them a spring snack! Twig fencing passed to me from my neighbor will screen the not-so-pretty but essential aspects of a working garden.

An old boat lift that was removed from the dock to allow for the dock to be made into a more useful deck had thick beams nailed together to provide support. If my husband is successful in splitting them apart, I will have some thick sides for a new raised bin. If that is not possible, Plan B is to get some thinner cedar boards for the new enclosure. Cedar is a good

material for this because it does not rot easily. Many people use cedar trees as posts for fencing for this reason. The live trees will not rot at all, of course.

Cleanup also moves into the garden shed. This is the year to throw out all the old seeds that have a few in each packet. Some may still be viable, but time is wasted when they do not have a good germination rate. Most seed packets have too many seeds for the small raised bed garden. Look for packages that have a limited number of seeds per pack. I will plant only a few zucchini each year because each plant provides many zucchinis. Beans, on the other hand, get a few short rows planted several times during the season so I use more of them. Most seeds will last for another year or so if you put them in a moisture proof container in your refrigerator.

If only a few plants will serve your needs, you might want to consider sharing seeds with another small space gardener. Some things like tomatoes I buy as plants since I will only have four to six plants in a bed. To get a jumpstart on the garden, onion sets, peas, and cabbage plants can be planted now if your soil is workable. Workable mean that a handful neither crumbles from dryness nor holds together like a solid ball. Raised beds or large containers warm up sooner than the ground.

If you just cannot bear to throw away seeds, try this to see if they are worthwhile to keep. Put ten seeds in a paper towel, wet the towel and put in a warm spot like a sunny window sill. If the number of seed sprouting is 50% or better, you can plant them. Just plant them a little thicker than usual.

In the garden shed thin out the rusty, broken and unusable garden stakes that have accumulated. Good rust covering spray paint can upgrade garden ornaments which may have another year of life left in them. If they are unrecognizable however, pitch them and you can enjoy some new space in the shed. I put pieces of pegboard on the inside of the doors to my shed and they hold many of the small tools I regularly use. The big tools like pruners and shovels go on the other door. This makes it easier to get them without actually going into the shed!

The old adage to “keep nothing that is not beautiful nor useful” goes double in the garden and shed. Beauty is easy to come by in the flowers, vegetable and herbs. However, some order will add to their beauty if the supporting garden plan and equipment in the garden shed is ready!

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