



# *The Grapevine*

May 2011

## New River 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)  
Vice president – Helen Young – 392-2292 [helen.young@verison.net](mailto:helen.young@verison.net)  
Vice president – Ini Beckman – 552-2873 [inibeckman@yahoo.com](mailto:inibeckman@yahoo.com)  
Secretary – open  
Treasurer – Erica Jones – 544-7359 [emjones@vt.edu](mailto:emjones@vt.edu)  
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At large – Keith Mileski – 382-7479 [janicem955@gmail.com](mailto:janicem955@gmail.com)  
Past president – Gwen Ewing – 382-9566 [ewinggr@vt.edu](mailto:ewinggr@vt.edu)  
Open Position, Trainee Member-at-Large

#### **Communications**

Website: <http://civic.bev.net/nrvmg>  
Erica Jones TEMPORARY, Webmaster and Listserv Administrator  
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### **VCE Master Gardener Program**

Wendy Silverman, Coordinator 382-5790

#### **Contact Us:**

#### **NRVMGA**

NRV MGA Website:

<http://civic.bev.net/nrvmg/>

(Membership Dues, Grants and General Correspondence) POB 747, Blacksburg, VA 24063

Listserv: [nrvmg@listserv.bburg.bev.net](mailto:nrvmg@listserv.bburg.bev.net)

#### **Virginia Cooperative Extension**

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#### **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**

Silent Auction - \$713.

Ruritan Donation - \$200.00



## May Garden Chores

### The Whole Garden

- \*Weed beds thoroughly before weeds get out of hand.
- \*Make certain all winter mulches are removed by beginning of month.
- \*Top off summer mulch in beds where levels have dropped below 2 inches.
- \*Rake beds that have ample mulch to prevent matting.
- \*Keep watering transplants and new plants frequently.

### Trees and Shrubs

- \*Prune shrubs that bloom in early Spring right after they bloom.
- \*Prune conifers.
- \*Train topiaries and espaliers.
- \*Plant potted roses.
- \*Fertilize roses, if you didn't feed them earlier in the season.

### Flowers and Grasses

- \*Cut back perennial stems damaged by frost.
- \*Set out dahlias after the last frost date.
- \*Plant gladiolus corms beginning early this month.
- \*Finish dividing summer and fall blooming perennials.
- \*Stake peonies, delphiniums, and tall phlox early.
- \*Start planting tender annuals outdoors after the last frost date.
- \*Reseed bare spots in the lawn.

### Fruits and Vegetables

- \*Start cucumbers indoors.
- \*Finish planting asparagus and rhubarb roots early in the month.
- \*Continue sowing onions, carrots, and beets directly in the garden.
- \*Direct seed parsley which takes about 3 weeks to germinate.
- \*Continue sowing radishes, endive, escarole, lettuce, and spinach every 2 weeks.
- \*Direct seed chervil, Swiss chard, turnips, and fennel.
- \*Begin transplanting tomatoes into the garden well after last frost date.
- \*Begin transplanting pumpkins, melons, and summer and winter squash well after last frost date.
- \*Begin transplanting peppers and eggplants into the garden well after last frost date.
- \*Start fall crops of brussel sprouts, broccoli, cauliflower, and cabbage by direct seeding or starting flats for transplanting in June and July.
- \*Set herb transplants into garden.
- \*Plant strawberries.

## **Local Calendar Meetings NRVMG (and one out-of-state)**

### **May**

May 6<sup>th</sup> - 6pm Class of 2011 Graduation, pot luck, and SILENT AUCTION Mont Co extension office. Come a little early to get your auction items "signed in." This is one of two annual fund raisers (no dues, remember!).

Items - books, plants (annual perennials, shrubs, house plants), any gardening supplies, food, do-dads, gift certificates for items or labor. Come meet the new class if you have not yet!

7<sup>th</sup> Saturday 10-noon Rain Barrel workshop, Hahn garden

8<sup>th</sup> Sunday 6:30pm Tree ID Walk. Meet at Gazebo at Duck Pond

### **June**

13<sup>th</sup> NRV MG Board - Mont Co. Extension office, 6pm

16th - Membership meeting 6:30 pm Tour Rebekah's Country Garden 6pm -rebekah.paulson@comcast.net

22-26 – Master Gardener College! Plan to go to awards ceremony

### **July**

21 – 6:30pm Garden Tours in Floyd County, Guides Pamela Cadmus, Jane O'Keefe

### **August**

18 – Square foot and therapeutic gardens – 351 Rolling Hills Drive, Christiansburg

Contact Debra Graff 381-1470

### **September**

15 – 6:30pm Alex Niemera, "Gardening in All Seasons" at Hahn Hort Garden

17 – fun all day – Heritage Festival at Monticello, Charlottesville

### **October**

10-14 – International Master Gardener Meeting – Charlestown, WV. Information is up on website

Please check our website often as things are there that may not be in newsletters.

## **Organic Seed Growers and Trade Association**

OSGATA President Jim Gerritsen released this statement, March 29th, 2011, the day Southern Exposure joined 60 other plaintiffs in filing suit against the Monsanto Company:

*Today is Independence Day for America. Today we are seeking protection from the Court and putting Monsanto on notice. Monsanto's threats and abuse of family farmers stops here. Monsanto's genetic contamination of organic seed and organic crops ends now. Americans have the right to choice in the marketplace - to decide what kind of food they will feed their families - and we are taking this action on their behalf to protect that right to choose. Organic farmers have the right to raise our organic crops for our families and our customers on our farms without the threat of invasion by Monsanto's genetic contamination and without harassment by a reckless polluter. Beginning today, America asserts her right to justice and pure food.*

Editorial by Food Democracy Now which is a watchdog group on organics, genetic alterations, dangerous herb and insecticides. [fooddemocracynow.org](http://fooddemocracynow.org)

## Love the Lowly Toads

Do you know??

Toads can lay as many as 30,000 eggs at one time.

A toad is an amphibian.

For many years toads were sold on the streets of France and England as protectors of the garden.

A toad can catch and swallow 300 insects a night.

A toad's long, sticky tongue is attached at the front, not the rear, of its mouth.....this helps make those lightning flicks possible.

Warts on a toad are really glands that ooze a gummy white fluid when the toad is grabbed by a larger animal which is very irritating.

Once toads are on land they stay there the rest of their lives. They only go back to water to start a new family.

\*\*60 % of a toad's food consists of insect pests.

Toads love insects, slugs, cutworms, beetles, army worms, and gypsy moth caterpillars.

It has been reported that toads are sensitive to music and will actually enter a room to listen.

Some toads have lived for as long as 20 years.

Toad populations are declining in many parts of the world.

From: *Hollyhock Days Garden Adventures for the Young at Heart* by Sharon Lovejoy

## Hahn Garden Update by Lynn Brammer

Do you ever stop to realize what a treasure we have in our own backyard? The Hahn Horticulture Garden on campus hosts a wealth of activities/events/volunteer night and more. The trainee class has spent some quality time there these past few months, but for those of you that may be involved in other projects, don't forget to check their website periodically for upcoming activities. They just finished up the annual plant sale that is always a gardener's delight. I took the Spring Wildflower Walk last week and because of Holly Scoggins savvy skills we visited a top secret location and got to check off almost everything on our list! The fellowship and knowledge that can be had on any Monday volunteer night is tough to match.

Contact [www.vtgarden@vt.edu](mailto:www.vtgarden@vt.edu)<<http://www.vtgarden@vt.edu>> to ask Stephanie Huckestein to add you to the list serve that keeps everyone aware of what is going on any given night.

Coming up on June 11th the Hahn Garden hosts the most exciting fundraiser of the year. And let's put that emphasis on the FUN portion of fundraiser. It's the Seventh Annual Garden Gala, so the theme this year is Lucky Seven. We are going to have casino games for the first time. There is always amazing food and an open bar, but the highlight of the evening is to see the amazing array of silent auction items: everything from unique plants, vacation timeshares, artwork, handmade garden furniture...and maybe even a Jane O'Keefe moss container garden. All are very classy upscale items.

We would love to see you all attend. If you would like to be so kind as to consider contributing an auction item please contact me for more information [lbrammer@vt.edu](mailto:lbrammer@vt.edu).

I encourage you to check out the entire Hahn website, but in the gala portion of that site we are reminded of why these funds for the garden are so very important for their function and purpose. So please take a moment to put it on your "favorites" and explore all they have to offer. And hey, I don't even get paid to say that!

[www.hort.vt.edu/hhg](http://www.hort.vt.edu/hhg)

## Invasives by Erica Jones

Some gardeners go along learning as they go (and avoid the really bad mistakes). The rest of us do dumb things and the education comes after the dumb part. My dumb has been, and still is, inheriting, planting and owning some fairly nasty “invasives.”

So what is an invasive? (Aren't all plants invasive??) In general terms it is a plant (usually introduced but that is not part of the definition) that aggressively competes with and displaces the local residents in that area. So what is invasive in the mountains of Virginia may or may be invasive in Tidewater.

USDA has a interesting web site full of them This site -

<http://www.invasivespeciesinfo.gov/plants/main.shtml> - lists about 45 top offenders.

The worse came inherited along with the property.

#1 Japanese knotweed or Japanese fleece flower (*Polygonum cuspidatum* or *Fallopia japonica*) is actually a pretty plant and was probably planted on the property years ago as an ornamental. Mine is a fun pink version which blooms late summer. But still . . . it is considered a problem chiefly because of its propensity to spread via rhizomes. One might think that is less of a problem than plants that spread by seed, but it is exceedingly easy to transplant via dirt that has been moved; and believe you me, we have spread it around simply by moving dirt, when we has our driveway worked on. Not just moved, but bulldozing cuts the roots into pieces and so it gets spread around, too. Remember, dirt moves by erosion, too. One variety of it I saw on the west coast where it had totally conquered creek banks. My approach to the knotweed has been glycofosphate poured into the hollow stems. My goal is zero, but I don't think I will ever get there. This one is on USDA's list.

#2 Oriental Wisteria

I planted this one, in white, after my mother died since she liked them too. They too spread underground. All around the plant in my yard I have new plants popping up from the roots; sometimes a good 30' away. Start pulling and you will discover the connectivity! Mowing does wonders, but please plant them in some place where you CAN mow. Could I tell you about wrestling with the stuff for 5 hours on the edge someone's yard in the woods? With this plant I recently disappointed someone by suggesting we not plant it on a project. There is a native version, but my one attempt at that alas, died. My 20 year old plant in my yard I mow around and prune the tar out of it, and it seems to be fairly subdued. Not tried the glycofosphate; yet.

#3 Miscanthus

Ornamental grasses are fabulous – four seasons of fun basically and all you have to do to them is cut them down early spring. Yes, well, but miscanthus really spreads by seeds. Again mowing does wonders, but if you can't mow.... I know of a set of stepped beds some 12' by 40' which were totally taken over by the stuff and now the owner is fretting. If you mow, then they don't produce seeds; but what is the point to that? I am still working on control of the beast. Any suggestions would be welcome!

All of us could add our favorite horror story I bet. But if you have something in your yard of dubious value, acknowledge that it might escape, and keep an eye on it, or even roust it. Some plants just do not deserve to live in your yard.

## Do You Know How?

There must be vast amounts of untapped knowledge among us. Are there any of you who make wine from the fruit you raise? Do any of you dry herbs and vegetables? Anyone dry flowers and use them for art? Anyone make gourd birdhouses or feeders, any specialty jam or preserve makers, etc . . .? See what I am getting at? I'd love to have those interested in sharing their interests, hobbies, or talents with the rest of us to allow me to put a little blurb in the Grapevine so that we will know that we can contact you for more information on that subject. Who knows, someone might just be looking for a quick lesson in something that you know a lot about. I believe it could be fun and fulfilling for us to share a bit of ourselves. I love horses and quilting and would love to share with folks interested. Think it over and please contact me at [cymoates@gmail.com](mailto:cymoates@gmail.com) to say how much you too would enjoy sharing your special something!



Gunther Hawk has been an organic/biodynamic gardener and beekeeper using sustainable methods for over 38 years. Gunther has given many beekeeping workshops all over the continent. He is tireless at working to save the honeybee and enthusiastic in sharing his wisdom. When I spoke with him he offered to do a talk and walk on his farm in Floyd for the Master Gardeners if there is enough interest. His is a non-profit organization so it would be on a donation basis. He and his wife, Vivian, have been instrumental in starting several biodynamic farms in the U. S. They arrived in Floyd County in 2009 to set up a bee sanctuary and share their knowledge of farming and beekeeping. You can read more about him at [www.spikenardfarm.org](http://www.spikenardfarm.org).



I hope you can see some changes taking place in our newsletter. I am actively searching the group for contributions for June. There has been mention of adding some book reviews, and so I am asking you to please email me with a short review of a favorite book. There is a huge arena of things we could share, please email me, or call with ideas, blurbs, or articles for June. I'd also like to ask members currently working on a project to give a little testimonial about how it's going and insight on the progress. It could be a potential way to get in hours for those needing them. Also, if you have a favorite garden or nursery in the surrounding area, please share it with our group. I hope you will contribute to help make this a newsletter we will all enjoy.

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**New River Valley  
Master Gardener Association  
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