



## *May Grapevine*

*New River Valley Master Gardeners Association*

**Minutes of New River Valley Master Gardener Assoc.  
Board Meeting  
April 11<sup>th</sup>, 2013**

Location: Donna Fern's Home, Riner

In Attendance: Donna Fern, Lynn Brammer, Maureen Fallon, Linda Harris, Gwen Ewing, Evelyn Melia, Rosemarie Sawdon

Lynn called meeting to order. The Minutes from the March meeting are waiting for approval when presented. Treasurer's Report to be presented at next meeting.

Lynn began meeting with proposal for "Gratitude" gift for presenters and/or speakers at our monthly meetings. Set amount to be \$15.00 with Donna Fern obtaining gift at her discretion.

Lynn also announced that Carol Moates has two proof reader volunteers for the Grapevine.

Maureen proposed that mailings to listserve members not promote, or inadvertently advertise personal business. As part of the Extension Service, it is not appropriate or condoned by Extension.

In conjunction with the film about diversity, Extension encouraged members to view; Lynn suggested the consideration of a scholarship for Master Gardener class to a minority member in our area. This was discussed and requires further review.

However, seeking minority members to join our association should be a priority in order to diversify the membership; therefore, members will be encouraged to reach out to minorities. Examples for outreach being the NAACP and the international community in Blacksburg.

Maureen has volunteered to help Gwen with plant sale preparation. A sign-up sheet will be sent out seeking members to assist with obtaining donations, distributing posters, and helping the day of the sale, May 11<sup>th</sup>, 8am-2pm.

Volunteers need at 7am to setup, price plants, put up signs, etc. Donna has revised donation letter which will be forwarded to volunteers and also available on line. Gwen has received permit from Christiansburg for signs. She is also looking into having 4-H members present.

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Betsy Kirby will donate cardboard boxes to be used for transport. Lynn will arrange Plant Clinic booth. Rosemarie will write article for the CURRENT and also notification inevent calendar in CURRENT.

Any questions regarding plant sale should be directed to Gwen.

Lynn took minutes at April 6<sup>th</sup> General Meeting /Rain Barrel Workshop. Workshop was a success with 10 barrels being constructed. Barrels will be sold at plant sale. Two of the barrels are being decorated and other members with artistic skills are encouraged to decorate, which should increase their value. The association's financial cost was \$250.00. Hopefully the association will receive a profit, with all monies going to the grant program.

Donna announced that Stan Stanley has offered his backyard for an August social.

General Meeting/Potluck Graduation scheduled for, Friday, May 10<sup>th</sup>, 5:30pm.

Members At Large are responsible for setting up, beverages, table decorations and small gift (plant) for graduates.(Money from operating account) Members at Large: Elizabeth McCormick, Evelyn Melia, Susan Lockwood, Bonnie Maccubbin.

NRMGA now has a Facebook page, thanks to Elizabeth McCormick. All events are posted on site. Members encouraged to become active on site.

2013 Directories available.... Update: Linda Harris (new phone) 540-922-2083

Upcoming meetings: Board Meeting, Thursday, May 30<sup>th</sup>, 5:45pm, Location to be announced.  
General Meeting - June 13<sup>th</sup>, 6:30pm, Stonewood Botanical Garden  
Mt Tabor Road, Blacksburg

Further information from Donna Fern forthcoming.

Submitted by: Rosemarie Sawdon

### **Now is the Time for All Good Master Gardeners to come to the Aid of a Fellow Master Gardener**

When I took the responsibility for the Museum Garden, I thought I would be working on it as time allowed. But there was a grant that was unfinished, I have been trying to complete that grant, which required labeling the existing plants. As I was going to revamp the gardening by removing existing plants and adding plants, it seemed worthless to make a pamphlet until a plant list was established and researched. In the mean time a great deal of maintenance has been required due to perennial weeds and mint that had established in the garden. The upper garden pamphlet is mostly written. I think I have someone to format the pamphlet although I have not heard from her in a while. Artwork for the front panel of the pamphlet is still needed. Then last fall without being consulted the garden was put on the Library Garden Tour. Another commitment that I did not request and am now responsible for the outcome.

In establishing the garden I have gladly donated plants from my garden, plants that I purchase, and materials for hardscape which has added up to \$200.00 to \$300.00 or more per year. When I volunteer I would rather donate my own money, than apply for grants. I like neither paperwork, restrictions, time limits, nor follow-up reports.

It has been a great joy for me to do public gardens over the years. My first public garden was in Brooklyn, New York at Long Island College Hospital. I am not sure why, but it cheers people up. While I worked people from the Puerto Rican maintenance man to an illustrator for Scientific American walking her dog stopped and asked me about the plants I was planting. Currently, at the rock garden I established in the median at the end of my street, I always get people saying thank you. If I am blue, I just spend an hour there and the people stopping to say thank you cheer me up.

So the reason I am writing is to say that I need your help in the Museum garden to get it ready for the Library Tour. Please do not wait until the day of the tour or a week before the tour. Now is the time that will make a difference in the outcome of the garden. The following are things that need to be done in the next month to get the garden ready for the tour.

1. Weeding of perennial weeds, especially a noxious vine that smothers the perennials it allowed to grow.
2. Planting annuals.
3. Watering annuals.
4. Removing butterfly bushes.
5. Removing star of Bethlehem in the lower garden. (You can have all you want.)
6. Removing some very high limbs that were damaged in wind storms. (Requires professional equipment.)
7. Edging beds.
8. Deadheading lamb's ears.
9. Removing Russian Sage around the edges of the bed and from under plastic in path.
10. Moving four large clumps of daylilies intertwines with perennial weeds.
11. Pruning hollies. (Three different species.)
12. Pruning trees leaning over picnic table and lower paths.
13. Using round up to kill Alanthus tree in lower garden.
14. Cutting down tree Alanthus.
15. Formatting pamphlet.
16. Getting pamphlet printed.
17. Weeding and finish spreading mulch on path in lower garden.
18. Cutting up and removing branches from storm.
19. Finish building brick pedestals for containers.
20. Write a plant list and information on the native plants in the lower garden. (I hope to do this as summer heats up).
21. Magnetic sign for the mailbox with pamphlets. Sign will say, Garden Guides, Return or take home.

If there was not a garden tour coming, all of these activities could be done as time allowed. But as the appearance of the garden will reflect on the Museum and the Master Gardeners I am requesting your help within the next two to six weeks. I hope on the day of the event that those who guide others through the garden will be those who have worked to maintain the garden.

Planned work times:

Tuesday, Thursday, Sunday 4PM to 6PM (except Sunday May 12)

I am willing to come other times if you cannot come at the above times. I need to be present as some plants that look like weeds are desired plants and some plants that are weeds look like plants to keep. I worked in the garden today and yesterday transplanting and planting lots of native seedlings and have started on the annuals.

I am the little red hen looking for volunteers to help prepare the garden for the Library tour.

Beth Umberger

382-1580

## 26th Annual Master Gardener College

Well, as the spring season finally gets here and we get excited about our numerous activities, I want to continue the gratitude to Wendy for keeping us updated on all the local gardening events. I encourage everyone to take advantage and get involved in some way with the amazing opportunity we have in our own backyard to participate in Master Gardener College. This year MGC is featuring Water Steward Training as a highlight. There are numerous ways to become a part of the events, from registering and being an attendee or by volunteering to moderate a session, or offering to drive some of the tour vans. Remember if you'd like to be a volunteer you still go to the registration site and sign up under the listing of "Volunteer." There are certain events opened to all without being a paid attendee. Wendy will make us aware of those. I have entered our Brag Board in the brag night event. That is an "open to all" event. It is a part of an amazing night of showing other groups throughout the state what we have been up to. Also the silent auction is an exciting evening of wonderful plant material and related items. Did you know that one of the associations that send the largest number of attendees travels from the other side of the state? It would be wonderful if our NRV group has a marked turnout (and we have our spiffy new shirts to help us be spotted in the crowd!). Remember to apply for the scholarship if you'd like to get help with the registration fee. There is always some creative and unique information to learn about and inspiring ideas of ways we can better serve our public. As an attendee or as a volunteer you feel the connection we have as Master Gardeners and it makes you very proud of our college, its campus, and the good fortune we have to be living in this beautiful valley. So get involved, enjoy the fellowship along with wonderful educational opportunity. Let's show off all we have to offer and share with these fellow gardeners by being a part of Master Gardener College this year.

<http://vmga.net/College/College%20Home.htm> great promo video:

[www.youtube.com/watch?v=gQUYIKjpl8s](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=gQUYIKjpl8s)<<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=gQUYIKjpl8s>>

Lynn Brammer

## Share the Spare

Share the Spare is a project that started as a booth at the Blacksburg Farmers Market. We set up a booth and banner on Saturdays from 8 until 2. Since spring of 2010 we have asked the patrons of the market to consider buying an additional item, putting it in our booth baskets and we pass it on to local perishable food groups at the end of the market day. Since inception, we have collected over 5 tons of fresh produce to put on the tables of families as a healthy, local option. We have expanded our mission a bit each year, we collect home gardeners own backyard garden surplus, we have farmers that donate their market surplus at the end of the day, and now we also harvest fresh fruit from local trees and pass that on as well. We have established a relationship with some local community gardens and Dr. Kim

Niewolny, assistant professor College of Agriculture and Life Sciences was kind enough to donate a huge cooler to this program that we place at the YMCA community garden and have those folks place their surplus inside.

The heart of the program is still the weekly booth on Saturdays. It also serves as a plant clinic to answer questions and becomes a wonderful chance to spread the word about the Master Gardener Program and all it offers. Extension is an amazing service and we, as their "offspring" get this chance to make the public aware of all we offer the community. We plan to start setting up for the season in late May. It would be wonderful to see some of our new trainees out there this year. We will have a MG with you during your 2 hour shift and help you get a feel for how we make the patrons of the market aware of our goals. It is a very social, interactive, busy scene so come out ready to engage and talk up our program and its mission. It's amazing the conversations you become a part of when you take the initiative. Listening to parents explain to their child what we are doing and then seeing that child hand you a zucchini, well, it doesn't get any better than that! You learn as much as you teach on a typical day if you are paying attention!

If you are one of those folks like myself that feels passionate about our programs and what we do, then please consider offering a couple of hours of your time on a Saturday. I have a list of those that have expressed interest already. I welcome feedback and suggestions to make this a banner year in an attempt to make sure no fresh produce gets wasted. And also those of us that have the good fortune to be able to buy one extra item can do just that. I would also like to emphasize this is not a competition for the food. If you share your extras with your neighbors, your church, your local pantry then you are doing just exactly what we are, only in a more direct way...so congratulations to you! If you would like to consider setting up a booth like this at your local farmers market I would love to assist you in any way possible. I will be sending out a reminder each week to all about mid-week about the upcoming Saturday and would ask that you shoot me an email or call and let me know what shift works for you. And once again, as a trainee there will be a Master Gardener there at the booth. Thanks for your consideration on becoming part of this rewarding project.

Lynn Brammer 449-6621c 381-4846h [lbrammer@vt.edu](mailto:lbrammer@vt.edu)

## New River Valley Garden Tour

On Saturday July 6th, from 9 until 5 pm the Friends of the Library host the annual garden tour. This year we are thrilled to have our very own Montgomery Museum Garden located on Pepper Street in Christiansburg on the tour. If you are familiar with this garden, Beth Umberger, one of our dedicated and tireless members gets to show off all the coordinated efforts that make this garden so very special. Beth and her team have worked hard to pull the invasive plants out of this garden and make it become a true representation of what a museum garden should be. The tour features eight gardens between Blacksburg and Christiansburg; it is a self-guided tour that takes place rain or shine.

Our role as Master Gardeners during this tour, is getting to "play host" in these gardens and be available to answer questions from the tour patrons. We ask that you sign up for a two hour shift. You are welcome to work multiple gardens just not back to back shifts since we ask you to arrive 15 minutes before your shift for a smooth transition.

There are teams from the Friends of the Library that host a table as you arrive. Their job is ticket checkers/sellers. If we make a FAQ (frequently asked questions) sheet for that garden we will have


copies there at the table that we'd ask folks to turn in as they leave if they don't need to keep it. Your role is to be out in the garden directing the flow of traffic, pointing out potential hazards (rain making a path slick), pointing out unusual or interesting features. You will be briefed by someone about the dynamics of the garden and/or given that FAQ sheet. As a Master Gardener you want to be aware of and pointing out the principles we are taught that are applied in that particular garden. For example, use of drought tolerant plants, erosion control methods, mulch options used by the home owner. If they have a rain barrel you take the opportunity to chat about water sheds and run off and being a good water steward (also a theme at MG College this year!). This is how we earn our hours. Most of the attendees come with friends and just have generic questions about plant identification. Some folks will be in their own little garden tour bubble and won't have any questions, but often, conversations start when they see your MG nametag and acknowledge our work. You will be made aware of the more unusual plant life of the garden you work. You are there to be back up to the owners (although one family will be out of town on tour day) as the touring people mill about. You want to yield to them and make sure to introduce them as the garden owners to the tourists as you are able. You can see the owners beam with pride when all the accolades roll in from the tourists.

The bonus of all this is treating yourself to a tour ticket and getting to see these amazing gardens. If you sign up to host a garden you will be invited to our Sunday event to have all the garden owners gather and share their stories and allow us to thank them and YOU for being on the tour. I will be circulating the sign-up sheet at our potluck but would welcome you to take a look at the information on the site below and consider picking a garden you would like to work. First come first serve on shifts. There are times I get multiple emails and I promise to look at them in the correct timeline so as to give proper priority to those that speak up first. Each and every garden is beautiful and unique in its own way. I guarantee a day filled with great conversations and a wealth of new ideas to take away.

Lynn Brammer 449-6621c 381-4846h [lbrammer@vt.edu](mailto:lbrammer@vt.edu)<mailto:[lbrammer@vt.edu](mailto:lbrammer@vt.edu)>  
<http://www.mfrifriends.org/gardentour.html>

### Welcome to Kelli Scott

We welcome Kelli Scott in her new role as Master Gardener Extension Agent! Wendy wrote a wonderful introduction in last month's Grapevine, but we want to make sure Kelli feels welcome and gets a chance to meet each member and work with us on upcoming projects. Kelli's role is to be the next person up the chain of command that works with Wendy. She will be working closely with Jon Vest as she transitions to this new job. Let's all take the chance to let her know how thrilled we, as well as Wendy and Jon are, to have her working for extension! And we are very happy that the state has seen the need for filling this important position. Yeah Extension, yeah Kelli! Her contact information is [kescott1@vt.edu](mailto:kescott1@vt.edu)<mailto:[kescott1@vt.edu](mailto:kescott1@vt.edu)> 382-5790 the Government Center Extension Office.

 YouTube - Videos from this email:  
<https://www-gm-opensocial.googleusercontent.com/gadgets/proxy/refresh=3600&container=gm&gadget=http%3A%2F%2Fwww.gstatic.com%2Fimg%2Fmodules%2Fgm%2Fyoutube%2Fcard-youtube.xml/http://i.ytimg.com/vi/gQUYIKjpl8s/default.jpg>

Please copy and paste this site into your computer to view our Master Gardener video.

## Hello New River Valley Master Gardeners

Kelli Scott



I'm so excited to be joining the Virginia Cooperative Extension team as the new Agriculture and Natural Resources agent for Montgomery County, VA. Agriculture and natural resource management has been a passion of mine for many years. I grew up in Brunswick County, located on the coast of southeastern North Carolina nestled in the Cape Fear region. Like many traditional agriculture families in the area, my family conventionally produced tobacco, corn, and soybeans. As a child, I was very involved in my local food system, supported by a very large family vegetable garden and our own livestock. I've seen a number of transitions in the family farm throughout the years. Currently, the farm is home to a grass fed beef cattle operation.

I moved to Floyd, VA in 1998, and started to work at Riverbend Nursery. While employed at Riverbend, I attended Virginia Tech, earning a B.S. in Horticulture and finishing with a graduate degree in Agricultural and Extension Education. I've worked in the greenhouse/nursery industry for most of my professional career. I had the pleasure of owning and operating a greenhouse business, ***Restless Wind Farm & Nursery***, for 5 years in my hometown of NC, while teaching part time in the Horticulture/Turf department of Brunswick Community College.

I'm really looking forward to learning more about Master Gardeners and the wonderful service projects the New River Valley group is developing and implementing throughout the region. I've already gained incredible knowledge about the amazing efforts contributed to the local community by NRVMG. Keep up the good work!

Please feel free to stop by the office and say, "Hello." I'd love to meet each of you. Wendy Silverman will remain your direct contact for the NRV Master Gardeners Program, but I'm also happy to assist you. Best of Wishes~

## The Plants You Plant May Escape Into Nature

Beth Umberger

Too many plants that have escaped into natural areas are still sold in the horticultural industry. As informed gardeners, we can choose to buy only plants that do not pose a threat to native areas. Gardens filled with plants that behave themselves are lower maintenance and help prevent non-native plants from naturalizing in surrounding wild areas.

Searching the web will tell you which plants are causing problems. Simply type in the name followed by "invasive."

This fall several areas of my garden received all my attention so that I could rid them of perennial weeds. Quack grass, Bermuda grass, burdock, fall asters, spotted knapweed, blackberry, raspberry, poke berry, English Ivy and other plants had volunteered, but the plants that I spent the most time on I planted (Mexican primrose, Spanish bluebells, lily-of-the-valley, periwinkle, Arum italicum, grape hyacinth).

Why I am getting rid of these plants? Plants that are invasive in my yard or that cause problems in native areas are no longer welcome in the gardens I maintain.

Arum italicum offers great glossy green foliage in winter and interesting summer flowers and red berries in late fall, but it now grows anywhere it wants in my yard and has caused problems in native areas in Virginia and North Carolina where it has escaped. This fall as they came up I grubbed out the major roots and all the little bulbs that are attached. This winter after each thaw I look for emerging leaves and grub out the roots. I much prefer Pachysandra procumbens, a native, with its good behavior and leaves that are mottled in winter followed by white bottle brush blooms in spring.

Mexican evening primrose, *Oenothera speciosa*, I started from seed and it seldom bloomed or showed much growth, but while I was working on other projects the last couple of years it invaded my raised vegetable beds. I dug out all I could find and sorted through the soil looking for the roots. Every time I see new growth I dig it out. A long term project I fear.

Lily-of-the-valley, *Convallaria majalis*, I planted because I like the round 'White Coral Bells' It sat in my yard for about 15 years and did not do much then I improved the soil and it took off over native plants across pine needle paths, hitchhiking with transplanted plants. It smells great when it blooms and the foliage looks tattered after spring. This fall I dug out all I could find in one area, mulched with newspaper and leaves in another area, the last area will be dug out this spring with follow up in the areas I did in the fall. This last area is covering a trillium clump and crossing a path.

Spanish bluebells, *Hyacinthoides hispanica*, is listed on the invasive plant lists and I can see why. I bought the plants. Their foliage covers up a group of native plants in my yard and comes up wherever it wants. I dug up a lot of bulbs in the fall and this winter I dug them out as they come up. The few that are left will be allowed to bloom and then be discarded. It will be several years of grubbing out as I see them come up, but spring beauties will be put in their place.

Periwinkle, *Vinca minor*, is on the invasive plant list for Virginia. I know it is pretty, but I did not plant it in my yard. It hitchhiked with some plants I transplanted from Smithfield years ago. The largest area I layered newspaper and then covered with leaves and grass clippings collected by the road in Christiansburg. I covered some invasive daylilies as well. They came up through the newspaper. I will cover again. The battle is on. On a bank I have been grubbing it out. A little is coming up, but I will take out all I see coming up.

Grape hyacinth, *Muscari botryoides*, volunteered. It was my first favorite flower as a child. I let it grow and now pull it up as I see it. It sends up its foliage in the fall and is easily removed except for the small bulbs. I read on the internet that this plant has become a problem in some agricultural fields. Now I check out plants on Google before I plant them. I type in the scientific name and then "invasive." If problems pop up it is not allowed in my garden. I get a garden I can manage better and the native areas do not have threats coming from my yard. I use to think that people who were concerned about invasive ornamentals were overreacting, but when I saw barberry growing in the woods. I changed my



mind. In the far south I have seen Nandina covering a forest floor. I now no longer grow it either. There are so many great plants to grow. We can help out Mother Nature by choosing local native plants or non-native plants that are not invasive.

### **Zucchini Soup** **Ruth Ann Sloop Whitener**

My younger brother, Alphonso Ward Sloop, who was a landscape designer, brought this recipe to our family from Vienna, VA, many years ago. It has become one of our favorite soups during either winter or summer. It is easy to use any size zucchini. I enjoy getting the HUGE squash from friends during the summer! These are the squash that most people toss on the compost pile! First I cut out the seeds and then freeze the zucchini for use later on in soup. If the skin is hard, simply peel it off. Of course, the smaller squash are easier to cut! Chop all of the vegetables before you start the soup.

1 lb. Italian sausage, crumbled and out of the skin (use either mild or hot, your preference!)

2 C. celery, cut into ½ inch pieces

2 lbs. zucchini, cut into ½ inch pieces

1 C. chopped onion

4 lbs. tomatoes, peeled and chopped (fresh or canned)

2 tsp. salt

1 tsp. Italian seasoning (I usually add more!)

1 tsp. sugar

¼ tsp. garlic powder (I use several garlic cloves, chopped)

1 tsp. oregano

½ tsp. basil or more, if desired (I chop up a bunch of fresh basil, especially in the summer!)

2 green peppers cut into ½ inch pieces

Brown crumbled sausage and drain fat. Add celery and cook 10 minutes, stirring occasionally. Add zucchini, chopped onion, tomatoes, salt, and seasonings. Cover and simmer 20 minutes. Add green peppers and cook, covered, 10 minutes. Serve with hot, buttered garlic bread!

### **May Profile: Beth Kirby**

Master Gardener Trainee

Current MG Activities: Junior Master Gardener Volunteer

Occupation: Veterinarian

Gardening History: Have been in the garden since childhood, in 4-H nine years

Interests and Hobbies: Cooking, canning, pet assisted therapy, working with underprivileged kids, teaching how to garden and cook

Favorite Plants: Tomatoes

I wish I knew more about: Fruit trees

What is the most important thing about gardening to me: It is my "Prozac," producing food, sharing with less fortunate.

**Officers**

Presidents – Mo Fallon mofallon56@gmail.com & Lynn Brammer lbrammer@vt.edu

Vice president – Donna Fern—336-380-5242 vafern3@gmail.com

Secretaries – Rosemarie Sawdon – 540-953-0379 [sawdon@msn.com](mailto:sawdon@msn.com)

Linda Harris - 540-922-2083 misslindafaye@hotmail.com

Treasurer – Bob Lockwood-639-5982 robelock@hotmail.com

At large – Evelyn Melia 540-998-0786 meliano@comcast.com

At large – Susan Lockwood 540-639-5982 svlockwood@aol.com

At large – Elizabeth McCormick 540-616-6645 Bluecatmoon2@gmail.com

Past president – Connie Lawson 674-6127 conniel@vt.edu

**Communications**

Website: <http://civic.bev.net/nrvmga>

Erica Jones: Webmaster and Listserv Administrator ([emiones@vt.edu](mailto:emiones@vt.edu))

Printed/Mailed Newsletter - Lynn Brammer [lbrammer@vt.edu](mailto:lbrammer@vt.edu)

Newsletter Editor – Carol Moates 745-4782 [cymoates@gmail.com](mailto:cymoates@gmail.com)

**VCE Master Gardener Program** – dues, hours, correspondence

Wendy Silverman, Coordinator 540 382-5790

Virginia Cooperative Extension, Montgomery County Office

755 Roanoke Street, Suite G,

Christiansburg, VA 24073

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

**Please note the email information for Gwen Ewing.**

[ewinggf@vt.edu](mailto:ewinggf@vt.edu) (work) [recycle.compost@gmail.com](mailto:recycle.compost@gmail.com) (home)

**New River Valley Master Gardener Association**

**755 Roanoke St., Suite G**

**Christiansburg, VA 24073**