



The Grapevine

November 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
Vice president – Helen Young – 392-2292 helen.young@verison.net
Vice president – Ini Beckman – 552-2873 inibeckman@yahoo.com
Secretary – Rosemarie Sawdon – 540-953-0379 sawdon@msn.com
Treasurer – Erica Jones – 544-7359 emjones@vt.edu
At large – Jack Selcovitz – 392-6132 darnell861@yahoo.com
At large – Lynn Brammer – 449- 6621 lbrammer@vt.edu
At large – Keith Mileski – 382-7479 janicem955@gmail.com
Past president – Gwen Ewing – 382-9566 ewinggr@vt.edu
Open Position, Trainee Member-at-Large

Communications

Website: <http://civic.bev.net/nrvmga>
Erica Jones TEMPORARY, 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
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) POB 747, Blacksburg,
VA 24063
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 1G,
Christiansburg, VA 24073
(540) 382-5790 Fax: (540) 382-5729

Treasurer's Report by Erica Jones

Grants account:

Previous:	\$4835.96
Checks C'burg Library Grant	\$165.52
Interest income	\$0.31
Ending	\$4670.44

Checking:

Previous:	\$3526.63
USPO (box)	\$96.
Ending	\$3430.63

At the last board meeting we were discussing saving \$96 a year, and using the 755 Roanoke St Christiansburg 24073 address. Wendy has designated a file drawer for our use! At this time it is not clear if the USPO will let us out of our POB lease. If not, it continues through October of 2012.

MINUTES OF NEW RIVER VALLEY VIRGINIA MASTER GARDENER BOARD MEETING October 17, 2011

Location: Government Building, Extension Office

In Attendance: Connie Lawson, Helen Young, Erica Jones, Wendy Silverman, Rosemarie Sawdon, Ini Beckman
Connie called meeting to order 5:35pm

Minutes from September 15th Board Meeting Approved. **Next Board Meeting, Monday, November 14th.**

General Membership Meeting, Thursday, October 20th, Pulaski Library. Ini has sent out information and directions, or carpool from Park & Ride parking lot, departing at 6:00pm.

Old Business:

Discussed items to be clarified and presented for Membership **Pot Luck, Friday, November 20th at Government Building. Friends and family are invited.** David Close has been invited. Grant recipients will receive an invitation, as well, and asked to give a short presentation of their respective projects.

Items discussed were number of tables, decorative center piece for each table, and setting up, which has traditionally been done by Members At Large. Board members have also volunteered to assist with preparations before meeting. Board meeting on November 14th will address any last minute issues, such as supply of plates, utensils, etc.

Three items left over from the auction in May will be raffled off. There also will be a book and magazine exchange. Bring a book, and take a book...bring three books take 3 books.

Three motions to be voted on are: Changes to by-laws (which were sent out by Wendy), charging membership dues of \$10.00 per member (the first year will be free: Class of 2012), and nomination and approval of officers.

There will also be recognition of, and awards presented, to volunteers for exceptional volunteered hours. Wendy will send out reminder to those who volunteered for the Friends of the Library Meeting in Blacksburg on Tuesday, October 25th, 5:30pm.

The Grant program was discussed, and a Grant Committee will determine the amount of grant money available and to whom the grants are awarded. It was suggested that the grants be awarded each year, and the number determined by the money available. In prior years grants were awarded every two years. Erica will oversee this project. Wendy stated that she is receiving grant requests. Wendy will prepare renewal membership forms.

Ini had 100 bookmarks printed and is having a friend refine them and also having them printed on heavier paper.

New Business:

Wendy will prepare new membership forms.

Also discussed was the possibility of cancelling post office box, however, further issues have to be clarified.

Wendy had two good suggestions from Master Gardener Conference. One a book she purchased for Jr. Master Gardeners, entitled "Literature in the Garden" which will be in the library. Also, a "garden planner" showing planting and harvesting dates for all areas of the country. Supplier is charging \$2.00 and the Association can sell them for \$4.00 which is an easy way to raise money without many hours of planning and arranging.

The meeting adjourned at 7:00pm.
Submitted by: Rosemarie Sawdon.

Top Ten Reasons to be a Master Gardener Compiled by Jessica Walliser – Horticulturalist and KDKA Radio Host Sewickley, Pennsylvania

- 10. Because dirty hands make for smart minds.
- 9. Because if you are a single man, the male to female ratio is totally in your favor.
- 8. Because, admit it, you always wanted to know the growth input ratio of a *Chamaecyparous picifera* 'filifera aurea nana' as compared to a *metasequoia glyptostroboides* 'ogon'.
- 7. Because someday you just knew you had to find out whether a tomato is really a fruit or vegetable.

- 6. Because you have an affinity for both horses***t and, more importantly, bulls***t.
- 5. Because the food at the meetings is soooo much better than at the PTA, the FDA, the FFA, the GCA, the GWA, and the AARP.
- 4. Because you take distinct pleasure in going to the local garden center and knowing more than that young punk who works there.
- 3. Because poison ivy doesn't really itch *that* much.
- 2. Because it may be the only time in your life when you have the opportunity to man a 1-800 hotline.
- And the number one reason why you have become a Master Gardener: Because you have always wanted to help save the world.

Speakers for Year End Potluck

By: Gwen Ewing

This year the speakers for our potluck will be the grant recipients. Julie Griffin, Kay Preston, Robin Hylton, and Pamela Hale have accepted the invitation. Master Gardeners will be responsible for providing everything; the guest speakers will not be contributing to the food. There is always lots of food, good cheer and anticipation about learning how our grant monies were used.

Favorite Gizmos

By: Erica Jones

Inventions keep appearing on the horticultural scene for trying to ease our horticulture woes. Some come from uses for new (to us, anyway) materials; others are old materials with new uses.

Light

Sun-powered low watt LED lights may be the most common piece of manufactured hardscape I see in gardens. Basically they have a small solar collector, a rechargeable battery, an LED source of light and some sort of post to hold it up. They are also one of the things I often see unused or no longer functioning. Most of the "lamps" do not put out enough useful lamination unless they are planted closer than 4' apart. Take careful note of watts the model put out; but generally the more watts the shorter functioning light period. These lamps will not work to any satisfactory level unless they receive a fair bit of direct sunshine (mine like 6 hours). As is want for most re-chargeable batteries, this is the part that will most likely quit working first.

Another light gismo is a light "meter" that will tell the owner that they have one of four levels of sunshine, ranging from none to full sun. My experience has been with novice gardeners is that they really have no idea of what "full sun" is; even if you use the word "shadows". In reality sun levels will change over the seasons given the change of aspect of sun (and shadows) and change of (deciduous) leaf cover. Light levels certainly can be hard to judge; a change of location of six feet can change light level from feeble to moderate.

To use these mushroom shaped gismos; simply plant in the spot in your yard you are interested in for 24 hours. It will then register your light level.

pH levels.

I have been preaching the joys of knowing your pH for years; and preaching “pay for a soil test” for the same amount of time. Certainly the accuracy of a soil lab pH test depends on the quality of your soil sample (reliability) but the accuracy should not be something to struggle with. Accuracy IS a problem, though, with many of the kits and testers sold for home usage. Basically, the more you spend the more accurate your sample will be. So don't waste your money on doing home tests unless you do enough pH tests to make it worth your while to buy a decent one (\$100 or more). pH testers need their electrodes (probes) kept separate from touching anything else; and will need calibrating fairly frequently. Some pH /common household are: 2.3 lemon juice 2.3, 3.7 orange juice, 7.7-8.0 egg whites, 8.3 baking soda, and 12.5 bleach. PH test strips are notorious for losing their “umph” over time. They are only good for very basic test ranges even when new.

Watering.

Some species of plants are particularly sensitive to how water is applied (African violets, rex begonia); others do not seem to give a hoot (think Mother-in-Law tongue). Something that seems to grow fabulous violets and begonia is to place the pots on what are called capillary mats. Fancier set ups will have two layers with a water reserve underneath. The mat soaks up water which the pots will take up via capillary action, as long as the potting media is in touch with the capillary mat. You can make your own cheaper version by placing sections of mat in a tray, and putting the containers directly on the mat. Capillary mat action might not be enough to keep a larger (6”) pot watered, though; but works fabulously on 4” and smaller plastic pots.

Another watering system that has been around for years but works quite well is to place a clay pot inside a larger container, and plant in the rim area. They is traditional for starting cuttings. A clay pot chard affixed with silicone seal works to seal the bottom hole. Water will seep out through the pores of the clay into media.

Gardening catalogs are also full of plumbing devices for watering ranging from plastic tubing for multiple containers to individual upside down plastic bottles. Now if I just had a greenhouse and an overhead sprinkler system!

International Master Gardener Conference 2011

By: Wendy Silverman

The 2011 International Master Gardener Conference was held in Charleston, West Virginia from October 11-14. The experience was the United States, Canada and four representatives from South Korea (they want to begin a Master Gardener program in their country). The theme was sustainable gardening with the conference slogan “Color it green in a wild and wonderful way”.

I saw some “high roller” speakers Like Anna Ball, president and CEO of Ball Horticulture Company and Joe Lamp'I who is an author and television host of “Growing a Greener World” a PBS show on gardening. The sessions were overall very good. I met Barbra Pleasant who writes for Mother Earth News and lives in Floyd Co. I Learned more about community gardening , how others see us as knowledgeable healers of the garden, and I was orientated on a new JMG (Junior Master Gardener) library curriculum.

On the more fun side, they had a scarecrow and quilt judging contest as well as a competition for the Search for Excellence posters where the best poster from each state (chosen at their state MG college) competes against each other for awards. Food and entertainment was provided throughout the conference including a taste of West Virginia reception, banquet night with live entertainment, hot breakfasts and box lunches.

This conference is held every other year, and moves around the North American continent. I don't know when the next time it will be in our neck of the woods, but if you like to travel and earn your training hours at the same time, the 2013 International Master Gardener Conference will be held on a cruise to Alaska!



What's Blooming Now?

By: Carol Moates

As far as I can tell, the blooming season must be over--I haven't gotten anything to say different from the MGs. I will say the trees around are still gorgeous in many places and my blueberry patch is bright red. I saw a few bedraggled wild daisies and a very sad violet at our farm yesterday. Everything else is frozen and gone here. There are so many other varieties of plants to offer interest in winter. There are trees with interesting or colored bark. There are wonderful colored barks such as the red and yellow twig dogwoods or mock orange, or the eye catching barks of trees like crape myrtle, shagbark hickory, river birch. There are even more plants that produce colorful berries and many attract birds and wild life as well. Pyracantha has orange berries, hollies with red or yellow berries, and dogwood with its red berries are a few. Some of the trees and shrubs even seem to be enhanced by losing their leaves because they are so ornamental in their structure like Harry Lauder's Walking Stick. I think I will begin working on a winter spot here at my home.

Recipe of the Month
Carrot Vichyssoise (Carrot, Sweet Potato and Ginger Soup)
By: Rosemarie Sawdon

SERVES 4

- 2 tablespoons olive oil
- 2 medium onions, roughly chopped
- 1 pound carrots, roughly chopped
- 1 large sweet potato (about 3/4 pound), roughly chopped
- 2 rounded teaspoons freshly minced ginger
- 1/2 kosher salt
- 4 cups water or broth
- 2 tablespoons butter or olive oil
- Heavy cream, for garnish
- Green onions, chopped, for garnish

1. In a stockpot, heat oil over medium-high heat. When oil is hot but not smoking, add onions. Cook, stirring frequently, until onions are soft and translucent (about 5 to 7 minutes).

2. Add carrots, sweet potato, ginger and salt; stir for an additional 2 to 3 minutes. Add water or broth and bring to a boil. Reduce heat to low, cover, and simmer until vegetables are very soft (about 15 minutes).

3. Using an immersion blender (or in batches in a countertop blender or food processor), purée the soup until smooth. Stir in butter or olive oil. Taste, and add additional salt if needed. Ladle soup into serving bowls and garnish with a swirl of heavy cream and a sprinkle of green onions.

November Garden Chores

The Whole Garden

- *Mark your paths and driveway with stakes.
- *Store firewood outdoors.
- *Clean, oil, and sharpen your garden tools.
- *Prepare the lawn mower for winter storage.
- *Adjust soil pH, if necessary.
- *Before the ground freezes hard, install bluebird nesting boxes.

Trees and Shrubs

- *Make sure all leaves are off your lawns before heavy snows begin.
- *Spray antidessicants on broadleaved evergreens.
- *Water broadleaved evergreens on warm days.
- *Fertilize trees and shrubs when dormant.

Flowers and Grasses

- *Keep planting daffodil bulbs until the ground freezes.
- *Finish cutting back perennials.
- *Mulch entire gardens once the ground has frozen.

Fruits and Vegetables

- *Continue harvesting kale and collards until snow is on the ground.
- *Harvest the greens I your cold frame for Thanksgiving dinner.
- *Finish putting your garden to bed.

**New River Valley
Master Gardener Association
P. O. Box 747
Blacksburg, VA 24063**