



# The Grapevine

November 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](mailto:conniel@vt.edu)  
Vice president – Ini Beckman – 552-2873  
[inibeckman@yahoo.com](mailto:inibeckman@yahoo.com)  
Secretary – Rosemarie Sawdon – 540-953-0379  
[sawdon@msn.com](mailto:sawdon@msn.com)  
Treasurer – Bob Lockwood-639-5982  
[svlockwood@aol.com](mailto:svlockwood@aol.com)  
At large – Erica Jones—544-7359 [emjones@vt.edu](mailto:emjones@vt.edu)  
At large – Lynn Brammer – 449- 6621  
[lbrammer@vt.edu](mailto:lbrammer@vt.edu)  
At large – Donna Fern—336-380-5242  
[vafern3@gmail.com](mailto:vafern3@gmail.com)  
Past president – Gwen Ewing – 382-9566  
[ewinggr@vt.edu](mailto:ewinggr@vt.edu)

### **Communications**

Website: <http://civic.bev.net/nrvmga>  
Erica Jones: Webmaster and Listserv Administrator  
([emjones@vt.edu](mailto:emjones@vt.edu))  
Printed/Mailed Newsletter - Lynn Brammer  
[lbrammer@vt.edu](mailto:lbrammer@vt.edu)

Membership and Directory – Evelyn Melia  
[meliano@comcast.net](mailto:meliano@comcast.net)  
Newsletter Editor – Carol Moates  
745-4782 [cymoates@gmail.com](mailto: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](mailto:nrvmga@listserv.bburg.bev.net)

#### **Virginia Cooperative Extension – Montgomery County Office**

Website: [www.ext.vt.edu](http://www.ext.vt.edu)  
(MG Coordinator and Timesheets)  
755 Roanoke Street, Suite G,  
Christiansburg, VA 24073  
(540) 382-5790 Fax: (540) 382-5729

## **Highlights of our Potluck!**

### **Lynn Brammer: Member at Large**

We are planning a wonderful culmination to this year's hard work by celebrating at the Government Center on Friday November 30th. Beginning at 6 pm we will enjoy your amazing array of potluck dishes. Please make sure to bring a generous portion as we have a few guests and their families and want to have plenty for all. And on that note, we highly encourage your family's attendance, this becomes a wonderful opportunity to see all those folks behind the scenes that support your volunteer activities. This year we thought we would attempt to go a bit green and ecofriendly by asking that you each grab that tableware from your picnic basket and BYO regarding reusable plates and utensils. Even a cup if you'd like. We will have napkins, beverages and back-up items for those that may forget, but this seems like an easy and reasonable idea that should reduce our waste a bit. We will provide beverages. Also, we will have a couple of boxes set aside for food pantry donations of any non-perishable item. It will be delivered to a local food bank.

For the first time we plan to raffle off a basket of donated goodies. With a garden theme the basket is spilling over with everything from garden gloves, weed control fabric, gardening books, and much more. In fact, if you have a miscellaneous items you would like to put in the basket that evening, please feel free to add to what we have. Tickets will be one for \$2.00, three for \$5.00. The basket will be on display as you come in so take a peek and see if you feel lucky that evening (better odds than the lottery!). Please bring cash for this if at all possible. And while we are discussing money, we will have the various membership forms available for 2013. That would be the annual renewal commitment contract, the NRVMGGA membership form and then one new form that we need to ALL fill out in order to be a volunteer with Cooperative Extension. We will have lots of pens available and our treasurer Bob Lockwood would request that you bring a check for your dues if at all possible.

We are excited to count among our invited guests Dave Close who will speak about his role as Consumer Horticulture and Master Gardener Specialist with Virginia Tech's Department of Horticulture.

We will also open the floor for nominations for officers for 2013. At this time here are the slate we will vote on that evening:

President: Co- presidents nominees Maureen Fallon and Lynn Brammer

Vice president: Donna Fern

Treasurer: Bob Lockwod

Secretary: Linda Harris with Rosemarie Sawdon

Please remember these are nominees; if you would like to be considered or would like to nominate someone, the floor will be open to all.

We hope to have a great turn out for our potluck, if you would like to put an item to be

discussed on the agenda please email our wonderful president Connie Lawson at [conniel@vt.edu](mailto:conniel@vt.edu). We would welcome anyone that would like to speak about their favorite project this year and report on its progress. Donna Fern would love to get the pictures for our PR/brag board!

So one more time:

potluck dish (recipe, too, as you know everyone will ask!)

utensils including plate, spoon, knife, fork and cup

nonperishable goods

cash for raffle (extra item for the basket if you have something)

check for dues

a good appetite for both food and fellowship!

Let's end the year feeling a sense of accomplishment for all of the worthwhile projects each of us have been involved with, we have much to share and be proud about!

## Pulaski County 4 H

Thank you from Chris of Pulaski 4 H and two teachers at Riverlawn Elementary School, Pulaski Co., for our visit (October "outing") and for the NRVMGGA grant for their nursery.



## Steve Hale Profile

Master Gardener Since: 2000

Current MG Activities: 4-H community garden in Pulaski, New River Valley Fair Horticulture Judge, Speaker for local garden clubs and other organizations, various other volunteer activities throughout the NRV.

Background: Retired School Psychologist from Pulaski County.

Occupation: Currently working "part time" as an External Consultant for the Virginia Dept. of Education.

Favorite MG Training Class & Why: I enjoyed each and every one of the training classes. I was

involved with a wonderful group of people and made many new friends.

**Gardening History:** My wife Trish and I live in a family home-place near Claytor Lake. Our children are the 5<sup>th</sup> generation of my family to live here. My parents were avid gardeners and grew fruits and vegetables for winter storage as well as in-season consumption. Our lawn contains many vintage shrubs and flowers from generations past.

**Interests and Hobbies:** Gardening is, of course, a year round interest. My favorite sport is snow skiing and I love winter! Every season has special appeal for any outdoor activity. I love being outdoors and enjoy all water sports, hiking, biking, and travel. Fall means college football, tailgating and GO Hokies!

**Favorite Plants:** Believe it or not boxwoods are a plant favorite for me.

**Recent Additions to my Garden:** A new patio and hot tub for year round enjoyment.

**I wish I knew more about:** Plant pathology.

**Plants I would like to share:** Siberian Iris and peonies.

**Plants I would like starts of:** Hydrangeas.

**What is the most important thing about gardening to me:** I really enjoy landscape design and have realized that you never really arrive at a perfect home landscape.

**My favorite gardening book(s):** I have a great collection of books but keep going back to "The Country Garden" by John Brookes.

**Advice to other gardeners:** Remember it is not the "product" but the "process" of gardening that counts.

## **Talking Gardening** **By: Mickey Balconi**

Gardeners are generally creative people who like to create beauty. Sometimes problems arise during this creative process, and then the problem solving aspect of the process is tested. How many times have I read a gardening tip and wondered, "Why didn't I think of that?" Sometimes I have adapted another's idea to suit my situation, and, yes, sometimes I have come up with a good idea of my own! I would like to share some of these with you.

First of all, the stakes are high! I am not talking about gambling but the sharp garden stakes that are necessary to hold up floppy plants. If you bend over too quickly, you could put an eye out. One solution is to cover the ends of the stake with a ping pong ball. I have also used wine or green water bottles which blend into the foliage. For another solution, use green bungee cords and hook them together around the stems.

Keeping broken umbrellas seems a bit likely to turn into a hoarder episode, but they can be useful in the garden. Cut off the curved handle with a hacksaw if it has one. Remove the fabric and sink the umbrella frame into the soil. The spokes will keep it steady. You can add some additional support between the spokes with twine, wire or fishing line. Eventually foliage will cover the supports.

If your kids are grown but your vines are having difficulties, use the baby gates hung vertically where you want the vines to climb. Baby gates can often be found at yard sales. Attach them to a wall or fence with nails or hooks. Keep them a few inches from the wall or fence with wood blocks to allow for good air circulation. At the end of the season they slide

together and are easily stored.

With the coming holidays and the dark nights, a little light is welcome. Cheap 6 or 8 inch terra cotta pots can be painted on the inside with metallic paint. When the paint is dry, cover the holes with a coffee filter and fill them  $\frac{3}{4}$  full with sand, gravel, marbles or glass stones. Nestle a tea light into the pot and light them just before your company comes so your guests will be able to follow their way to your front door.

Another bright idea for when the weather is freezing is to make ice luminarias. Make a little room in your freezer. Freeze small plastic containers with water. Then cut a liter plastic bottle in half and place the iced container in the middle and fill the liter bottle with water. As long as the temperature is below freezing, this can go outside. Run hot water over the liter bottle until the ice comes out in a big block. Run some hot water in the middle to loosen the small container and remove it. Pop in your tea lights and light them just before company is coming. These look fabulous along the driveway. I would not use these on the walkway as melting and refreezing might make the walkway slippery.

The last bright tip is to use colored wine or water bottles. I have used cobalt blue as edging in my garden where they will not be hit by a lawnmower. A new idea is to use the white icicle holiday lights. Each icicle will fit in one bottle. Dig a 6 inch trench and put about an inch of sand in the bottom. With each bottle filled with one icicle light, place them upside down in the trench adding 4 inches of sand to hold them upright. These will have to be near a source of electricity so I am going to start mine near the outdoor light pole which has a plug on it.

With the coming of Thanksgiving I am reminded to be thankful for all you who read my articles. I hope you enjoy some of these tips. More will follow in the next article. If you have a good garden tip, drop it off at the Patriot office in an envelope with my name on it. I hope we can share our ideas!

### **Ini's Prize Artichokes**



Ini's fresh harvested Jerusalem artichokes. Eat them braised with a little garlic and/or lemon juice or ginger, or grated raw as a salad with some dressing.

## Simple but oh so good Eggplant recipe

By: Ini Beckman

My neighbor gifted me three beautiful, fresh, home-grown, full-grown eggplants. I put one of them, length-halved, on an oiled cookie tray in a 350\* oven for an hour, alongside a similarly halved winter squash. (The squash is inconsequential here, except that we ate it too.) After baking the skins came off easily. I cut the vegetable into cubes, put on a dash of butter and a little salt, pepper and oregano, then mixed it up with a fork. Delicious!!



Autumn is a second spring when every leaf is a flower.

Albert Camus

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