

The Grapevine

December 2022

New River Valley Master Gardener Association Newsletter

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Potluck



Fall Potluck

Photos: Wendy Silverman

Wendy Words

A BIG THANK YOU to the outgoing NRV MGA Board

Most of our current Board members served two years in their officer positions. They had to adapt to various stages of the COVID pandemic. This included figuring out ways to have meetings on Zoom with internet connections that were less than ideal. They had to have some NRV MGA general meetings on Zoom, in person, and outside (and one meeting in a thunderstorm). We had a pot-luck outside, COVID safe plant sales, and many more obstacles they had to navigate through. It wasn't easy and sometimes stressful. You all stuck through it. You were a wonderful Board to work with and I really appreciate all of your hard work. You all amaze me and I am honored to be able to work with you through these difficult years. Thank you.

2022 outgoing Board:

Dianne Blount: President
Steve Hale: Vice President
Ashley Johnson: Secretary
Bill Kealy: Treasurer
Gwen Ewing: MAL/Historian
Carol Trutt: MAL/Grant Committee Chair
Sarah Smiley: MAL
Susan DiSalvo: 2022 Training Class MAL
Beth Kirby: Plant Sale Chair. Not a Board member but attended every Board meeting.

CONGRATULATIONS!

A big congratulations to our largest service hour award winners for 2022! How this works: once you have received this award, you may not get it again, even if you served more hours than the current recipient. This is so we can share the honor with others. The recipient gets a service hour award plant stake, as seen in the photo.

And now, for the 2022 award ... **Congratulations to Ashley Johnson!** Ashley served a total of 237.25 hours this year.

The interns who served the most hours above the 60 required hours are:

2021 Intern: Mel Flaherty who served 128 hours
2022 Intern: Rona Vrooman who served 143 hours

They are both still eligible for the plant stake in future years.

Previous award winners are:

2018: Gwen Ewing
2019: Beth Umberger & David Orcutt
2020: Beth Kirby
2021: Erica Jones

I encourage you all to keep volunteering and get into the NRV Master Gardener plant stake hall of fame! Who knows, it may be **you** who gets the honor in 2023!

Note: Please keep reading my weekly updates. There are still a few more volunteer and educational opportunities before the end of the year. If you need help earning hours, please contact me.

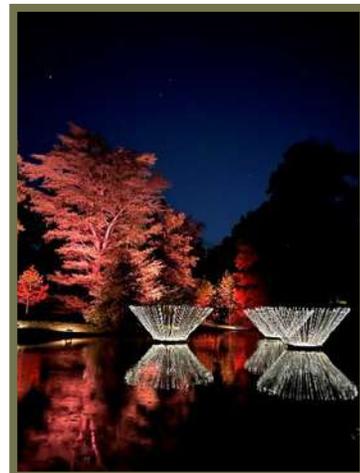
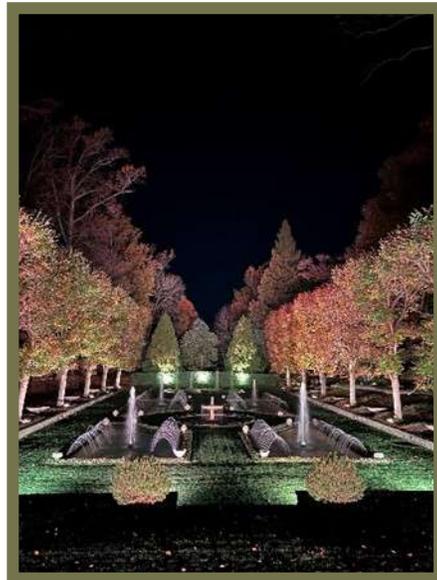


Longwood Gardens by Sue Perry

A trip to Longwood Gardens in Pennsylvania never disappoints a gardener or possibly anyone, for that matter. But my recent visit to Longwood exceeded all expectations. It was a privilege to stroll through the light installations by Australian artist Bruce Munro. One of the eight light installations had as many as 18,000 lights placed in open areas that



resembled an illuminated field of wildflowers. Another featured a water display where a backdrop of brilliant fall foliage accompanied the light's reflection in the water. Later that evening, the water fountain performance Longwood is so well known for added sound, water, and sight as the fountains danced to music by Lady Gaga and Madonna. And finally, the chrysanthemum festival in the conservatory showed what stretching horticultural limits looks like with so many shapes, colors, and sizes of chrysanthemums.



Travels With(out) Paige Denver Botanic Gardens by Erica Jones

We went on an organized tour of Colorado, and decided to fly to Denver a day early to visit the Denver Botanic Gardens (DBG), since plants were not going to be highlighted on this tour. These gardens are in downtown Denver near the zoo. But unless you visit DBG in January, I would plan on most of a day to soak in the sights.

Getting there: the address is 1007 York St, Denver. There is an auxiliary site in Littleton, CO called Chatfield Farms. Chatfield is a 700-acre native plant oasis, but the main attraction in the fall is the corn maze. Littleton is 12 miles south of Denver. Denver public transit covers a lot of the area, but trying to figure out how to use it will cause major discord in even the most even-tempered couples. Public transit consists of both buses and light rail. But we never saw maps for both systems together anywhere!! It does go to the airport (another big secret); they triple the rates for this last stretch of light rail.

Denver has a growing zone similar to some of Virginia, but the precipitation is wildly different from Virginia. So you will be entertained with some new-to-you flowers and plants. Denver's zone is a warm 5b (or cold 6a); Colorado has zones 3 – 7, often because of elevation. (Pike's Peak is one of fifty-eight "14ers" in Colorado – that is, peaks above 14,000 feet – and is a mere 14,100'.) The elevation of Denver is about 5280', which is why it is nicknamed 'The Mile High City.' Certainly, the surrounding rock types affect your soil type, and the amount of precipitation affects how much organic matter gets into the top layer of soil (skimpy rainfall= no trees = no leaves). Colorado's average moisture is about 16" (mostly from snow) and the often heavy clay soil has pH ranging from 7.0 to 8.3.



When you first enter the garden, you go along a long narrow path with plants that can be grown in the area. The pink flower is Agastache, nestled among ornamental grasses. Photos: Erica Jones



This is the high desert garden, combining rocks with native plants. The yellow flower is evening primrose (*Oenothera*) & the blue is globe thistle (*Echinops*).

The DBG website promises 18 different "Gardens of the West" in the York Street location. One of these, the Dryland Mesa Garden, was planted some 20 years ago and they boast that they have never watered it. And yes, of course, they have some water features. I suspect it will take a major climate crisis to get garden managers to remove their water features. We all love our koi and water lilies. Many of the gardens incorporate drought-tolerant (Xeriscape) plants.

As you wander, you will find a carefully maintained Japanese garden. A Japanese theme looks very refreshing, and blends in nicely with the semi-arid high desert of Denver. When we were there, the Japanese section had a sculpture exhibition installed as a bonus.



A section of the Japanese garden. How would you like to live in that condominium?

One surprising (to me) area was the iris garden. The irises were sharing their space in the late summer with dahlias. Both those bulbous types obviously do well in this climate and somewhat reduced rainfall. Irrigation effects could be spotted but were not obvious.

In the middle of the 24-acre site was a big, open, steep grassy dip. It's an amphitheater that is utilized for seating for annual summer concert series.

Other sections of the garden were kept segregated by subtle use of pathways, trees, shrubs, and wood and concrete barriers. You may not realize that your progress is being directed, and you might need to review where you have been in the garden.



Paige resting after a day of gardening. She kept the garden going while we were away.

The Great Carrot Challenge

by Susan Perry

I'm calling it the Great Carrot Challenge because I love making up names for our funny gardening adventures. We've had Pesto-rama – the annual basil-harvesting, making, and freezing a year's worth of pesto; the Fig Out, which involves trying to figure out how the heck to use hundreds and hundreds of figs that all ripen in 7 weeks; and the Tomato Tragedy, the year where all our tomatoes were eaten by pesky chipmunks. Unrelated to gardening, we had the Bird Defense System (versions 1 & 2), which was upgraded to the Ultimate Bird Defense System (totally successful), which prevented birds from covering our roll-up awnings with bird poo.

I got into carrot growing in 2011 when we lived in Colorado. As with growing any new veggie, I started slow, planting one row of maybe 50 carrots. When that went well well, I went a little wild. The next year, I planted a couple hundred carrots and life was good, the carrots tasty, and everything "going according to plan" until the ground froze, sometime in December. Never one to be deterred by obstacles, I was able to continue harvesting, albeit literally using a hammer & a chisel. Harvest took a little work & some determination, but they cooked up as tasty as could be. And then we had a warm snap that lasted about 2 weeks. At 5,000 feet, a warm snap helps the soil thaw quicker. But the soil can re-freeze just as quickly, which it inevitably did. Freeze, thaw, freeze will definitely make carrots inedible and sadly, I had to compost several hundred carrots. (Should I call that The Carrot Cry Fest?)

But did I mention I'm not easily deterred by obstacles? The following year, I planted a couple hundred carrots and protected them in cold frames. I used a single string of incandescent Christmas lights in each cold frame to prevent the ground under the cold frame from freezing. It worked like a charm & we had loads of fresh, homegrown carrots all winter long. Yeah!

When we first moved to Blacksburg, we got a half-plot in the Hale-YMCA community garden and I planted a row of carrots. That year, we got carrot fly and had no edible carrots. If I were grading that carrot harvest, it was an F! Before moving here, I'd never hear of carrot fly. When you live in a place with not much natural water, you just don't have as many bugs.

Fast forward to 2022 and a new Blacksburg attempt at carrots, inspired by reading *Carrots Love Tomatoes* by Louise Riotte. This book discusses companion planting and was reviewed in the March 2022 Grapevine by Emma Patterson. I followed the recommendation to plant carrots with onions and I'm here to tell you it looks good so far. I planted 2 varieties, Nantes Half Long and Short 'n' Sweet. We've harvested carrots 3 times so far (one 'mixed' and one each of the 2 varieties planted) and none have signs of carrot fly. But they do show that there's more work in our future if we want great carrots. So I'll be self-critical me and pick through all the flaws.

First, length:

- Nantes Half Long should be 6 – 7" long. As you can see from the picture, there are 2 in this harvest that qualify, with the rest all being too short. Most likely, this is a sign



2022 Blacksburg carrots. Grade: D.
Photos: Susan Perry

that the soil needs more amendment. On the left side of the photo, you can see 5 or 6 teeny, tiny carrots. Well, if they're an inch long, I'm a monkey's aunt! Another factor in size could be that I was not watering as regularly as I imagined. Carrots don't like to be waterlogged but they also can't be thirsty.

Next, width:

- The most likely cause for the narrow width is failure to adequately thin. I'll admit, thinning out perfectly good carrot seedlings is difficult for me – because they are perfectly good seedlings. But with carrots, committed thinning is a must. Typically, I try to thin till carrots are 1-2" apart, so that they can grow about 1" in diameter without any crowding or competition from nearby carrots. So this is totally on me.
- I don't worry that there are some very "wide" carrots among my Nantes Half Longs. If you get into carrots, you'll learn that there are round carrots (try Romeo) and wildly colored carrots (check out Calliope for a mix of purple, red, yellow, & white carrots). So even though Nantes Half Longs are not supposed to be wide, I'll give wide carrots a pass and hope soil amendments and thinning will solve this.

Then, forking:

- You can see in the photo that a couple of carrots have two legs, called forking. (OK, I call 'em legs and if you call them 'stubs', I won't argue!) This is usually due to soil quality (needs more amending), crowding (solved by thinning), or a stone got in the way. Still edible but I'd like legless carrots if possible because they are easier to clean & peel.

Last, a couple carrots look a bit 'hairy.'

- This could be caused by the onion fertilizer. Carrots typically don't need fertilizer, and certainly not nitrogen, so any 'spillover' of nitrogen used on the nearby onions could have caused this. It could have also been caused by inconsistent watering. Now that I live in a place with regular rain, I keep track of how much rain we get on my calendar and try to adjust my manual watering accordingly. So, since there are only a few hairy carrots, I probably won't worry about it. If it were the majority, I would immediately submit a sample to make sure it's not nematodes or some other insect.

Have I ever told you I'm not deterred by obstacles? Just wait till next year ... the Great Carrot Challenge continues! HA!



Colorado carrots (Scarlet Nantes) (IMG_0242 in 8-13-2012). Not half bad, so I generously grade myself A-.



Colorado carrots (Short 'n' Sweet)(8-26-2012). Pretty good .. another A-.

Some Favorite Recipes by Lynn Brammer

Curried Butternut Squash Soup

2Tbsp. butter
1 c. chopped onion
4 cloves minced garlic
4 c. chicken or vegetable broth
2 pounds cubed butternut squash
2 tsp. curry powder
1 tsp. salt
1/2 tsp. cumin
1/2 tsp. cayenne pepper (less if you don't want the heat)
1 c. half and half
2Tbsp. honey

- Melt butter in a large pot, add onion and garlic. Cook on low for 10 minutes.
- Add broth, squash, seasonings, and bring to a low boil. Simmer for 15 minutes or until squash is tender.
- Add half and half and the honey.
- Using an immersion blender, puree until smooth. Or let cool slightly and add to a blender in increments.
- Ladle it, add a dollop of sour cream and enjoy.

Jalapeno Sausage Poppers

1 pound sausage (I use "hot")
1/2 c. chopped onions
1/2 c. peppers
4 oz. cream cheese
6 oz. grated parmesan cheese
1/2 tsp. red pepper flakes
4 cloves minced garlic
1Tbsp. honey
~15 jalapenos (depending on size) sliced and seeded (use gloves!)

- Brown sausage adding onions and peppers.
- Add cream cheese and 4 oz. of parmesan along with pepper flakes and garlic.
- Cook until cheeses have blended into sausage mixture.
- Stuff the jalapenos, bake at 350 for 10 minutes topping with the remaining parmesan in the last few minutes.

I Got a Little 'Figged Out'

by Susan Perry

You all remember the phrase, 'wiggled out,' right? Well, at the beginning of September, we had one of those 'good news - bad news' situations: the fig tree we moved from a huge pot into the ground 4 years ago had slept (year 1), crept (year 2), leapt (year 3), & now in year 4, exploded! In 2020, we harvested 12 figs, the biggest weighing 30 grams. In 2021, at the end of our 6 week harvest, we had a total of 283 figs with the biggest weighing 37 grams. At 2 weeks into the 2022 harvest, we'd already had 174 figs with the largest this year weighing 40 grams. Tom estimated we still had about 300 figs yet to ripen. Yikes! (Boy, was he wrong. But more on that later.)

I should confess up front, the figs are really Tom's deal. He has fond memories of his Italian immigrant grandfather harvesting figs from a tree in his backyard in Kensington, MD. When we were offered 2 large potted figs in 2018 that had never bloomed, he enthusiastically said yes — not like either of us had any experience. And almost on a lark, we picked a random spot in the yard to plant one in spring 2019 — a spot that accidentally turned out to be perfect. Lacking a sunny south facing slope, we picked a sunny east-facing slope that had a 2' tall brick half-wall on the north side. The west side is protected from wind by the house. The first few years in the ground, we did end up trying to protect the 7' fig during the winter — once by piling a ton of leaves in a chicken-wire enclosure we built around the fig, another year with tarps. Neither was particularly easy, so this winter are just going to try to focus on protecting the crown & roots with black greenhouse fabric, and let the branches survive as they may.



So back to this year's harvest. The final official count was drum-roll please ... 781 figs! We made jam till it was coming out of our ears. We also gave lots of figs away. But what to do with the rest? First, I reached out to a fellow Master Gardener, who suggested the Internet. Beyond jam, the results fell in three camps: eat 'em fresh, which is an inadequate response for our quantity; dehydrate them, which we tried but didn't love; and freezing, which is a great solution for us but one in which their texture is lost, relegating them to cooking only.

The figs we harvested in 7 weeks were simply overwhelming and I admit to being a little 'figged out.' But have I ever mentioned ... anywhere ... that I am not easily deterred by obstacles? Next year, we're going to try to find a home brewer and work a trade. We'd provide the figs to try to produce a fig beer;

we'd get half of any beer that resulted. If you know anyone who might be interested, you know how to find me!

Charleston Tea Garden

by Emma Patterson

Who doesn't like a hot cup of tea on a cold wintry day? The mellow



flavor, the caffeine boost, and the warmth of a favorite mug make sipping a cup of tea an experience to savor. Probably not many of us take the time to reflect on where that tea comes from, though. On a recent trip to South Carolina, my husband and I did just that. We visited Charleston Tea Garden on Wadmalaw Island. We learned this giant tea farm is the only one in

North America that both raises and processes its own tea. Although several other U.S.-based tea companies process tea, they do not raise their own tea plants, according to Charleston Tea Garden.

Tea plants stem originally from China, India, or other East Asian countries. However, tea is also grown on every continent except Antarctica. Charleston Tea Garden propagates about 320 varieties of "Camellia sinensis," the botanical name for tea plants with origins in China. The plants are direct descendants of the original tea plants started in Summerville, S.C. in 1888. They sprawl across hundreds of acres.



These tea plants have braved summer humidity, fall hurricanes, and winter storms to stay strong. Selected plants are harvested for "whips", pencil-like cuttings of about 8 inches with at least 3 leaf nodes, in May and June. To encourage rooting, the whips get a small wound in the base. Roots develop from a new callus at the base or from vascular meristems in the cambium

layer of the whip. After 8-16 weeks of rooting, the plants move from the greenhouse and are slowly introduced to outside weather over two months.



Tea leaves are harvested and then processed. The same plants produce what we know as black tea, green tea, or white tea. To produce black tea, tea leaves are wilted, lightly crushed, and fully processed through an oxidization bed, which makes them appear brown

or black. Green teas are simply heated in a much faster oxidation process, then pressed and dried to maintain their greenish color. White tea leaves undergo the least processing and almost no oxidation. The amount of oxidation affects not only the color but the caffeine level of the tea. The more the tea is processed, the higher the caffeine level – black tea has the most caffeine, green tea about half as much as black tea, and white tea has very low caffeine.

A visit to Charleston Tea Gardens is free and includes a factory video tour, a free cup of tea, walks through the tea fields, and a stroll past a pond with a resident alligator (okay, full confession, some of us ran past the pond to avoid the alligator). Of course, they hope visitors will take home tea and accessories, and they charge for a trolley tour of the many acres of fields. We experienced a memorable morning stretching our legs and learning about tea. Now where did I put the teapot?



Adventures with Amaranth

by Elizabeth Bryant (MG), Rona Vrooman (MG), and Rachel Theomaurelli (asst. Director, Plenty!)



In addition to a variety of produce, this year's demonstration garden at Plenty! Farm featured a most appealing and impressive addition – amaranth. Tall and upright, with long flowing clusters of tightly packed flowers, this flamboyant plant attracted a lot of attention.

According to the Center for Crop Diversification at the University of Kentucky, amaranth is a versatile warm-season, broadleaf plant that can be grown as a grain, ornamental, leafy vegetable, or forage crop. The Thomas Jefferson Agricultural Institute notes that there are over 50 species in the *Amaranthus* genus. Some amaranth commonly grown in the US for grain include 'Plainsman' (*A. hypochondriacus* x *hybridus*) and 'Red Amaranth' (*Amaranthus cruentus*).

Despite its ancient past and versatility, amaranth is also viewed as a nuisance and undesirable varieties, such as *Amaranthus palmeri*, endure the humiliation of being called "pigweed."

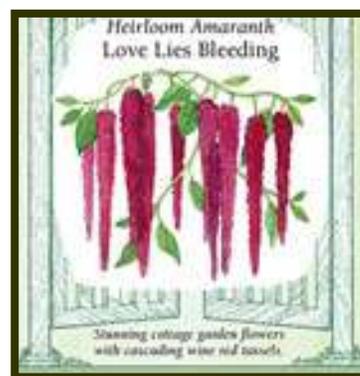
While volunteering at Plant Clinics with seed give-a-ways, you could see people's eyes light up when they spied a packet of 'Love Lies Bleeding' (*Amaranthus caudatus*). Dried amaranth flowers make beautiful floral arrangements and wreaths. According to The Spruce website, some popular varieties and colors include: 'Coral Fountain' (gold, burgundy), 'Dreadlocks' (magenta), and 'Autumn's Touch' (green, brown/bronze). Flowers can be upright plumes or rope-like tassels.

Our Amaranth Adventure got off the ground as a result of a lunch and learn session at the Hahn Horticultural Center attended by Amie Slate (Master Gardener). The speaker distributed seeds for 'Emerald Tassels' (*Amaranthus* spp.) and Amie then shared seedlings with Plenty!

Early in the season, we picked the green leaves. They taste similar to spinach and can be a substitute for kale, chard, or other greens. It works well in soup, stew, and stir-fry. The mother of a Garden Ranger participant prepared it for dinner and gave it two thumbs up!

As the season progressed, it was clear our amaranth was content in the garden. With minimal care, it produced seemingly endless catkins. Visualize Rapunzel with hair draping more than two-feet. Then imagine thousands of seeds getting ready to explode.

Feeling adventuresome, we decided to tackle harvesting the seeds. Spoiler Alert: It looks a lot easier on You-Tube!



How do you know when it's time to harvest seeds? According to The Thomas Jefferson Agricultural Institute, seeds are ready about 3 months after germination. The cue is when they start falling from the flower head on their own. In other words, hold your hand under the flowers, give the tassel a gentle shake, and if you see seeds falling – it's harvest time.

So ... for several weeks, we shook flowers to discover the optimum moment.

Unfortunately, about that same time, the weather turned windy and rainy. In fact, Hurricane Ian was scheduled to make landfall soon. So that we wouldn't lose the crop, we opted for cutting the stalks, tying into bunches, and hanging up to dry.



Once the plants were fully dry, we moved on to threshing – the process of removing seeds from the plant and breaking up remaining plant material. In our case, it was more thrashing than threshing.

The seeds did not fall gracefully. We weren't sure if we were too early or too late.

Standing over a large tray, we began by shaking vigorously and rubbing our hands up and down the stalks. Assorted bits came tumbling down including flowers, dirt, and insects.

We then used various mesh strainers to eliminate debris. Although the pile got smaller and smaller, the seeds were indistinguishable.

Finally, we ventured into winnowing. Using two metal mixing bowls, we carefully poured from one to the other. In theory, the breeze should carry the lighter material away and leave the heavier seeds. In practice, it was challenging to tell the direction of the wind so we ended up getting covered in fluff and stuff.

Persistence paid off and we finally had a few handfuls of clean seeds. What a fun time! We're looking forward to next year, when this year's rogue seeds pop up.



The Homegrown National Park

by Lisa Heckert

Thanks to Javad's email, I was able to join the Blue Ridge Prism Fall Meeting online. Their guest speaker was Doug Tallamy, T.A. Baker Professor of Agriculture in the Department of Entomology and Wildlife Ecology at the University of Delaware. He spoke about his grassroots effort, Homegrown National Park (HNP), to "enlist a vast army of landowners or volunteers to help us deal with the two big issues we have today – biodiversity loss and invasive plants."

Doug's premise is while we seem to have numerous national parks of preserved land, only 12% of the land in the U.S. is protected. He referenced Elizabeth Kolbert's book, *The Sixth Extinction: An Unnatural History*, which concludes humans are responsible for the beginning of a sixth mass extinction of the Earth's biodiversity.

Doug presented some sobering statistics with regard to the use of land right now:

- Every 30 seconds, a football field worth of America's natural areas disappears to development.
- There are 44 million acres of lawn, an area the size of New England.
- We have paved over an area larger than Ohio (20 yrs. old).
- There are 2 millions acres of golf courses, an area larger than Rhode Island and Delaware combined.
- Not much can live in the 135 million acres of typical residential landscapes (lawns) here in the U.S.

In 2007, Doug started the non-profit, Homegrown National Park. With 78% of land privately owned, he sees an opportunity that "lawn is the low hanging fruit." As Doug stated on his website, "...what if each American landowner converted half of his or her yard to productive native plant communities? Even moderate success could collectively restore some semblance of ecosystem function to more than 20 million acres of what is now ecological wasteland." On his website, landowners can register their property as part of this initiative. There's a map on the HNP website that shows the level and ranking of native plantings by state and color.

I had the chance to contact Doug and ask him a couple of questions relevant for our role as Master Gardeners:

As Master Gardeners, how can we best grow Homegrown National Park?

There are two things Master Gardeners can do to help HNP. The first is the obvious one; register your property on the map and start thinking of ways you can improve the degree to which your property sustains pollinators, shares the food your plants make with animals (especially insects!), stores carbon, and manages the watershed. Second, planting a keystone plant would be a great start.

If home gardeners ask us what one thing they could do to start on this initiative, what would you suggest?

Plant an oak tree! Oaks support more biodiversity, sequester more carbon, and manage the watershed better than any other tree in the mid-Atlantic states. They also support pollinators, even though oaks are wind pollinated. Bees regularly go to oak catkins to gather pollen, which they feed to their young. This need not be expensive — start with the smallest tree you can find (acorns are free!) You'll end up with a faster growing, healthier tree this way.

I could go on for several more pages with all of the awesome information Doug presented in the webinar. I strongly encourage you to watch the webinar on YouTube (Blue Ridge PRISM Fall 2022 Meeting – Homegrown National Park) or view one of the videos he has posted on homegrownnationalpark.org. You can also register your own property, as well as access many resources on native plants, including keystone plants. Doug says, "Keystone plants are the most productive plants for the most productive insects!"

I'll end with this quote from Mary Reynolds, an Irish gardener, landscape designer, author, and public activist, "We are only brief guardians of these portions of land we call our gardens."

NRVMGA Grant History

by Gwen Ewing

1997

- Price's Fork Elementary School (Blacksburg): classes designed, created & weeded their own garden, pizza garden, butterfly garden, rainbow garden. amount unknown

1998

- Auburn High School (Riner): Shakespeare Garden, amount unknown
- NRV Hospice in Christiansburg (was on West Main Street): brighten entrance, \$400
- Floyd County 4-H at Skyline Nursing Home: improve courtyard plantings, \$500
- Christiansburg Middle School (Christiansburg): butterfly garden project, \$500
- Belview Elementary School (Radford): Pepper's Ferry Science Center grades K-5 explore nature, \$500

1998 TOTAL: \$1,900

1999

- Blacksburg Community Garden (Roanoke St. E location): watering cans, tomato cages, garden supplies, \$300

1999 TOTAL: \$300

2000 - No grants found.

2001

- Riverlawn Elementary School (Fairlawn): ecology club for composting, leaf shredder, map school landscape, \$608
- Margaret Beeks Elementary School (Blacksburg): restore colonial herb garden, \$500
- Giles High School (Pearisburg): mobile water garden, \$473
- Giles High School (Pearisburg): stationary hydroponic garden, \$310

2001 TOTAL: \$1,891

2002

- Falling Branch Elementary School (Christiansburg): courtyard project, \$1,100
- Christiansburg Elementary School (Christiansburg): nature area, courtyard and vegetable garden, \$725
- Giles High School (Pearisburg): garden for birds and butterflies, \$450

2002 TOTAL: \$2,275

2003 NRV MG grant program was funded by a silent auction held during MG College with donated plants and plant items from area nurseries.

2003

- "Kipps Clovers" 4-H: Jr Master Gardener Club, amount unknown
- Claremont Elementary School (Pulaski): items for greenhouse, soil, plants, trowels, \$432.25
- Critzer Elementary School (Pulaski): improvements to butterfly garden, \$432.25
- Auburn Middle School (Riner): rain garden, biosphere project, \$432.25
- Floyd Community Action Food Bank: perennial and vegetable gardens, \$800

2003 TOTAL: \$2,096.75

2004

- YMCA Pulaski: create and maintain flower beds, front entrance, \$500
- Radford Riverway: trees for pathways, biking and hiking trail, \$750
- NRV Juvenile Detention Home (Christiansburg): horticultural program & help w/greenhouse, \$900
- East Montgomery Garden Club: improve front entrance of Eastern Montgomery High School, \$350
- Gilbert Linkous Elementary School (Blacksburg): planted 1,500 daffodils to improve overall landscaping, \$400
- Jacksonville Center & School (Floyd): walkway and barrier wall with shrub plantings, \$300
- Montgomery Museum (Christiansburg): revitalize museum garden, \$450
- Tekoa, Inc. Residential Treatment Facility (Floyd): raised beds for kitchen garden, \$350
- Critzer Elementary School (Pulaski): expand existing garden, \$375

2004 TOTAL: \$4,375

2005

- VT YMCA (Blacksburg): children's garden at Gilbert Linkous Elementary School, \$300
- 4-H Teens/4-H Adopt-A-Spot Program (Pulaski): develop flower beds, landscape design, upkeep & documentation, \$500
- NRV Juvenile Detention Home (Christiansburg): comprehensive garden & horticulture program, \$1,000
- Auburn Middle School (Riner): continuation of project biosphere rain gardens & water testing, \$400
- Critzer Elementary School (Pulaski): butterfly garden, \$650
- Harding Avenue Elementary School (Blacksburg): butterfly garden, \$250
- YMCA Pulaski: continuance plant, harvest, garden beds and pumpkin patch, \$500

2005 TOTAL: \$3,600

The Grants Committee asked and the Board agreed that MG GRANTS were to be funded every other year.

2007

- Beans and Rice, Inc.: youth garden at Meadowview Apts., \$525
- Harding Avenue Elementary School (Blacksburg): greenhouse items (tables, flats, soil, plants), \$550

- Margaret Beeks Elementary School Kindergarten (Blacksburg): America's anniversary garden, \$377
- Blue Mountain School (Floyd): butterfly garden, \$600
- Gilbert Linkous Elementary School PTO (Blacksburg): enhance grassy area in front of school, \$350
- VT Child Development Center (Blacksburg): intergenerational garden, \$700
- YMCA Pulaski: \$400

2007 TOTAL: \$3,502

2009

- Hale-YMCA Community Garden (Blacksburg): greenhouse and demonstration garden, \$1,000
- Hale-YMCA Community Garden (Blacksburg): vermi-composting, \$600
- Riverview Nursing Home (Rich Creek, Giles Co): horticulture therapy program, \$2,000
- Floyd Community Center for the Arts: demonstration landscape rain garden, \$700
- Auburn Middle School (Riner): outdoor classroom garden renovation, \$800
- Heritage Hall (Blacksburg): horticulture therapy/food preservation, \$800

2009 TOTAL: \$5,900

2010/2011

- Blacksburg Community Garden (Roanoke St. E location): amount unknown
- Belview Elementary School (Radford): veggie garden, \$500
- Harding Avenue Elementary School (Blacksburg): landscape front of school, \$650
- Eastmont Garden Club (Shawsville): Global Buckets project, \$300
- Pulaski County Extension 4-H: 4-H gardening and horticulture projects, \$874.04
- Christiansburg Public Library: three educational gardening workshops, \$354
- Pulaski County Library: expand shade garden, \$500
- Heritage Hall Nursing Home (Blacksburg): replant courtyard with smell, sight, & veggie garden, \$229.50
- Montgomery Museum (Christiansburg): plant labels, brochure, \$250
- Eastern Montgomery Elementary School (Elliston): medicinal plant, butterfly, & native American gardens, \$615

2010/11 TOTAL: \$4,272.54

2012

- Hahn Garden: Jr. Master Gardener Day Camp, amount unknown
- Blacksburg Community Garden (Roanoke St. E location): amount unknown
- Margaret Beeks Elementary School (Blacksburg): re-landscape front beds, \$300
- Belview Elementary School (Radford): "giving garden" project, \$500
- Pulaski County 4-H: third greenhouse, \$500
- Harding Avenue Elementary School (Blacksburg): at-risk kids vegetable gardening, amount unknown
- Claudia's Garden Visitors Center (Pulaski County): plants, labels at \$400
- Radford High School (Radford): \$400
- SEEDS (Blacksburg): \$250
- Valley Interfaith Child Care Center/NRV Head Start (Blacksburg): \$150
- Price's Fork Elementary School (Blacksburg): soil, tools, plants, \$650
- Mountain Valley Charitable Foundation (Shawsville): grow plants for Meadowbrook & public library, amt unknown
- Christiansburg Public Library: install & host classes on how to start new flower beds, water garden, amount unknown
- Floyd County Jr. MG Program: start up supplies \$135.25
- Narrows Elementary School (Narrows): memorial/awareness garden, amount unknown

2012 TOTAL: \$3,285.25

2013/14

- YMCA Children's Garden (Pulaski): \$250
- NRV Juvenile Detention (Christiansburg): \$300
- NRV Recovery Garden (Radford): \$400
- Micah's Backpack Garden/St. Michael's Church (Blacksburg): \$300
- 4-H Programs (Pulaski County multiple schools): \$250
- Floyd County HS: vermi-composting, \$500
- Gilbert Linkous Elementary School (Blacksburg): \$200
- Christiansburg School: special ed garden, \$400

2013/14 TOTAL: \$ 2,600

2015

- Pulaski 4-H: \$550
- Radford City Schools: \$400
- MarketKids (Blacksburg): \$250
- Fairview Home (Dublin): \$422
- Plenty! (Floyd): \$275
- Pulaski YMCA: \$437
- Radford University Selu Conservancy: \$400
- Harding Avenue Elementary School (Blacksburg): \$350
- Juvenile Detention Home (Christiansburg): \$483

2015 TOTAL: \$3,567

2016

- Floyd County High School: \$670
- Indian Valley Elementary School (Willis): \$430
- Pulaski 4-H Programs: \$600
- Dublin Middle School (Dublin): SO Fresh, \$580
- MarketKids (Blacksburg): \$100
- Floyd WIC Garden: \$200

- Pulaski Grow (Draper): \$392
 - Pulaski YMCA: \$300
- 2016 TOTAL: \$3,272**

2017

- Floyd County High School: agriculture program, \$650
- Giles County Technical Center: \$500
- Pulaski 4-H Programs: \$650
- Smithfield Plantation: \$245
- Giles Community Garden: \$400
- Blacksburg Parks and Recreation: \$300
- Farmacy Garden (Christiansburg): \$408
- Pulaski Grow (Draper): \$316
- Pulaski YMCA: \$393
- BioBuild Outreach (Blacksburg): \$113
- Glencoe Museum (Radford): \$150
- Pulaski Adult Day Service: \$400
- Micah's Garden (Blacksburg): \$400

2017 TOTAL: \$4,925

2018

- Floyd County High School: \$635
- Pulaski YMCA: \$290
- Belle Heth Elementary School (Radford): \$650
- Smithfield Plantation: \$264
- Friends of Peak Creek (Pulaski): \$500
- Pulaski Grow (Draper): \$400
- Pearisburg Public Library: \$300
- Giles Community Garden: \$300
- Pulaski 4-H: bedding plants, \$500
- Pulaski 4-H/Dublin Elementary School: \$450
- Giles High School: \$400
- Plenty! (Floyd): \$300

2018 TOTAL: \$4,989

2019

- Pulaski County Youth Center: phase II garden project: \$1,250
- New River Land Trust: Emes educational rain garden at Eastern Montgomery Elementary School (Elliston), \$825
- Pulaski Adult Day and Fall Prevention Center: \$400
- D. Mitchell. Recovery Comm Center (Pulaski): bulb garden project, \$250
- Pulaski County 4-H: garden & horticulture programs, \$650
- Eastern Montgomery High School (Elliston): horticulture startup, \$1,000
- Small Space Demo Garden at Plenty! (Floyd): \$200
- Wilderness Road Museum (Dublin): medicinal herb garden, \$175
- Ratcliffe Museum (Pulaski): interactive learning garden, \$400
- Giles Community Garden (Pearisburg): \$500
- Snowville Elementary School (Snowville): children's garden, \$150
- Indian Valley Elementary School (Willis): garden club & school garden, \$525

2019 TOTAL: \$6,325

2020

- Micah's Garden (Blacksburg): \$640
- Hahn Horticultural Garden: \$1,277.25
- Hale Community Garden (Blacksburg): \$620
- Indian Valley Elementary School (Willis): \$710
- Montgomery Central School (Christiansburg): \$500
- SWVA Natives Campaign: \$500
- Pulaski County High School (Dublin): sensory trail, \$1,750

2020 TOTAL: \$5,997.25

2021

- Floyd Center For the Arts: pollinator gardens, \$1,237
- William Preston's Smithfield: medicinal plant tour, \$200
- Shawsville Middle School (Shawsville): gardens on the rise, \$500
- Blacksburg Municipal Park: native species for pollinator gardens, \$300
- McCleary Elementary School Gardens (New Castle): \$176
- Pulaski Adult Day Service: composting tumbler & hose, \$395
- Blacksburg Community Gardens: kiosks & raised beds, \$1,000
- Pulaski County High School (Dublin): sensory trail, \$1,500
- Pulaski County 4-H: gardening & horticulture program, \$650

2021 TOTAL: \$5,958

Grand Total to 2021: \$71,030.79

Travels with Paige: Visit Virginia!

by Erica Jones

I have been wanting to visit the two state parks in the very SW corner of the state to see Natural Tunnel and the very small Wilderness Road State Park. As a bonus, we checked out Cumberland Gap National Historic Park (CGNHP), while we were in Lee County and the surrounding area. Natural Tunnel is in Scott County, immediately east of Lee County. Part of my motivation was to do hikes in those two state parks. The Virginia State Park system has a Trail Quest challenge when you hike any trail of your choice in the selected state park. They give pins for 5, 10, 20 parks, and then all of the parks. So....

A geography diversion – Lee County is closer to the state capitals of 8 other states including Ohio and Indiana, than it is to Richmond. It has a population of more than 22,000, making it bigger than Patrick County (17,600), Floyd County (15,475), and Giles County (16,780). Must be the scenery! The 2020 census of Lee County's population makes it bigger than 62 Virginia city/counties, even though the biggest town in the county comes in at just 1700 people. Lee is 71st in population size (but 39th in area). The area of Alleghany and Grayson are bigger.



View to the northeast from Pinnacle Overlook; elevation 2440 feet in CGNHP

According to this link - <https://growappalachia.berea.edu/portfolio-items/45040/> - Lee County has only had a Master Gardener (MG) program since 2019. Also see: <https://sites.google.com/view/leemastergardeners/home>. The Lee County MGs also have a Facebook page. Maybe VMGA needs to do more to welcome Lee County. But back to the trip...

Natural Tunnel had a railroad track installed in it in 1893. Ownership of the tracks switched to Norfolk Southern later; and then it became a state park in 1967. The park has one day a year in mid-summer (usually in mid-July) when no trains run and the public can walk through the tunnel. It's called Railroad Day and you can Google the date. Unfortunately, we missed the 'hike the tunnel' day by one week, dag nab it! The tunnel is some 800 feet long. You can take short hikes to see both ends of the tunnel for the rest of the year (or ride a chair lift down to one entrance). Wilderness Road State Park is an odd one. It is very small (about 300 acres). It must have been a working farm in its previous life. The park has a field with a small number of bison in it. (Yes, bison used to roam in these parts. This brings up all sorts of debates about when they got expatriated from this area, but they probably were the same species that is now living out west).



The author was getting hot on the Pinnacle Overlook. The overlook is heart-shaped.

Keep your dog on a leash when going by this field, if your pup likes to chase animals. (No, Paige did not look at, let alone chase, any bison).

The visitor center has a fun planting of natives in the front. And a bit further away is a glorious plaque mounted on a rock, for another small garden started by a group from the Virginia Federation of Garden Clubs. The garden was mulched but apparently not watered this spring, as evidenced by some 20 dead small shrubs -- the joys of trying to maintain public gardens!

Cumberland Gap National Historic Park was started in the late 1950's with land from Tennessee, Virginia, and Kentucky transferred to the Federal government to form the park. It is a historic park, because the Cumberland Gap was an important east-west route for early settlers and undoubtedly, the original native peoples who inhabited the area. Daniel Boone, the Civil War, and railroad expansion all played a role in its history. Also running through CGNHP and Wilderness Road State Park is the Wilderness Road – the original path leading west in 1794. The road was eventually abandoned in 1840 as a public road, but pieces of the original route remain. The park has 24 caves, but only Gap Cave is open to the public (but alas, not to dogs). It is one of the prettiest caves I've ever been in. The local bats have white nose syndrome, so access is limited to try to mitigate the spread of that disease. The park did not obtain ownership of Gap Cave until 1992. Until then, the local private university (Lincoln Memorial University) owned it, oddly enough.

Route 58 used to go over the Gap but again, the three states agreed to build a tunnel under the Gap in 1996 to improve traffic flow. When construction crews built the tunnel, they had to dodge caves and an underground lake (the tunnel was lined in PVC to help keep out leakage). The old roadbed literally got dug up and planted in trees. This was the area in CGNHP where we stumbled on some sweet gum trees. That part of Virginia is a known sweet gum habitat – unlike here at home on the Alleghany range** – but we don't know if they were part of the planting or were already there. There literally is a two square foot piece of asphalt left from the old road; everything else was roused.

** https://www.srs.fs.usda.gov/pubs/misc/ag_654/volume_2/liquidambar/styraciflua.htm

If you hike a bit in CGNHP, you can stand on the spot where the three states meet up. On another hike in the park, they painted a heavy white line when you cross into the 'next' state. And yes, when you are driving around in the area, you give up quickly trying to remember what state you are in...just way too much work.



Photos: Erica Jones.

MASTER GARDENER PHOTOS

Photos: Ruth Ann Whitener



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*Comments, questions, and submissions can be sent to Susan Perry
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A special thanks to everyone who contributed to this issue of the newsletter.
You know who you are!