



Portsmouth Master Gardeners Association Newsletter-April 2024

Note from the President

“The most noteworthy thing about gardeners is that they are always optimistic, always enterprising and never really satisfied. They always look forward to doing something better than they ever have before.” Vita Sackville-West (Sissinghurst Castle Gardens)

It's March already and we're all looking forward to what we'll plant and how splendidly our gardens will thrive. We're working with Churchland Branch Library to put in a seed exchange cart - more information on this as the program evolves.

The Intern Training class is going very well but we need more volunteers to help with hospitality, the raffle and speaker/moderator. If you have time, help!

There are many opportunities to get in some hours this month – check Signup Genius for a full list.

Our Early Bird Greenhouse sale for PMGA will be on Friday, April 12th from 1-3pm; for the public on Saturday April 13th from 9-12 noon. Our next PMGA meeting is on Tuesday, April 16 at 6pm. See y'all there!

PMGA President- Glenda Richard

Brent and Becky's Bulb Farm Tour

by Sherry Myles

Wednesday afternoon March 13th about a dozen Master gardeners headed to Gloucester, VA to take a tour of Brent and Becky's bulb farm and property. These are third generation farmers who started their business in 1900.

The drive was a perfect day with spring popping out in tulip trees and daffodils. What a lovely drive. We had just arrived and one of our fellow gardeners said, “I'm coming back.” We passed a few antique shops, an old fashioned ice cream store and an old fashioned Texaco gas station. I had been listening to John Denver music earlier where the lyrics are “Country roads take me home” and I felt I was on that country road. The property was once owned by the

Officers

President- Glenda Richard

V. President- JC Gardner

Treasurer- Lu Anne Copeland

Secretary- Michelle Ryan

Past President- Barbara Byers

Cor. Secretary- Nancy Perkins

Standing Committees

Communications- Ellen Bible

Education- Louise Roesser

Horticulture- Kathleen Duke

Ed Officio Advisor
VCE Horticulture
Agent- Cyndi Wyskiewicz

Upcoming Events

Library Talks-
6:30-7:30pm at
Churchland
Library

Apr. 17- Starting a Vegetable Garden

May 15- Roses

June 12- Drought Tolerant Plants

Apr. 13- Early Bird G.H. Sale-9-12pm

Apr. 20- Workshop: Build a Rain Barrel

May 4- Open Garden Plant Sale-9-1pm

George Washington's family and had been a working plantation. The sycamore tree in front of the family home is one of the oldest trees in the nation.

Brent told us things about daffodils I couldn't even imagine. One tip I especially appreciated was how to pick the flowers. It is important to pick them by hand at the bottom where the stems are white so more water can flow up the plant. He picked many flowers along the way and gave them to the guests to enjoy. You can enjoy shopping in their gift shop that is full of so many goodies. There is plenty to see even if you don't go on a planned tour.

We had delicious box lunches provided by Nuttall Country Store and delivered to us so we could enjoy at picnic tables on the property.

There is a daffodil festival in the town of Gloucester and a reason to plan a visit. I will go back and I hope you will consider checking out the sweet community and family owned business.





Getting to Know Your Master Gardener- Sarah Cunningham

What year did you join the PMGA?

2020/2021

Which PMG activities do you enjoy the most?

Intern Training Assistance, Seed Starting, PM

What is your favorite type of gardening? Vegetables? Containers? Annuals/Perennials? Others?

Vegetables, ornamentals

What other hobbies do you enjoy?

Pilates, Travel, Golf

As a PMG volunteer, what impact do you feel you have made on our community?

I know I have been a resource to citizens of Portsmouth whether at PMG events, or in everyday conversations with my neighbors.



Test Your Horticulture Knowledge

Answer the 10 following questions (answers are at the bottom but don't cheat!) and see how you rank.

Seed Starting

1. The seed is made up of three parts. Choose which one is **incorrect**.
 - a. outer seed coat
 - b. radicle
 - c. endosperm
 - d. embryo
2. The environmental factors which affect seed germination include:
 - a. water
 - b. oxygen
 - c. light
 - d. heat
 - e. all the above
3. When starting seeds in your home, supplemental light should be provided for at least _____ hours.
 - a. 10
 - b. 12
 - c. 14
 - d. 16
4. In general, what is the best temperature for starting seeds?
 - a. 55-65°F
 - b. 65-75°F
 - c. 75-85°F
 - d. 90-95°F
5. Seed stratification involves:
 - a. breaking, scratching, or softening the seed coat
 - b. putting seeds on the refrigerator for 10-12 weeks
 - c. cutting the seed in half
 - d. soaking it in acid
6. A good seed germination media be:
 - a. well-drained
 - b. fine textured and uniform
 - c. low in soluble salts or fertilizer
 - d. all the above
7. Why should seeds be sown in rows?
 - a. provides good light and air movement
 - b. less chance spreading disease throughout container
 - c. easier to handle at transplanting time
 - d. all the above

8. A good night temperature for most seedlings is:
 - a. 45-50°F
 - b. 55-60°F
 - c. 65-75°F
 - d. 75-80°F
9. The ideal time to transplant seedlings is:
 - a. when the first set of true leaves appear
 - b. when seedlings are one inch tall
 - c. when seedlings are two inches tall
 - d. anytime since it doesn't matter
10. Which of the following does NOT promote hardening-off of seedlings?
 - a. putting seedlings outdoors on a windy day
 - b. gradually lowering temperature
 - c. reducing water
 - d. reducing relative humidity

Answers- 1- b; 2-e; 3-d; 4-b; 5-b; 6-d; 7-d; 8-b; 9-a; 10-a

0-2 correct-needs improving; 3-4 correct-improving; 5-6 correct- getting better; 7-8 correct- most improved; 9-10 correct- Super Master Gardener!

Membership Meeting-3/18/24

On Monday, March 18th Dr. Laurie Fox gave an excellent talk on **Gardening As You Age**. She emphasized to adapt, improvise, and overcome the challenges in gardening as we age. She highlighted to change our **Attitude** about gardening, do an **Assessment** on ourselves, change our **Habits**, think about the **Clothes** we wear, and lastly the **Tools** we use. Great talk!



Invasive Plants by Diana Davenport

Invasive alien plants are considered a major reason for the loss of biodiversity and alterations to the ecosystem. Invasive plants are known to contribute to climate change, introduce pests, and destroy environments and impact human health.

Invasive plants are introduced by accident and intension and flourish in their new environment. They have a lack of natural predators in new environments, tend to be prolific reproducers, and may have multiple means of reproduction and dispersal. These plants are highly adaptable and quickly occupy soil that has recently been disturbed. The impact of invasive plants on native species results in decreased reproduction and decreased biodiversity. Fewer native plants in the food chain reduce food sources and habitats for native animal species thereby reducing their populations. This then reduces available food for the next tier in the food chain.

It is important to understand that the introduction of any invasive plant can bring not one but a host of negative consequences. Invasive species are responsible for the decline of 42% of endangered species in the United States. Three invasive species common in Virginia are Kudzu, The Tree of Heaven, and English Ivy. Kudzu a native of Japan was introduced in 1876 as an ornamental plant with sweet smelling flowers. In the 1930's through the 1950's it was promoted as a solution for soil erosion in the South. Reproducing by runners, rhizomes and vines, Kudzu overtook and continued to grow over everything in it path. The vines of an established plant can grow a foot a day. Kudzu has now grown beyond the borders of the South.

The Tree of Heaven was brought from China as a shade tree and it has become invasive across the United States. The tree has a strong offensive smell and as a result is referred to as Stink Tree in some locations, produces highly allergic pollen and has bark and sap that irritates the skin resulting in a rash. It negatively impacts native growth by producing such a large number of seeds that native plants are crowded out and by secreting a chemical in the soil that is toxic to surrounding plants. The Spotted Lanternfly seeks out the Tree of Heaven to lay its eggs and then feeds on and damages many native and fruit bearing trees.

English Ivy is an invasive that grows up big trees and overtakes the canopy eventually killing the tree. On the ground the layers and layers

of vines create a dense mat of English Ivy. This can be easily witnessed in suburban and rural areas.

Many gardeners are raising invasive plants unknowingly. In my yard I have cultivated Chocolate Vine, three types of Vinca, Mimosa, Chinese Privet and Creeping Jenny. Gardening centers are still selling invasives so the responsibility is ours to make sure that we are not purchasing invasive plants or bringing them home from a friend's garden.

Some non-native invasive plants that are of particular concern in Southeastern Virginia are listed with a native alternative.

Chocolate Vine – an alternative may be Carolina Jessamine, Trumpet Creeper, Cross-vine, or Coral Honeysuckle

Tree of Heaven – an alternative may be Eastern Redbud, Persimmon, Winged or Shinning Sumac

Mimosa – an alternative may be Serviceberry, Eastern Redbud, White Fringetree, Silky Dogwood, Northern Spicebush, or River Birch

Autumn Olive – an alternative maybe Groundsel, Buttonbush, Yupon Holly, Virginia Sweetspire, or Elderberry

English Ivy – Wild Ginger, Cross-vine, Carolina Jessamine, Virginia Creeper, or Golden Ragwort

The Nature Conservancy

Virginia Tech Publications on Invasive Species



Raised beds constructed at Craddock Elementary school by Cyndi, Gene, and Bob. Well done!



Upcoming Garden Events

By: Kathy Rivenbark

Hoffler Creek

- April 13 Early Bird Walk-7:45-10:00 AM Free
- April 14 Mindful Meditation 2:20-3:30 Free
- April 21 Mindful Meditation 2:30-3:30 Free
- April 26 Arbor Day Tree Walk 10:00 AM-12:00 PM \$15
- April 27 Go Birding Day Talk and Walk 10:00-12:00 \$15
- April 28 Mindful Meditation 2:30-3:30 Free

Paradise Creek

- April 20 Spring Bird Walk 8:30-10:00 Free

Norfolk Botanical Gardens

- April 14-Sunday Dog Day in the Garden 9:00-5:00PM Free with admission.
- April 26-28 Tidewater African Violet Show and Sale 9:00-4:00 PM Free with admission

Bluebird House Workshop- 3/9/24 (photos submitted by Vicki Padelford)



Rabbit Remedy?!?!

by: Kathy Rivenbark

Each spring and fall, I plant a variety of lettuces and spinach in my raised beds. I've been doing it successfully for about 12 years now. That is until last fall. In early October of 2023, my entire "garden" was mowed down by rabbits. Every leaf of butter crunch, red sail, Black seeded Simpson, spinach and arugula just seemed to disappear as quickly as it was planted. I couldn't believe it! I decided that this spring, I would have to invest in a fence. Did that happen? No. I decided that maybe I could beat the odds and try some of those "Rabbit Ridder" sprays that you see on the shelves of your local garden center. I planted a few "test" plants and tried a spray that had pretty good reviews. No luck. Within two days, two small plants were nibbled away. Determined, yet still too lazy to put up the fence, I tried a certain brand of soap. I'm sure you have heard of it. You "shave" the bar of soap and scatter the minty smelly shavings around the area. I wish I had a picture to show you. After it rained, the entire area was a soapy mess and two more plants had become dinner for the rabbits. My next try was bloodmeal. I scattered it in large handfuls all around. I just knew it would work, because you could smell it as soon as you pulled up in my driveway! Once again...silly me. The grandchildren wouldn't go near the garden, but the rabbits ate the last of my six little test plants. I knew I should have put up a fence, but by this time my husband was a little less than happy about helping me with the project. This is when I resorted to trash cans! Yes, the small wire waste baskets that you can find at the dollar tree. I planted about half as many plants as I usually do and plopped one of the "trash cans" on top of each plant. I'm happy to report...so far, so good. My biggest concern is that they block some of the sunlight, but everything is growing. This leads me to my next concern ...will they outgrow their little "rabbit protectors?" I guess I will find out. I will report back next month. Still hoping to get that fence built!



**Plan now to Join VCE's 2024
Virtual Master Gardener College June 5 - 9**

VCE Master Gardener College



June 5 - 9, 2024
virtual conference



Keynote speakers, breakout sessions,
program round-table discussions, networking,
plus virtual tours and add-on in-person tours.

See mastergardener.ext.vt.edu/college for more info as it's available



***Planned Cost**

Early registration: \$40
begins mid April

Regular registration: \$60
begins May 8

both include 6 months' access
to recorded sessions.

*Cost subject to change.

EMGC 2024 is coming! This year's virtual event will keep the education and fun of an on-campus conference while improving accessibility for the 5,000+ volunteers in the VCE MG program.

This year you can...

- learn from **interesting keynote speakers**:
 - **Doug Tallamy** talks about **restoring ecosystem function** at home, work, and play;
 - **Debra Freeman** explores **traditional African-American crops** that you can find today; and
 - **Heather Holm** discusses some of the **specialist bees** that visit our native plants.

- participate in more than **a dozen concurrent sessions** on a range of topics, including:
 - Trees and shrubs in small gardens;
 - Indoor vegetable gardening; and
 - Gardening as we age.

- and enjoy **optional add-on tours and social time** with fellow volunteers at locations throughout the state, like:
 - Some of Virginia Tech's Agricultural Research Centers,
 - Oak Spring Garden,
 - Maymont's Gardens, or
 - Enjoy a "Virtual Tour" from home at the National Arboretum, Desopo House, and other spots.

You'll even have the opportunity to **network and learn from one another** by joining round-table discussions and visit social spaces to

- View unit brag boards;
- Talk about projects, like seed libraries, garden tours, or public workshops; or
- Learn more about the Advanced EMG Steward programs.

For those new to hybrid continuing-ed events, they have unique benefits, like keeping costs lower, saving hours on the road, and removing some of the accessibility concerns that come with setting up on campus for a few days. They also give you increased continuing-education opportunities; in addition to the 3+ hours of online sessions per day and optional tours in June, you can see any breakout sessions you missed (or rewatch a favorite) because you'll have access to recordings for six months. Prior Zoom educational conferences allowed more volunteers to attend than the traditional in-person format, but if hybrid learning isn't for you, EMGC will be back on campus at a future conference.

More information on keynotes, breakouts, and tours will follow soon, with early registration beginning mid April. You'll also have the opportunity before June to see this Zoom conference platform in action through a short training webinar. If you have questions, you can reach the state office at emgoffice@vt.edu.

VMGA's mission includes fostering communication, education, and fellowship among VCE MG volunteers. It is happy to support EMGC and the state program office in this year's conference as part of that mission. If you'd like more information on VMGA, contact me at Treasurer@VMGA.net.

See you in June!

Stacey Morgan Smith
VCE Master Gardener Volunteer, Suffolk
Treasurer, Virginia Master Gardener Association (VMGA)

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