



The Garden Gate Newsletter

August - September, 2005

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2nd Vice President:
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Jeanette McKittrick

Newsletter:
Jody Taggart

Hospitality:
Peggy Lowry, Shelby Earehart

Service and Recognition:
Joyce Carole Brannon

Historian:
Joyce Carole Brannon

4-H Youth / Junior Master Gardeners:
Sherry Kerley

Plant Clinic:
Dave & Joanie Brobst

SMART Lawns:
Stephanie Feaser

Special Events:
John Simmonds, Judy Burton

Website:
www.co.henrico.va.us/agent

Association Meetings

August

Asian Gardens of Junko Liesfeld

Join us on **August 10th at 1:00PM** for a field trip to the Asian gardens of Junko Liesfeld who was prominently featured in the Maymont Flower and Garden Show. The Liesfeld's five acre garden will show how cool and peaceful gardens can be even during the heat of summer. This garden is not normally open to the public for owner-led tours so please come and enjoy this very special event. (Driving directions can be found on page 3.)

September

Our **September 14th** meeting will include a discussion of Master Gardener College.

Upcoming Extension Programs

Winterizing Your Lawn

September 13, 2005 & September 15, 2005

Call the office for more details.

SMART Lawn Field Day

Saturday, August 20, 2005

Henrico Extension Office

Visit with local vendors of lawn products and services from 8:30 A.M. – 9:30 A.M. Then from 9:30 – Noon, enjoy a seminar on “Steps to a Beautiful Lawn” and have your lawn questions answered.

Thanks!

Thank-you to the following members for putting together the 2005-2006 HMGA Yearbook:

Joyce Brannon
Peggy Lowry
Janie Vincent

Carol Colby
Susan Robson
June Walker

Annual Dues

We currently have 65 Master Gardeners that have paid their dues for the 2005 - 2006 year. If you have not paid your dues, please get them to me as soon as possible.

Allen Earehart
Treasurer

The 2005-2006 HMGA Yearbook (a handy little reference book about the Association) is available for Association members. Pick one up at regular Association meetings or in the office at the front desk

Plant Clinics

The fall plant clinics are filling up fast so if you need volunteer time, please call Dave Brobst at 672-6724. All of the September slots are filled and only a few in October are available. Dave is planning at least one Saturday plant clinic in the east-end along with the ones currently scheduled for the west-end. If you would like to volunteer for an east end clinic, please call me, Dave.

Tomato-Parmesan

4 bacon strips
1 garlic clove, minced
1 medium onion, thinly sliced or chopped
1 cup sliced mushrooms (opt)
1 Tb. flour
½ tsp salt
¼ tsp pepper
5 medium tomatoes
6 Tb. Parmesan cheese, divided
1 Tb. butter



Cook the bacon until crisp. Drain and crumble. In the drippings, saute the garlic, onions and mushrooms until tender. Stir in the flour, salt and pepper and the bacon. Cut the tomatoes in ½ inch slices; place half in a lightly greased 8 inch baking pan. Spoon half of the bacon mixture over the tomatoes. Sprinkle with half the cheese. Repeat layers. Dot with the butter. Bake at 350 degrees for 20 to 25 minutes.

-Peggy Lowry

Getting to Know Marty Janner

Marty Janner became a master gardener in 2003 and is now our new 2nd vice president. He is a native of Brooklyn New York and a Marine Corps veteran of the Korean War.

Marty was introduced to gardening at an early age by his father who was in the landscape business. His father was responsible for the appearance of many estates and homes along the Long Island shore as well as homes in other counties. And so Marty grew up with a love of plants. His favorite flower is the camellia japonica and his favorite trees are the dogwood and blue spruce.

Marty has been married to his wife, Patricia, for 53 years, and they have one son and one grandchild. Prior to becoming a master gardener, Marty volunteered at Lewis Ginter when he retired in 1991.

Directions to Junko Liesfeld's Garden

Take I-64 West if you come from town. Take the Rockville/Manakin Exit # 173. Turn right at the top of the ramp onto Ashland Rd. (Rt.623 North). Travel approximately 2.6 miles. Turn left at the stoplight onto Pouncey Tract Rd (Rt.271). Go about 0.2 miles, turn right onto Howards Mill Rd. (Rt. 673). Travel approximately 2.7 miles. Cross over a concrete bridge (South Anna River). Take an immediate left onto Casco Mill Lane. Pass two houses then onto a cobblestone driveway.

Don't Eat My Roots

By Janice Kuhns

I don't know about your garden but mine is shady with lots of natural areas. You know what that means – Voles. Over the years I have tried lots of things to try to foil the furry little critters but little had helped until recently. While walking through the shady portion of the Lewis Ginter Botanical Garden I noticed that some of their hostas and other plants were planted in wire cages. It looked like it might work and I decided to try to make some for my garden.



I bought some hardware cloth (1/4 inch) and some multi purpose ties (black nylon UV resistant) and got to work. Let me share with you how you can make your own. First decide how large a cage you will need. Almost any size can be made. It is important to keep in mind that the top of the cage needs to stick up above the ground two or three inches at least or the furry critters will be able to crawl over the top on a twig or nearby pile of leaves or mulch. The cages may not look too attractive but they do look like they mean business. Mark on the hardware cloth (aka rat wire) with a marking pen the size you want to cut. Wear gloves – the stuff can be sharp! Cut along your mark with tin snips and then cut a square to cover the bottom. Overlap the edges to form a cylinder and fasten with the multi purpose ties. Put the square on top and fasten with the ties. I bend the corners up at the edges. I usually use seven or eight ties on a small cage. Once in the ground the earth will support the sides of the cage.

For planting first the dig hole and place the cage into the hole. Next put your plant into the cage and firm it in making sure there are no air spaces either in the cage or underneath the bottom. Water well and know that as long as the edges are above ground level no furry critter will be able to get to the roots of your plants. Good luck. Call me if you have any questions. Janice Kuhns at 270-0962 or e-mail me at jhkuhns@cavtel.com.

First MG Friendly Garden Tour a Great Success

By Ann Dutton

Our first Master Gardener Friendly Garden Tour was a great success! Tickets were purchased by 238 persons who visited all or most of the gardens. We received over fifty evaluations that showed people liked the educational focus of the tour. An overwhelming majority said they liked having gardening assistance through handouts, MG's available to answer their personal questions, plant identification labels, and on-site observation. There was such enthusiasm for plant identification that we plan to offer a printout of scientific and common names of many plants in each garden on the next tour.

Despite a year of planning and preparation, the Planning Team for the tour knows fully well that the tour could NOT have been a success without all the wonderful MG volunteers. A ***BIG thank you*** goes to all of you who graciously offered your time and expertise! Your willingness to help and your enthusiasm in sharing your horticultural knowledge were a major part of the success. Almost 50% of our current Master Gardener membership participated in the tour. Thank you for such great support! Thanks also go to the Extension Office staff that offered their support in many ways. Their support and enthusiasm also helped to make the tour a reality.



The purpose of the MG Friendly Garden Tour is to be a bridge for garden enthusiasts who for whatever reason have not taken the MG classes and yet want more information than a typical garden supply store might offer. Seeing “the right plant in the right place” and having wonderful MG volunteers available to answer specific questions is informative as well as very encouraging to an eager-to-learn-more gardener.

Another goal of the tour is to offer gardens that are maintained by homeowners so that the average gardener gains an “I can do that!” attitude. Two comments on the evaluations support that we were successful in instilling this attitude with some of our visitors. One person said, “I can’t tell you how glad I am that I had the opportunity to see these gardens – to see that regular people can have such a beautiful garden!” Another comment was, “Thank you! A wonderful afternoon in real gardens, created by real people!” How gratifying, after all the hard work, to read these comments and know that we have truly served our gardening community in such a fruitful way!

If you, or a friend or neighbor you know, would be willing to share your garden, please let us know. We are compiling a list of gardens for future consideration. We would like to know if the garden is at its peak in spring or fall, and any interesting features of the garden. Several visitors asked if we could include water gardening features. Thanks for any help you might give us for future garden tours!

The Planning Team of the Friendly Garden Tour:

Robin Baliles	Ann Dutton
Gerri Lynch	Jeanette McKittrick
Allyson Roberts	Cynthia Seal
Rhonda Sutton	Allison Wright
Keith Wyllie	

A Little Bit about...Zinnias

By Peggy Lowry

The zinnias we grow today – eye catching with bright, vibrant colors – originated in Mexico with humble beginnings. One source claims that they were the flower of the Aztecs, cultivated in Montezuma’s gardens along with morning glories, dahlias and sunflowers. Most sources say that when the conquistadors marched through Mexico in the 1500’s, the zinnia was a small, insignificant weed growing everywhere. It was called “eyesore” by the Aztecs and “mal de ojos” by the Spanish. The weed was a sturdy annual with small daisy like blooms of dingy yellow and muddy purple, and it was ignored until the 18th century. At that time there was a worldwide interest in plants. The first part of that century saw plant hunters collecting unknown and exotic plants which were then classified, propagated, and some hybridized. Later in the century the less spectacular plants were also collected because of their ability to adapt and endure less than perfect conditions for survival.

Collecting wild flowers was also a popular pastime, and a young German doctor named Gotfried Zinn had an outstanding collection and he became well known in most horticultural circles. A friend sent him some seeds of the “eyesore” weed, and he was quite pleased to try to grow it. It was regarded as a curiosity. Although he died about ten years later, the “mal de ojos” was named Zinnia in his honor. It was also called “poor house flower,” everybody’s flower, and “old maid.”



In the early 1900’s the French began to experiment with the zinnias and soon produced a double flower with a brighter, clearer color. Horticulturists became interested and began to consider the properties zinnias had and their requirements. There were sixteen species of zinnias – all indigenous to Mexico. Zinnias required full sun, were tolerant of poor soil, but flourished in rich, well drained loam. They were definitely a warm weather annual. Their stems were sturdy and the leaves were slightly bristled with a pungent odor to repel insects. The flower head was the type that hybridizers could work on to put out a “ray” of petals.

The modern zinnia began with Luther Burbank in the early 1920’s when he produced a “dahlia” type of bloom, and this led to more years of experimenting. When he died, his head gardener, William Henderson, continued to work on zinnias until William Atlee Burpee bought the seed company and continued the work on his own. Millions of zinnias were planted over the years, and only those that had sturdiness and clarity of color were saved for further research. Burpee wanted the zinnia to be a tetraploid by artificially shocking the plant in some way to compel it to double the number of chromosomes in its cells. Then, if the seeds proved fertile, plants could be grown that would be larger and have more complex flowers.

As late as 1948 Burpee’s tetraploids were still average with seeds that were not dependable. “The zinnia resisted. Burpee insisted.” But that year, one plant was found to be wholly female. The flowerheads had no petals but were filled with stigmas. Bred with male flowering plants, the first generation of hybrid zinnias on a commercial scale was born. This freak zinnia was the mother of them all. Today zinnias come in all varieties of form, sizes, and all colors except blue. There are the dahlia flowered, swizzle hybrid (a two tone), scabiosa like pastels, and “peppermint sticks” with stripes and splatches of color on cream colored petals.

You can start zinnia seeds indoors 2 to 4 weeks before setting out in full sun and well drained soil. I found the easiest way is to wait for a week in May when no rain is expected for about five days. Scatter the seed on the prepared bed and lightly mist with the hose. Then barely cover them with soil and mist again. Then top this with vary small bits of mulch and mist again. Mist off and on during the next five days to keep the seeds from drying out. In about five days they will have germinated. Thin or wait about a week or two to transplant crowded seedlings. They don't like to be moved, but will forgive you if you do this on a cloudy day or late in the afternoon when the sun is not so strong. Since zinnias are susceptible to mildew, always water at the bottom. Of course, the more blooms you cut, the more you will have. Zinnias are not listed as a butterfly-attracting plant, but I saw them daily on mine, especially swallowtail butterflies.

The zinnia is the state flower of Indiana and ranks second in popularity to the marigold. The "mal de ojos" has come a long way to help make our gardens beautiful.

Meeting Date Reminders

Board Meetings

August 3, 1:00PM
September 7, 1:00PM

Association Meetings

August 10, 1:00PM
September 14 , 1:00PM

Please e-mail your contribution to the newsletter
By **September 20** to
Jody Taggart jody.taggart@comcast.net

