



# The Garden Gate e-Newsletter

## OFFICERS

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**Mary E Vetovec**

1<sup>st</sup> Vice President  
**Ann Dutton**

2nd Vice President  
**Suzanne Pericle**

Treasurer  
**Beverly Cochrane**

Recording Secretary  
**Holly Hartley**

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Programs  
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**Peggy Lowry & Shelby Earehart**

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**Joyce Carole Brannon**

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SMART Lawns  
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Special Events  
**John Simmonds & Judy Burton**

Websites  
[www.co.henrico.va.us/agent](http://www.co.henrico.va.us/agent)  
[www.henricomga.org](http://www.henricomga.org)

June–July, 2008

## Annual Meeting & Election of Officers

Please join us on Wednesday, **June 11** for our Annual Meeting at 1pm. We will have a year end review, elect officers and sign up for committees. This is a great time to join the Association for another year, get more involved and share your ideas. General nominations will be accepted from the floor at this meeting.

The following individuals have been nominated to serve as officers of the Association for the 2008 fiscal year:



President - Ann Dutton

1<sup>st</sup> Vice President - Erica Gilliam

2nd Vice President - Suzanne Pericle

Treasurer - Beverly Cochrane

Recording Secretary - Brenda Orton

Corresponding Secretary - Shelby Earehart

Thank you to our Nominating Committee:

Beverly Cochrane, Ann Dutton & Carol Patterson

### *July Association Meeting July 9, 1:00pm*

Virginia McMillen from Winterwoods will speak on Hellebores. Winterwoods ([www.winterwoods.net](http://www.winterwoods.net)) is a small family nursery in Bon Air specializing in hellebores, epimediums and assorted hardy shade perennials.

### *Looking Ahead to August...*

#### *August 13, 1:00pm*

Mike Lockatell will discuss reblooming bearded irises. He started the Joyce Lockatell Memorial Garden in Powhatan County and he propagates and grows many varieties of both irises and peonies. He was featured in the May 3 Home and Garden section of the *Richmond Times Dispatch*.

# President's Message

## *A Place for Everyone*

Dear Master Gardening Friends,

This is a good bye after two years of serving as vice president and two years as president. It is a also a hello to continuing service; volunteering as a master gardener.

My first service commitment is to get all the plans set up for teaching two hypertufa workshops at our October 18 Harvest Fair. I am always asking for help so here goes- I need volunteers with wheel barrows, a pick up truck and an ability to assist in lifting 80 pound bags of cement. I need volunteers who love to teach and to get dirty. I need volunteers with a talent for planting stone-type containers. All of these abilities can be spread among several people. So the first 4-6 persons to call will get these exciting volunteer jobs.

My point here is this: there is a volunteer place for everyone. And we need all skills. If you can't lift, you can collate instructions. If you don't have a wheel barrow, you may welcome participants at the registration tables. We hope to have 100 master gardeners in our association next year and we need the work talents of everyone. And I'll look forward to working with each of you.

Lastly, I want to thank everyone for their suggestions and willing support from 2004-2008 especially the hard working officers and chairpersons and their committees and everyone who volunteered an hour. And I will look forward to working with each of you from 2008-2032. Then I will be 85 and I'm retiring!!!

Mary E Vetovec mevetrovec@aol.com



## ***Cheese and Cherry Danishes***

- 8 oz cream cheese, softened
- ¼ cup sugar
- 2 tbs grated lemon zest
- 1 tbs lemon juice
- 1 tsp vanilla
- 2 tbs flour



- 2 pks (8 oz. ea) refrigerated
- crescent – roll dough
- canned cherry pie filling
- sliced almonds
- egg wash (1 egg beaten with 1 tbs water)

Mix the first six ingredients until smooth. Unfold 1 pk. of crescent roll dough and separate into 4 rectangles. Cut each in half crosswise making two squares (8 in all). Pinch together any holes or perforations, then stretch two opposite corners of each square slightly so they can fold over filling. Spread a generous tablespoon of the cheese mixture diagonally onto center of each square at a right angle to the stretched corners. Top with about 4 cherries in syrup. Fold flaps across, one over the other. This is better done on the ungreased baking sheet so danishes hold their shape. Brush each with the egg wash and sprinkle with sliced almonds. Repeat with remaining dough and filling.

Bake at 375° for 15 minutes or until golden. Cool on wire racks. Can be refrigerated, covered, about two days.

Makes 16.

- Peggy Lowry

## New MG Training Volunteers Needed

Holly Hartley has volunteered to head up the New Master Gardener Training Committee beginning with the Class of 2009. She is in need of volunteers to serve as training session facilitators. Even if you have signed up before please contact Holly; the sign-up sheet is missing. This offer is open to veterans as well as interns (Class of 2008). You can reach Holly at [ilex1002@verizon.net](mailto:ilex1002@verizon.net) or 756-1563.

### Botanical Interests

The folks at Botanical Interests have offered us the opportunity to earn **15%** of all seed sales made to our members (and any of your friends who use the link). There is no tax on the seeds and the shipping is a flat \$3.95 for any size order, so you many want to combine orders with your friends. There are two ways to place an order.

Go to their website at [www.botanicalinterests.com](http://www.botanicalinterests.com) and click on the box in the top right corner that asks if you would like to see a % of your order go to a charitable organization. That will bring up a page that lists Henrico Master Gardeners Association—click on it.



OR

Go to their website through this link: [www.botanicalinterests.com/nonprofits.php](http://www.botanicalinterests.com/nonprofits.php) and then you will click on Henrico Master Gardeners Association as your non-profit organization.

Once you do this and place your order it will be automatically recorded and 15% will be donated. This money will then be donated from the Henrico Master Gardeners Association into the VT Coordinator Endowment Fund.

As an update, we have received our first check from Botanical Interests and that money has been donated to the Endowment Fund. So, keep on ordering those seeds, as you plant and re-plant your summer vegetables and flowers.

## Ukrop's Golden Gifts

Ukrops has mailed out the Golden Gift certificates for this year. You can help the HMGA by donating your Golden Gift certificate to us. If you would like to donate, please bring your certificate to the VCE office, or mail it in to the office by the end of May so the certificates can be turned in to Ukrops by June 14th.

Thanks for your support of the Henrico Master Gardeners Association.



# A Little Bit about Portulaca

There are between 40-100 different species of portulaca (purslane), the two most recognized being portulaca grandiflora (moss rose purslane) and portulaca oleracea (common purslane). The portulaca we know as moss rose is a native of South America and was introduced to European gardens about 300 years ago. This semi-succulent annual is best known for its ability to thrive in hot, dry places where other species could not make it. It is an ideal plant for the front of the garden because of its low growing habit – 4 to 8 inches in height. It tends to spread and is often used in window boxes and hanging baskets throughout the summer. The profuse narrow leaves give the plant a moss-like appearance that provides a beautiful backdrop for the flowers. The flowers themselves came in many vivid colors, some single and some double, and open only when the sun is shining. New hybrids, however, have blooms that open when skies are cloudy, and bloom time is summer through fall. This easy to grow annual needs regular watering until established and then appreciates just a little watering to prevent root and stem rot. Other than that, the moss rose is just about care free.



Gardeners in earlier times grew this plant for medicinal purposes including treatment for muscle spasms, teeth grinding, scurvy, and for soothing gunpowder burns. It was believed that the juice from the plant was also good for treating insect and snakebites, burns, scalds and eczema. Placing a moss rose flower in a child's bed was thought to keep evil spirits at bay while the child slept. The leaves were eaten cold, cooked or used to thicken soups.

Portulaca is one of the cheeriest garden plants when in flower; its myriad of bright reds, yellows, whites oranges and colors in between can transform a dull garden in no time. The name portulaca came from the Latin porta (door) for the door like openings of its seed capsule.

The F.D.A. lists purslane, portulaca oleracea, as the seventh worst pervasive weed world wide, and Wyman's says that it is probably the worst weed troubling gardens throughout the U.S. and Canada. The plant can store water and survive drought; and when left on the ground after being pulled up, it can form roots after the next shower. With its succulent, prone stems it is one of the most readily identifiable wild plants. It can be found in gardens, gravelly wastelands, vacant lots and any place where topsoil has been scraped away for development. But – these are the perfect habitats for one of the most widely unappreciated suburban wild edibles. In fact, it is a sought after vegetable almost everywhere in the world except in the U.S. It is found here from the Atlantic to the Pacific and from Canada to Tierra del Fuego. A ground hugging annual about two inches high and one or more feet across, it produces tiny four petaled yellow flowers from May to November (July to September here). Seeds continue to ripen even when the plant has been pulled and is no longer in the ground. All parts of the plant are edible. The new leafy tips (quickly replaced by the plant) are good by themselves or mixed with other greens in salads, cold or boiled, salted and buttered. Some people find their mucilaginous quality objectionable, but the leaves can be used the same as okra to thicken soups and stews and add flavor. They can also be frozen for later use, and the tender stems can be pickled. The leaves and stems are rich in calcium, phosphorus and vitamins A and C. Many recipes including purslane can be found in cookbooks throughout Europe. More People in this country are beginning to learn about this useful plant. The Southern Exposure Seed Exchange catalog lists purslane as a cut and come again edible for salads. It has a higher iron content than any other green vegetable except

parsley and amaranth. It is also a rich source of omega-3 fatty acids which are beneficial in treating congenital heart disease and certain cancers.

For over 2000 years purslane was used also as a medicinal herb. The Romans used it to treat dysentery, intestinal worms, headache and stomach upsets. It was also considered an anti-magic herb to work off illnesses and protect against evil spirits. The Greeks used it as a blood cleansing herb, and it was popular in the Middle Ages to treat liver and heart disorders, bacterial infections, fevers and headaches. One source says that the Arabs introduced purslane to Europe, but surely the Romans did this before the Arabs as they did with all other useful plants. European settlers brought it to America where it was carefully planted and gathered by early colonists. Today purslane has been found to have a beneficial effect on cholesterol, triglyceride levels, and on strengthening the immune system. It contains antioxidant activity and has long been considered of value in treating urinary and digestive problems. Placed in animal feed, it prevents diarrhea and in some cases is effective in treating hookworm and amoebic dysentery. Purslane in mouthwash has demonstrated antimicrobial as well as anti-inflammatory effects. Studies are being made to find its effects on acne, psoriasis, and sunburn.

Purslane seed is produced in a peculiar manner, many seeds being packed into a little pillbox about the size of buckshot. When ripe, the outer half of the little box pops off, like a lid, and releases the seeds. The seed pods themselves open unevenly, but if the plant is pulled from the ground, the plant uses the food and water stored in its stems to rush the process of seed production to completion.

Purslane's central foot cluster sends leafy trailers in every direction making a netlike carpet over many acres if left undisturbed. It is an attractive plant resembling a prostrate jade plant and could make a fine ground cover for sterile areas that would otherwise remain bare. Purslane cultivators sometimes show up in today's garden centers. Euell Gibbons said, "Let's stop considering purslane worthless merely because it is abundant and easily procured. Not all good things are rare and costly. Maybe purslane proves there is truth in the old cliché that states that the best things in life are free."

*By Peggy Lowry*

## **Purslane Salad**

- ½ small green cabbage, finely shredded
- ¾ lb purslane
- 2 cups baby greens
- 4 scallions (white part only) thinly sliced
- 1 large cucumber, peeled, seeded and cut into small cubes
- 2 tbs olive oil
- 1 ½ tbs fresh lemon juice
- salt and pepper to taste
- small mint leaves for garnish(opt.)

Soak the cabbage in cold salt water for 30 minutes. Drain and spin dry. Pick over the purslane and use only the leaves and small sprigs (about 2 cups). Wash and spin or pat dry. Toss the cabbage and purslane with the baby greens, scallions and cucumbers.

Whisk together the olive oil, lemon juice, salt and pepper. Add the salad and toss to coat. Garnish if desired. Serves 6.

Purslane can be found at some farmers markets.

—Peggy Lowry

## *Getting To Know Tom Fifer*



Claude Thomas Fifer, Jr. (better known as Tom) was born in 1938 at Sheltering Arms Hospital here in Richmond. When he was eight years old he was placed in the Poor House but was later reunited with his family. At the age of 10 he was placed in the Methodist Orphanage where he stayed until he graduated from John Marshall High School.

In 1957 he enlisted in the USAF and spent two years in the U.S. and then two years in Torrejon, Spain, serving in the Strategic Air Command. After his discharge he went to work for the phone company during which time he met his future wife, Barbara. Tom also worked for the U.S. Government, IBM, Eastman Kodak and retired in 1991. Tom and Barbara live in Varina; and after 45 years of marriage, they have two children and three grandchildren.

Tom became a Master Gardener in 2000 and has been involved mostly in plant clinics and home shows. Tom likes all flowers, has no favorite shrub, trees that flower, oaks, and black locust. Vegetable gardening is his favorite.

Currently Tom is District Deputy Grand Master District 15-B of the Grand Lodge of Virginia AF and AM. He is a member of Babcock Masonic Lodge #322, Richmond Scottish Rite, ACCA Temple, Eastern Henrico Ruritan Club, Calvary United Methodist Church and the Richmond Bee Keepers Association. He relaxes by gardening and playing the guitar. He stays quite busy working with his honeybees and helping new beekeepers learn how to “keep” bees. We have enjoyed Tom’s talks about bees at Association meetings and hope he will speak to us at another meeting in the year to come.

### *Insect Watch: The Emerald Ash Borer*

by Peggy Lowry



Probably brought into the Great Lakes area via wooden crates aboard cargo ships, this borer was first detected in Michigan and Canada in 2002. It is a native of eastern Russia and northern Asia and has made its way across seven states. It kills ash trees that, among other things, provide timber for millions of baseball bats. Scientists are working on a way to control this pest, and the federal government has imposed a quarantine in six states. The most recent infestation (2007) is close to us – Fayette County, West Virginia.

## Bats in Your Backyard



I got my first mosquito bite this year in March. Looking around the yard there were already a couple of swarms looking for tasty human blood. I hate the thought of putting chemicals in the yard since we have a lot of nesting birds and other wildlife we enjoy in addition to the fact that it's not environmentally sound. Another Master Gardener mentioned she had been to a workshop on bats, learning what effective predators they are so I did some research and discovered that one bat can eat up to 1,000 insects an hour! Clearly, I need bats in my yard.

I asked my husband for a bat house for Mother's Day. "You want a *what*?" was his response. It took a little convincing for him since bats have gotten a rather negative image over many centuries which recent research has been able to dispel. Several organizations are now dedicated to promoting the understanding and value of bats.

There are over 1,000 species of bats, 40 of which can be found in North America. They are nocturnal, reclusive mammals, hunting insects at night using "echolocation" to find their prey. They don't compete with the birds in your yard for insects since they are finished their hunt before the sun comes up and the birds start looking for food. In fact, bats are an indicator of a healthy ecosystem. The more bats that are in an area, the lower the amount of pesticides that are needed. Farmers love having bats near their crop areas because bats can save them millions of dollars in crop destruction by pests.

The most troubling myth about bats is that they carry rabies. While rabies is a serious disease, and not to be taken lightly, bats are not "carriers" of the virus and are no more prone to rabies infection than any other wild animal. If you see a bat lying on the ground and it is not trying to avoid human contact, do not handle it and call animal control instead.

You can attract bats to your yard by providing the things most wildlife needs: water, shelter and a chemical-free environment. You can buy or build a bat house according to specifications from the Bat Conservation International website ([www.batcon.org](http://www.batcon.org)). This is a great resource for choosing the right house, locating it properly on your property to attract bats and much more information on the benefits of bats. A medium size, multi-chamber bat house can accommodate up to 300 bats. At 1,000 insects per hour, per bat, that's a lot of bugs gone from the yard! Once properly installed, the bat house requires minimal maintenance and once a colony becomes established, bats will return to the same house every year.

I did get my bat house for Mother's Day and it's ready for occupancy. The "VACANCY" sign is out and I'll be anxious to see my first tenants arrive and my mosquito population decline!

-- Barbara Talley

# Annual Dues Notice for HMGA

It's time to renew memberships in the Henrico Master Gardeners Association (HMGA). Our membership is **\$12.00** annually and the membership year is from July 1 through June 30. If you have been a member in the past, thanks for your support. If you are an intern or a MG who has never been a member, you might find interest in what the HMGA provides for you.

☺ Advanced training and programs on the 2<sup>nd</sup> Wednesday of the month April through November. These programs include garden tours, various guest speakers, and the annual Plant Swap and luncheon;

☀ A newsletter (*Garden Gate*) with interesting articles and other gardening-related information;

☺ A website ([www.henricomga.org](http://www.henricomga.org)) with great information and links of interest to Master Gardeners;

☀ Funding for significant Master Gardener activities such as Junior Master Gardeners and the upcoming Henrico Harvest Fair.

Our officers, board members and committee chairs spend many hours working to make the association strong which, in turn, helps make our Henrico Master Gardener program strong. Without the HMGA and our annual dues, as well as the tireless efforts of our members it would be very difficult to provide the above amenities.

As a member of the HMGA you can get more involved in what we do by serving as an officer or on a committee. Some of our committees include: **MG Training (Intern and Advanced), Horticulture Helpline, Finance, Hospitality, Junior Master Gardeners, Communications, Special Events, SMART Lawns, Service and Recognition, Historical, and Plant Clinics.**

Membership in the HMGA is completely voluntary—you do not have to be a member to continue to be an active Master Gardener. However, to be a member of the HMGA, you must first be an active Master Gardener (or an Intern working toward certification). So, if you have not joined HMGA, I urge you to consider becoming a member. And remember, attendance at all of the HMGA events and programs counts toward your recertification hours.

If you have any questions about membership in the HMGA, please feel free to contact me, or any officer or member of our board.

Thank you.  
Beverly Cochrane  
Treasurer  
Henrico Master Gardener Association

To join the HMGA, or renew your membership, please complete the form below and return it along with your check for \$12.00. Dues may be dropped off or mailed to the extension office or handed to the Treasurer at a meeting.

**Henrico Master Gardeners Association  
Membership Renewal Form**

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Please check one:

\_\_\_\_\_ I prefer my newsletter to be sent by **Email**

Email Address: \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_ I prefer my newsletter to be sent by **USPS mail**

Address: \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

Make checks payable to: **Henrico Master Gardeners Association** and mail to:

Henrico Master Gardeners Association  
P.O. Box 27032  
Richmond, VA 23273-7032

## **Special Note for Intern Master Gardeners**

Come to the annual meeting on June 11 at 1:00pm to meet the new officers and join for the 2007-2008 year. We would like to meet you and welcome you to the association. It is also a good time to sign up for committees that interest you.

# Meeting Date Reminders

## Board Meetings

June 4, 12:30pm Mary E. Vetovec's  
July 2, 1:00pm

## Association Meetings

June 11 *Annual Meeting* 1:00pm  
July 9, 1:00pm

Please submit your contribution to the newsletter  
By **July 20** to Jody Taggart  
jody.taggart@comcast.net 360-2680