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Websites
www.co.henrico.va.us/agent
www.henricomga.org

The Garden Gate e-Newsletter

December - January, 2007

Master Gardener Appreciation Reception

You are invited to attend a reception in honor of Master Gardener volunteers on **Wednesday, December 13 at 3:00pm**. If you have not sent in your RSVP, please call the extension office at 501-5160 to let us know if you are coming and if you plan to bring a guest.

Volunteers will be recognized for their service and members of the 2006 class who have completed their service commitment will receive their 50-hour certificates.

This will be the first opportunity to sign up to work at the Maymont Show in February and the Home Show in March. See Judy Burton for details.

Contributions for the **Henrico Christmas Mother** will also be accepted at the reception.

CVNLA Short Course

You should have received your applications by now for the CVNLA short course to be held in January. The deadline for registration is Dec. 15.

Recertification

Recertification packets will be arriving soon with the MG Training schedule for 2007 and advanced training opportunities. Classes for new Master Gardener training begin on January 26, 2005.

Planning ahead...

Remember that there will be **no association meeting** in January.

Don't forget the association website:

www.henricomga.org

President's Message



Fortunately for gardeners the intense preparation and celebration time of the holidays is gardening 'down time'. The chores of leaves and putting the gardens to bed pale next to shopping, decorating, cleaning, traveling, visiting, worshipping and most of all being with loved ones. Maybe there is time to read a gardening book or plan with seed and plant catalogs. However you spend December and January I wish you good cheer!

Keep the Master Gardener events on your agenda:

December 13th 3pm Welcome new MGs

January 3-5 Landscapers Short Course

February and March each Wednesday at 1pm-Advanced Master Gardening classes.

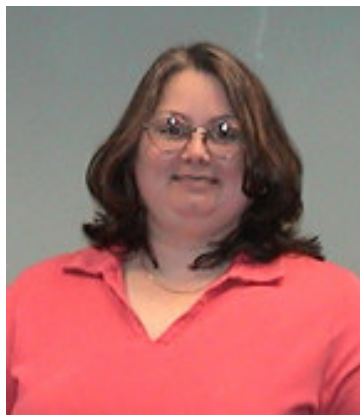
Last week in January-new class training begins.

We will also begin a new year of Master Gardening activities.

Choose your favorite way to get work hours or try a new volunteer job. Most of all join in and we'll move into 2007 together!



Mary E Vetovec



Getting To Know Angela Wrigglesworth

Angela joined the Henrico Extension Office in October of 2004 as Unit Administrative Assistant; and as of October of this year, she is the County Administrative Assistant for the Henrico Extension Office. We are fortunate to have her in the office and hope that she will be there for many years to come.

Angela has two wonderful parents, and she is the oldest of seven (five brothers and one sister). She grew up in the east end of the county, and while attending Highland Springs High School she took special college courses sponsored by Virginia Tech. She attended Longwood College and finished an Associate Degree in Liberal Arts at J. Sargeant Reynolds Community College. Three years ago she moved to Hanover County with her husband, Curtiss whom she married in July, 2001. They love to travel and have been to North Carolina, New York, Hawaii, Ecuador, and the Galapagos Islands. A trip to Australia is planned for the near future.

One of Angela's hobbies is reading. The librarian at Montrose Elementary, Mrs. Easter, was her favorite teacher, and the two of them would have breakfast together and "talk books." Mrs. Easter gave Angela her first lesson in secretarial work – how to use a mimeograph machine. She had fun despite the purple fingers.

To quote Angela: "I like working toward the betterment of people rather than a product; being able to work with subjects I am interested in – gardening, children, conservation, money management; and working in an office where learning new skills is not just encouraged, but mandatory. I am an amateur gardener who loves to get her hands dirty! I have a special love for daylilies and use them wherever I can. I am very interested in the horticultural side of Extension and love to work on projects with others. I particularly enjoyed working with Judy Burton on the Good Bugs/Bad Bugs project. And remember – If you need help with anything, I'm just down the hall."

-Peggy Lowry

A Little Bit about...Jerusalem Cherry

By Peggy Lowry

The Jerusalem Cherry, *Sollanum pseudocapsicum* is neither a cherry nor from Jerusalem but belongs to the same family as tomatoes, eggplant, potatoes and the deadly nightshade. One source says that these plants originated in Madiera, and another says that they are native to Peru. At any rate, this is a winter holiday plant that you can easily grow from seeds or cuttings. It makes a great Christmas plant – the orange red fruit stays on the plant five to six months.

To get them started for a holiday display, sow the seeds in late February to mid March. Ordinary potting soil will do. Press the seeds into moist soil, but do not cover. Keep the seed pans warm and moist and give them fourteen hours of light per day. Be patient as it may take as long as three weeks to see results. When seedlings are about five weeks old, they should be potted up in three-inch pots. Begin a regular feeding schedule by feeding every three weeks March through December with a water-soluble fertilizer. Half strength fish emulsion or tomato fertilizer is good. Pinch or prune to form compact symmetrical branches while still in three inch pots. Repeat when plants are six inches tall. Then transfer to the next size pot. Take care to keep plants from drying out since their roots are fibrous and fragile.

When all danger of frost is gone, place them outside in a shady spot for a few days and then gradually move them into full sun for the summer. Continue to feed and keep moist. Should they be kept in pots? Jerusalem Cherry plants that have been grown in the soil outside are difficult to dig up and pot. When the roots are disturbed, the plant will quickly wilt. The lovely white blossoms usually appear in July followed by green berries, which grow larger and become yellow, then bright orange to orange-red.



When the weather turns cool, bring them indoors. If you bring them in after your heat has been turned on, they may drop some leaves and fruit. Place them in sunny windows or under grow lights. Although they enjoy summer warmth, they prefer a place inside where temperatures are not over 70° and even cooler at night. After Christmas your plant may drop fruit and a few leaves. Do not feed again until March, and water sparingly. In March, repot in a one-inch larger pot, prune and feed. Move outside again when all danger of frost is gone.

The easiest seed source other than a catalog is a ripe berry from a florist grown plant or from a friend. Just let the berry dry and then sort out the seeds. One final note: The berries are rated poisonous. The toxin is not life threatening but can cause gastric problems including vomiting and gastroenteritis.

Peggy's Egnog Pie



1 envelope unflavored gelatin
¼ cup water
1 cup eggnog, divided
¼ cup bourbon
dash of rum
2 eggs, separated
¼ cup sugar
1 cup cream, whipped
1 graham cracker crumb crust

Sprinkle gelatin over water to soften. Add sugar, ½ cup eggnog and egg yolks. Stir over low heat until sugar and gelatin dissolve and mixture is smooth.

Remove from heat and stir in ½ cup eggnog, bourbon and rum. Refrigerate until thick like unbeaten egg whites.

Beat egg whites until stiff and fold in. Fold in half the whipped cream. Pour into crust, cover and chill. Garnish with remaining whipped cream and sprinkles of nutmeg.

-Peggy Lowry

Winter Composting

By Jody Taggart

Winter can be a tough time to keep up the composting habit. When the temperatures fall and the northern winds blow walking out to the compost pile can be one of the last chores you may want to tackle. You will have to decide for yourself whether it is worth your effort, but be assured that even though your pile may be in a deep freeze, the decomposition is still occurring.

Although the heat generated by a compost pile is the most important factor which turns the raw materials into usable, completely decomposed compost, good compost can be made hot or cold and during hot and cold weather. Most of the heat generated within the compost pile is made by the microorganisms that “eat” the material, and not surprisingly the process speeds up during the heat of summer and slows during the winter. Most people who carefully manage their compost piles for a balance of ingredients are trying to produce ‘hot compost’, which heats up or “cooks” as the materials decompose. But slow, cool composting works just fine, it just takes longer. During the winter when decomposition slows, the freeze thaw of the winter can still break down the fibers in the plant material in the compost pile. So it is still worth the effort to keep adding kitchen and yard waste to your pile, besides, what are you going to do with all those leaves and kitchen scraps anyway? Throw them in the trash? No way!

Tips for winter composting are the same as for the rest of the year. Keep a large bowl, recycled paper milk carton or a purchased compost pail in the kitchen to gather anything green that can be added to the pile. Since moisture is necessary for the composting process I sometimes add some water to my kitchen scraps as an easy way to get more moisture into the pile without having to get out the garden hose. If you have extra time you can chop (or use the blender) to make everything smaller. Smaller sized scraps provide more surface area for the microorganisms and speed up the decomposition process. Don’t forget these things from your kitchen that you can add to the pile: coffee grounds and filters, paper towels, napkins, fruits & vegetables, paper bags, and wilting flowers. It makes me feel better to compost all those veggies that spoiled in the refrigerator before we could eat them. At least the fancy vegetables that the kids wouldn’t eat will make me compost rather than clogging up the landfill.

Near your outdoor compost pile you may want to keep a pile of leaves handy and add a layer on top of the kitchen scraps. It seems to help retain the moisture of the nitrogen rich ‘greens’ and keep down any tiny insects that may make their homes in the pile. It also adds some carbon-rich ‘browns’ to the compost equation. To help the ingredients decompose rapidly, a balance of “two parts brown to one part green” is optimal, but in truth, keeping a balanced ratio is simply an option. (Dry materials, such as leaves, pine needles and dead plants, are usually considered “browns,” whereas wetter materials, such as grass clippings and kitchen waste, are considered “greens.”) It’s not that balancing browns and greens is wrong; it simply makes home composting more complicated than it needs to be. You can pile up all your organic material without worrying at all about greens and browns, and it will still mature into compost.

Even if you do nothing differently in the winter, your pile will keep on doing its thing and still give you finished compost. So try and take the time to keep adding to the pile all winter. In the Spring you might be surprised at the amount of nearly finished compost you have waiting for you.

Wollemi Pine

By Peggy Lowry

Are you interested in heirloom and/or endangered plants? The attraction of raising them is that they add value and interest to your garden, and your neighbors probably won't be raising them. The Wollemi Pine is the latest find in rare plants. In 1994 a park ranger in Australia came upon a grove of odd looking evergreens in a remote gorge in the Wollemi National Park. Experts determined that the plant was a new genus and a descendant of a fossilized plant that may have provided shade and sustenance for dinosaurs. Since then, fewer than a hundred of these trees have been found in the same location. The name given to them, *Wollemia nobilis*, is in honor of where they were discovered – Wollemi National Park – as well as David Noble who found them. The exact location has not been disclosed for fear that the trees could be destroyed by plant hunters or curious hikers.

To make sure that this new genus survives, scientists decided to have a commercial nursery propagate and sell them to consumers. The National Geographic Society has been selected as the exclusive retailer in the U.S. Those plants offered for sale will be 10-12 inches tall. Suitable for indoor container gardening or as a landscape tree in some areas, it comes with a care manual and the full story of its discovery and history. Part of the proceeds will fund ongoing conservation and research.



The Wollemi Pine belongs to a 200 million year old plant family thought to be extinct for more than two million years. Actually, it is not a member of the pine family at all. In the wild, it grows about 130 feet tall. Instead of needles, it has thin dark leaves that resemble fern fronds, while its brown bark looks a bit like bubbling chocolate. It tends to grow with multiple trunks and has the ability to generate new ones when old ones die. This may be one reason that the plant has survived so long. It can live in temperatures as low as 23° and can therefore grow outside in the southern part of the U.S. At present, experts are testing it in temperatures as low as 10° to see if its outdoor growing range can be expanded.

It is estimated that over 100,000 plants world-wide face extinction because of loss of habitat, predators, and over harvesting. Other than botanic gardens, the home gardener can provide several benefits:

- reduce the incentive of rogue plant hunters to harvest in the wild
- create a revenue stream from royalties that can help in the conservation effort
- reintroduce plants if originals were for some reason destroyed

The National Geographic is offering the Wollemi Pine at \$99.95 plus \$5.00 for express delivery to ensure freshness. It can be ordered from www.nationalgeographic.com. Consumer sales programs such as this offer insurance that rare and endangered plants can be saved other than by botanical gardens. A few nurseries that offer rare and/or endangered plants are:

Old House Gardens
www.oldhousegardens.com

Riveredge Farms
www.americanelm.com

Greenwood Nursery
www.greenwoodnursery.com

Heirloom Seeds
www.heirloomseeds.com

Rare Find Nursery
www.rarefindnursery.com

Meeting Date Reminders

December 2006

| Monday | Tuesday | Wednesday | Thursday | Friday | Saturday | Sunday |
|--------|---------|---|----------|--------|----------|--------|
| | | | | 1 | 2 | 3 |
| 4 | 5 | 6 No Board Meeting | 7 | 8 | 9 | 10 |
| 11 | 12 | 13 3PM MG Appreciation Reception | 14 | 15 | 16 | 17 |
| 18 | 19 | 20 | 21 | 22 | 23 | 24 |
| 25 | 26 | 27 | 28 | 29 | 30 | 31 |

January 2007

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|----|----|---------------------------------------|----|-------------------------|----|----|
| 1 | 2 | 3 No Board Meeting | 4 | 5 CVNLA Short Course | 6 | 7 |
| 8 | 9 | 10 No member meeting | 11 | 12 | 13 | 14 |
| 15 | 16 | 17 | 18 | 19 | 20 | 21 |
| 22 | 23 | 24 New MG Class Training Begins | 25 | 26 | 27 | 28 |
| 29 | 30 | 31 | | | | |