



OFFICERS

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Peggy Lowry, Cynthia Seal

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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

The Garden Gate e-Newsletter

October - November, 2005

Association Meetings

October

Suntrust Green Roof Program

The speaker for our October 12th meeting is April Harris. April was project manager for replacing the roof of the Suntrust mid-Atlantic headquarters with a green roof. This project was supported by the Virginia Department of Conservation and Recreation and the federal Chesapeake Bay Program. The roof was featured in a Times Dispatch article on September 7, 2005. Not sure what a green roof is? Come and find out!

November

Our meeting speaker is not yet confirmed. You will receive an email with the details closer to the November 9 meeting date or you can call the Extension office to find out more information. **Don't forget that the meeting will be held at the Henrico Training Center at the intersection of Parham and Shrader Roads.

Upcoming Extension Programs

Extension BBQ Fundraiser for the Henrico Christmas Mother.

BBQ Fundraiser to benefit
the Henrico Christmas Mother

Friday October 7th

Lunch: 11:30 am - 2 pm

Dinner: 3 pm - 6 pm

Bruster's Old Fashion Ice Cream Shop
9101 Staples Mill Road

Advanced order forms are available at the office and are due by Sept. 27. Or you can order and pick up the day of the event. Volunteers are needed to assist with food handling and clean up - contact Karen Carter.

4-H Annual Apple, Peanut and Honey Sale

Order forms are available at the office and orders received after Monday, October 10 will be filled first come, first serve. Distribution is Tuesday October 25, 11 am - 6 pm and Wednesday, October 26, 11 am - 2 pm in our building at the rear loading dock.

President's Message



I hope that your horticultural endeavors over the past summer were successful and if you had the opportunity to travel, you had an interesting and enjoyable time.

We spent a couple of weeks in the Canadian Rockies and saw some great scenery and interesting gardens. We were in Vancouver, the location of Stanley Park. The park has 1000 acres of which 700 is rain forest. There are huge trees and lush greenery throughout this part of the park which is in its natural state. The other third of the park is given over to Gardens, beaches, and public facilities.

We took a ferry to Victoria and spent time at Butchart Gardens, about 13 miles from Victoria, which is the provincial capital of British Columbia. The garden was started by Jenny Butchart in 1904 as an attempt to beautify an abandoned limestone quarry on their property. Besides this sunken garden the 55 acres include a rose garden, a Japanese garden with waterfalls and a formal Italian garden.

But now it's back to reality and working in our gardens and maybe a MGA garden. Over the past year it has been suggested that the Association develop a demonstration garden. A couple of sites have been suggested, but before we pursue acquiring a site (on county property) we need to determine how much interest there is among the members to design, install and maintain such a garden. If you are interested in making a commitment to this activity, please contact me.

Jack



Double Cheese Pizza Potatoes

1 box (5 ½ oz) au gratin potatoes
1 cup hot water
⅔ cup milk
¼ cup sliced black olives (optional)
¼ tsp pepper
¼ tsp dried basil
¼ tsp dried ground oregano
1 can (4 oz) mushrooms, drained
1 can (16 oz) tomatoes with liquid
1 cup (4 oz) shredded Mozzarella

Mix all ingredients except the cheese.
Bake uncovered in an ungreased baking dish at 400 degrees for 45 minutes.

Sprinkle with cheese and bake until cheese melts – about 5 minutes.

Serves 5 – 6.

-Peggy Lowry

Getting To Know Gina Polich



Gina became a master gardener in 2001 and is our recording secretary. She grew up in southern West Virginia and earned a degree at Virginia Tech in Hotel, Restaurant, Institutional Management from Human Nutrition and Foods. She also picked up credits for teaching at Virginia State and VCU.

In 1984 Gina moved to Richmond where she met her husband, Ed. They have two girls – Julia Grace, 12 and Emma Claire, 11. Both girls attend Byrd Middle School. Gina is a Creative Memories Consultant. She was a cantor for 12 years at her former churches and is now a substitute cantor at church.

In the master gardener program, Gina works on the Smart Lawn Committee. She enjoys perennial gardening, and her favorite flower is the daisy because daisies never tell. Other favorite plants are lilacs because of their fragrance, forsythia because of its vibrance and Japanese snowbell because it is different.

To quote Gina: “I love to create projects outdoors. Last year I dug out our ten foot by six foot pond (because someone told me I couldn’t). Ashland Berry Farm did the plumbing and stone work. The year before that I built a stone walkway; the year before that I built our thirteen foot by fifteen foot patio and the year before that I built our retaining wall. My husband was so glad that I let this summer slide by – project free. He keeps hiding my Idea books, and he cringes when I return from M. G. training with the words, 'Honey', guess what I learned that we can do today!”

Smart Lawns



The Smart Lawn program ended September 1 with 214 enrollments for the year. Thanks to all who measured lawns this year; especially those who stuck with me through August and September. If you have measuring equipment, please return it to the extension office and check off your name on the Equipment Sign Out Sheet. Thanks again for your support. – Stephanie Feaser.

A Little Bit about...Potatoes

By Peggy Lowry

The white potato is a native of the Andes and was unknown in Central and South America until the Spanish arrived. In the 16th century, the Incas were already rotating crops, using irrigation, and had learned to preserve their potatoes by freezing them in glaciers, drying them in the sun, and storing them in cool caves. Every Spanish ship returning from the New World carried plants, seeds and bulbs along with gold and jewels. Spanish monks, trained botanists of the day, saw how the “batata” grew quickly in all kinds of soil and produced abundantly. It had good “keeping” qualities and so could be included in the ships’ stores. The potato was also shipped to the colony in St. Augustine founded in 1565.

Francis Drake plundered the Florida coast and then picked up the survivors of Raleigh’s Roanoke Island Colony. Along with them he carried some white potatoes bartered from the Indians. It is said that they were planted on Raleigh’s estate in Ireland – thus the beginning of the Irish potato in Europe. Raleigh presented some of them to Queen Elizabeth, but they were regarded as a curiosity and ignored for another century. The potato was also carried out of Spain to other European countries, but it was looked on as a foreign herb to be grown and observed only in botanical gardens.

Eventually the potato’s usefulness in Ireland became known, and England ordered the potato to be on ships to the colonies as a “veritable stay for stomachs of slaves, servants and swine.” There is no record of potatoes being grown in colonial gardens in the 1600’s except Bermuda. A fleet of ships carrying colonists to Jamestown was wrecked there in 1609. The potato was planted there, thrived and saved the colonists from starvation. Early court records show that harsh punishment befell anyone stealing potatoes because they became the chief cash crop of Bermuda. Potatoes were sent from there to Virginia in 1621, but tobacco was such a successful cash crop that interest in the potato was put aside for almost another century. Several authorities insist that the first permanent white potato patch in North America was in or near Londonderry, New Hampshire in 1719.



In 1728 England ordered the Scottish Highlanders to plant potatoes to relieve a famine, but the Scottish government replied “good Presbyterians would plant none of the heathenish food recommended by papist neighbors.”

In France a well-known agriculturalist persuaded Louis 16th that the potato would help to feed the hungry peasants. He planned an all potato dinner to which he invited diplomats, nobles and aristocrats. (The guest list included Benjamin Franklin.) Marie Antoinette wore a potato blossom in her hair, and the king wore a blossom in his buttonhole. Every dish served was made from potatoes.

Some days after the dinner, the king had his gardeners plant potatoes in a field that peasants passed on their way to market. When the plants began to blossom, guards were stationed around the field arousing the curiosity of the peasants. When the plants matured, the guards withdrew at night and hungry peasants stole the harvest. Of course they liked the potatoes, found them easy to grow and devised recipes for their new food. Later it was said in a “Botanique” of French plants that the “pomme-de-terre” was the only good thing that ever came out of America.



Other European countries began to see the potato’s potential. They were planted in Germany for food and fodder, and in Russia potatoes became a staple food. During the Napoleonic Wars, the French harbors were blockaded, and sugar from the West Indies could not be delivered. The potato came to the rescue producing a sugar syrup that continued to be popular after the wars had ended. The syrup was a familiar product as late as 1861 and was listed as an ingredient in a cook book by a Mrs. Beeton of New York. The potato also produced a starch much cheaper than the one made from wheat, starch being a necessity in the age of ruffles and ruffs.

In the autumn of 1845 the terrible blight turned the potatoes black in Ireland. Up until then the potato was not much different from its Peruvian ancestors. It was sometime in the 1870’s that Luther Burbank developed new varieties; and after many seasons of hybridizing and selecting, the Burbank russet was born.

Since then the U.S. Department of Agriculture has developed potatoes of improved quality and resistance to diseases. More and better potatoes are being produced to resist extreme cold, heat and dryness. In the Virginia Gardener, an article described a new potato, the Defender. So far it is the only commercial variety in the U.S. to usually survive late blight. This allows growers to reduce amounts of pesticides. The Defender produces high yields with sugar and starch proportions suited for processing into frozen products. It will also be sold fresh in supermarkets.

Perhaps the potato took so long to become a world staple because it belongs to the deadly nightshade family. Its narcotic power is in the flower, leaf and stem. The sweet

potato, native of the tropical New World, belongs to a different family (*Ipomoea batatas*) and is kin to the morning glory. Yam or sweet potato? Although we use the words interchangeably the two are not alike. The sweet potato is smooth-skinned, orange fleshed (pale or deep) and contains beta carotene and vitamins A and C. Yams (*Dioscorea*) have rough, scaly skins and white flesh. Low in sweet potato nutrients, they are high in potassium and zinc. They are more commonly used in African and Latin American cookery. To confuse us even further, some modern dictionaries give us a third or fourth definition of yam, “(South) any of certain large varieties of sweet potato.” Bear in mind that 50 years ago you would not have found “ain’t” or “irregardless” in the dictionary either.

The flavor and cooking qualities of the white potato depend upon the starch content. A firm lower starch potato is best for boiling; while the one with a high starch content is best for baking and making fluffy mashed potatoes. Today there are over a hundred varieties to choose from, and so the batata has now become a world staple food.

At-Home Volunteer Opportunity

I am looking for volunteers to write a short article for the Extension Newsletter in the months to come. The article should be one side of one page, typed, single-spaced, 12-point font on any horticultural topic of your choosing. If you have photos or clip art to add that would be great, but it is not required. Some suggestions are listed below, but if you have a topic that you specialize in or a topic you would like to research and learn more about, that would be great too. Please contact me if you are interested, with the date you would prefer and a topic, so I can schedule you. –Stephanie Feaser

Some possible topics:

- Organic insecticides, herbicides, fungicides and fertilizers
- Growing small fruit in the home garden
- Pantry pests
- Gall insects
- Scale insects
- Plants for fall color

- Plants for year round interest
- Using native plants in the landscape
- Companion planting
- Using ground covers in the landscape
- Moss gardening
- Maintaining garden tools
- Tips for starting a new garden bed
- Firewise gardening

Meeting Date Reminders

Board Meetings

October 5, Cancelled
November 2, 1:00PM

Association Meetings

October 12, 1:00PM
November 9, 1:00PM

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