



The Garden Gate Newsletter

October – November 2009

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Websites

www.co.henrico.va.us/agent

www.henricomga.org

October Association Meeting

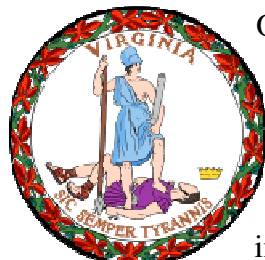
On Wednesday, October 7, we will welcome **Leonora Burnet** (Norie) as our guest speaker. Her credentials are extensive and she will speak on: “Celebrating Mosses: A Shade Gardener’s Odyssey.”

Check out some old issues of almost any and every gardening journal, both locally and nationally, and you will find articles about her garden. There will be a specific list of publications featuring her garden at our meeting for you to research before the garden visit.

Save the date, Wednesday, October 21 for a field trip to visit Norie’s Moss Garden. Please arrange your own carpools and plan to arrive at 1915 Montaigne Drive, Richmond, VA 23235 at 12:45pm for a 1:00 garden tour. Please park on Montaigne Drive. We will walk up the driveway as a group. Please wear comfortable flat shoes so as not to damage the moss. There will be driving directions on the ‘check in table’ at the October 7 meeting. We will visit the garden rain or shine.

November Association Meeting

On Wednesday, November 11, all county office buildings will be closed and so our regular scheduled meeting will be moved to Wednesday, November 18.



Our speaker will be **Anthony J. Griffin**, the Deputy Chief of Maintenance and Operations at the Virginia State Capitol. Tony has been at Capitol Square for almost 20 years. He grew up in Mechanicsville, attended Lee Davis High School and then the University of Tennessee where he received a degree in Ornamental Horticulture and Landscape Design.

President's Message

Wow! We have some very talented and dedicated people among our Henrico Master Gardeners! Who could have not been impressed watching this talent manifested in our volunteers who worked on the Henrico Harvest Fair?

Very observant was the exceptional leadership both from our lead co-chairs as well as the co-chairs of each subcommittee. Their organizational skills and virtue of responsibility kept everything and everyone working together for a common goal. Also observed was a spirit of cooperation and mutual respect that brought harmony and energy to the entire team.



Let's don't overlook the nitty-gritty – a lot of just plain hard work from a group of people who generously offered their time and effort to a cause. Wow! Henrico Master Gardeners are a great group of people!

The President Responds...

Q: Why does it seem like the same people get to volunteer at the Maymont Flower and Garden Show each year? Can there be a more fair way to select who goes?

A: The MG Board of Directors addressed this issue at their September board meeting. Their decision was announced at the September MG Association meeting. The board decided to use a lottery system. MG's who want to be in the drawing need to be a "member of good standing". That means they need to be a current member of our Henrico MG Association and also be up to date with their required volunteer hours needed for recertification (as shown by our yellow volunteer sheets).

At the December reception, a container will be available for qualifying Henrico MG Association members to put their names "in the hat". Winners (and alternates) will be drawn at the December reception. At that time Judy Burton, our Special Events chairperson, will have the schedule sheet ready for sign up for the winners.

If you are unable to attend the December reception, please call the Extension Office and give your name to Caryn Coombs to be put in the basket.

We hope this gives everyone who desires to volunteer at the Maymont Flower and Garden Show an equal opportunity to participate. Please don't hesitate to call me with any questions (740-2514).

-Ann Dutton annforddutton@mindspring.com 740-2514

Save the Date: Wednesday, November 11

We have been invited for a field trip to **Colesville Nursery** in Ashland. Please arrange your own carpooling and meet at the cottage for a 1:00 PM Nursery Tour. Please wear comfortable walking shoes or mucking boots. Alexis, one of the associates will give us a tour of the Nursery, and a talk on Fall Color in the Landscape. (hopefully there will still be some leaves on the trees) Her talk will focus on Specimen Trees for the Landscape and Fall Color in your Shade Garden. Colesville has also agreed to give us a 25% discount on any plant material purchased on that day....so come one, come all!

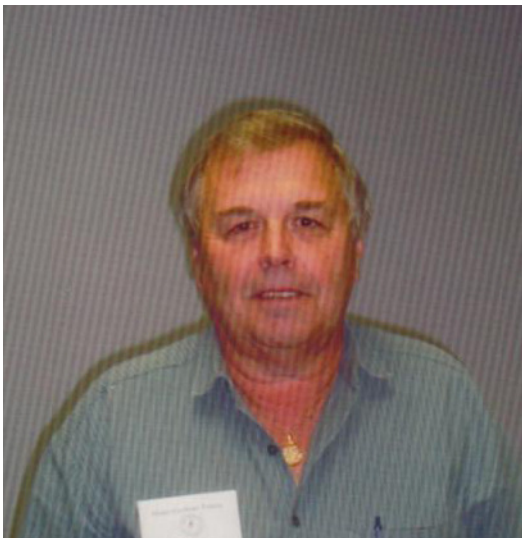
Directions to Colesville Nursery, 14011 Nursery Road, Ashland, VA 23005

From Richmond:

Take I-95 north to the Ashland exit (92B). Go 1/2 mile to Route 1 (the 3rd stoplight) and turn right. Proceed north about 1.2 miles to Jamestown Road and turn right. After crossing over I-95 you will see Colesville Nursery signs and will take a left onto Nursery Road (our driveway).

Freebies

I have lots of young Crape Myrtle plants if anyone would like some. -Joyce Brannon (j.brannon70@verizon.net) or **266-9065**



Ray Clemen

During the weekend of August 27-29, some of us attended a performance of Oklahoma!, a benefit for Mills E. Godwin Theater Program and St. Michael Theatre Group. Featured in the show among others was our own Ray Clemen. There he was – acting, singing and dancing! The show was outstanding.

Kudos to Ray!

A Little Bit About Dahlias

by Peggy Lowry

In 1519 when Cortez marched his army through Indian villages in Mexico, the streets were lined with hedges of four to six feet plants with dark green leaves and small blood red flowers. These plants, called cocoxochitl by the Aztecs, had been grown and hybridized long before the Spanish arrived. Explorers in the new world knew the value of new plants to be sent to their native lands. Thus the cocoxochitl tubers were sent to Spain and planted in monastery gardens, but surrounded by more colorful and exotic flowers, they were ignored.

The French were aware that the Spanish not only found gold and silver but also new and exciting plants in their conquered lands. Also found was a certain wood louse that had been used by the ancients to make a crimson dye – a valued and costly import from the Middle East. The French



minister to Mexico was ordered to steal several hundred of the lice and have them smuggled back to France. The minister knew that the lice lived on live plants, and so he had them packed accordingly with cocoxochitl plants and tubers. He didn't know, however, that those particular lice fed only on a certain cactus, and so they arrived dead. The plants were still alive and were sent to botanical gardens where they thrived and multiplied and became quite popular. Surplus tubers were offered for sale, and some were exported to England where they received a warm welcome.

In the late 1700's a Dutch grower had a friend in Mexico send him a package of cocoxochitl tubers. On arrival, all but one of the tubers had died. The one live tuber was planted and bore a large red bloom with many pointed petals. It was crossed with others and more hybrids resulted – the forerunners of the modern dahlia.

In 1789 the king of Spain held a celebration to confirm his country's discovery and official right to the cocoxochitl. He decreed that henceforth the plant was to be called the "dahlia" in honor of Anders Dahl (1751-1789) a Swedish botanist who had developed several hybrids of the plant. Until that time, the dahlia had been called georgenus or georgina in Germany --- named for the naturalist Johann Georgia of Russia. Although other nations possessed the plant illegally, its popularity increased, and it was planted all over Europe in public places just as the Aztecs had done. By the mid 1800's more dahlia hybridizing was well underway as well as the demand for the plants. Fortunes in the tubers were made and lost just as they were with tulips in the late 1500's. Nurseries on the continent began to ship dahlia tubers to the U.S. Peter Henderson, a Scot who had a seed store in New York City, began to grow his own dahlias for seeds and tubers because the War Between the States had cut off his transatlantic supply. When free land was offered here in the west, Henderson began a small mail order business. Other seed houses began to do the same, and dahlias took the nation by storm. By then, there were over 3,000 varieties to choose from.

Anders Dahl regarded the dahlia as a vegetable rather than a garden flower. The Aztecs had cultivated it for ceremony and food as well as for decoration. They even made pipes from the stems of one variety that had woody stems. Dahlia tubers were used for centuries in Mexico, Central America and some parts of South America as a wholesome and nutritious food. Dahlia tubers contain inulin, a

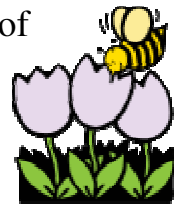
bonded fructose complex carbohydrate. Inulin, also found in cammasias and chicory, yields pure Laevulose after undergoing a special treatment. This is sometimes called diabetic sugar and its sweet and pleasant taste can be used by diabetics with impunity.

Dahlia “bulbs” have several distinct tubers, each a separate lump. Each must have an eye in order to sprout in the next season. Soil should be prepared by digging down at least a foot and amending it with compost. The plants need full sun, steady moisture and regular feeding until the flowers appear. Some dahlias become tall and massive and need support. To grow from seed, plant the seeds in trays about ½ inch deep. Use a transparent cover or plastic for a greenhouse effect. If heated from the bottom, the seeds will germinate in five to seven days. At the end of the growing season, after flowering, they will have formed tubers that can be dug and stored in the fall. The tubers should be dried a few days and stored prior to the first frost. Dahlias range in many sizes and varieties from twelve inch bedders to giants taller than a man. Flowers range from an inch in diameter to plate size.

The American Dahlia Society has placed them in 15 divisions. The society is devoted to the study of dahlias, their classification and the showing of the many colorful varieties.

From The Smithsonian

“Bumblebees search for flower petals that offer traction, University of Cambridge-led scientists have shown. Some petals are smooth and slippery, but others have cone-shaped cells that act like Velcro when bees touch down. The reward for sticking the landing? Bees can guzzle nectar more readily. For the flower’s part, more and longer visits by bees increase the chances of pollination.”



-Peggy Lowry

Thank You

The beautiful flower arrangement on the refreshment table (July meeting) was made by Carolyn Snyder. Thank you, Carolyn – your centerpiece was admired by everyone!

-Peggy Lowry

Harvest Fair Thank You

To: HMGA Harvest Fair Volunteers

It's over—we all breathed a sigh of satisfaction as we left the Armour House Saturday afternoon. When we think back to that long journey we went through, from that first meeting in January to September 19, we have to congratulate ourselves on how we brought all of the multitude of tasks together, solved the problems as they occurred, reacted to the unexpected situations, worked with, communicated and supported each other to pull off our Harvest Fair.

One thing is certain, it could not have been accomplished without the dedication of all the MG's who volunteered time and talent to get the job done. To our committee co-chairs, to all of you who coordinated volunteers, planned the classes and obtained speakers, for the classes and demonstrations, developed marketing and publicity plans, secured vendors, solicited donations, provided for food and drinks, taught the children and set up the grounds and cleaned up after the event, we appreciate your efforts and dedication.



Truly we accomplished the purpose and mission of our Master Gardener Association:

To assist with the VCE plan of work by planning and implementing an educational program on Horticulture that enhances and protects the environment.

To administer the Master Gardener program in Henrico County in accordance with the policies of the VCE.

To foster communication, education, volunteerism and leadership development among our members.

We thank you and are grateful for all you have done as a volunteer.

John Sartin and Jack Kelzer
Harvest Fair Chairs

Note: There is a Harvest Fair follow-up meeting scheduled for Oct. 6 at 10AM at the Extension office demo kitchen for volunteers to discuss feedback and ideas about this year's fair.

Getting to Know Grace Harrison



Grace Harrison has been elected as our Association's new 2nd vice president. She was born in Farmville, Va. In 1944. While she was still a baby, the family moved to Blackstone, Va. on ten acres of land. She is the oldest of five children. Today Grace has two children, eight grandchildren and five great grandchildren.

Her mother's parents were farmers in Charlotte County and were about 90% self sustainable. They grew tobacco, corn, other vegetables, cows, horses, pigs, chickens and wheat – some of which they ground for their own use.

When Grace retired, she decided to learn more about growing flowers. And so she joined the Master Gardener Program and graduated in 2008. She says that besides her church work, being a master gardener is “one of the most rewarding (and learning) experiences she has had the pleasure to be associated with.” Welcome, Grace!

Chocolate Crunchies

- 2 cups Rice Crispies
- 2 cups Cap'n Crunch's Peanut Butter Crunch
- 2 ½ cups mini marshmallows
- 2 cups pecans and/or walnuts, chopped
- ¾ cup toffee bits (opt.)
- 12 oz white chocolate bits
- 12 oz milk chocolate bits



Mix all ingredients except the chocolate. Melt chocolate with a tablespoon or two of oil and mix with dry ingredients until combined. Spread on a lightly greased jelly roll pan (15" x 10" x 1"). Refrigerate until set. If you leave it refrigerated too long, it will be too hard to cut. Substitute semi-sweet or dark chocolate if you wish.

-Peggy Lowry

Meeting Date Reminders

Board Meetings

October 7, 1:00pm

November 4, 1:00pm



Association Meetings

October 14, 1:00pm

November 18, 1:00pm

(Nov.11 is a Holiday so we will meet one week later than usual.)

Please submit your contribution to the newsletter

By **November 20** to Jody Taggart

jody.taggart@verizon.net 360-2680