



The Garden Gate Newsletter

August–September 2011

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Special Events
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Scholarship
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Websites
www.co.henrico.va.us/agent
www.henricomga.org

Upcoming Meeting Speakers

August 10 Association Meeting

Tom Smith, Natural Heritage Director, with the Virginia Department of Conservation and Recreation will discuss conservation work and the Flora of Virginia Project which will aid in identification of 3500 plants native to Virginia. For more information you can visit: www.floraofvirginia.org.



September 14 Association Meeting

George Longest, author of *Genius In The Garden*, *Charles F. Gillette and Landscape Architecture in Virginia* will present an overview of the look of Gillette Gardens.

Armour House Diagnostic Clinic

The new Diagnostic Clinic at Armour House has made the main county website! <http://co.henrico.va.us/>

If you haven't signed up for a block of time yet, please contact Linda Lang. lindalang13@gmail.com

-Lisa Sanderson

President's Message

Hi everyone - I'm on top of the world! I'm typing this message on July 21st while sitting on a rock high in the Colorado Rockies. We're on a hiking adventure, and our group has just stopped for lunch. Someone's phone made a noise & we realized that somehow we were within reach of a cell signal. So I turned on my phone for the first time in several days & here came a bunch of messages. One of them was from Jody, who always gently reminds me that she's pulling together the newsletter. Thanks Jody!



I'm typing into my phone (not very good at this). Good thing I tossed my drugstore reading glasses into my pack. To my left and up the slope, there's a football field-sized "patch" of snow, and I can stick my hand into it from my perch on this rock. In front and below us is a spectacular vista with the most beautiful expanse of wildflowers – columbines & penstemon & much much more. It's like being in a postcard!

One of our guides is a retired horticulture professor who owns a small nursery specializing in dwarf conifers & alpine flowers and groundcovers. What great fun we've had along the trail chatting about our common interests, and comparing the successes & challenges in our respective locales.

I'm not very knowledgeable about alpine plants, but I've been absorbing this experience like a sponge! I wish I could describe the beauty of the "rock gardens" I see cascading down these slopes – tough-as-nails ground covers & delicate little flowers that enjoy their brief season in the sun before once again being covered by dozens of feet of snow for the next eight to nine months.

I'm struck by this confluence of events:

- I'm immersed in the breathtaking beauty and wonder of nature
- I'm sharing knowledge with a kindred soul (I have a little, he has a lot!)
- I'm in a remote location sharing my experience with my MG friends back home

Isn't this exactly what we do as Master Gardeners? We take our love of nature & share our science-based knowledge with others! I'll long remember this experience when I'm back at home pulling crabgrass out of the borders around my flowerbeds...

Gotta go. Guess I'll have to eat my lunch along the hike back. Life is good!

Looking forward to again being with all my Master Gardener friends soon.

All my best,

Barry barryjhayes@comcast.net 314-1998

A Little Bit about Clematis

Because it climbs
upon a lattice,
The hoi polloi
will say Clemátis

But Webster will not
cease to hiss
Until we call it
Clématis.

This rhyme was made up to show the preferred pronunciation of clematis. The word is derived from the Greek word klema meaning vine-like. It is said that it may have formally been called atragene meaning firecracker in Greek. When dry stems of some clematis were thrown into fires, the heat caused them to split and make a noise like firecrackers.



Ancient Romans believed that growing clematis on walls protected them during thunder storms, but northern Europeans believed that the plant attracted lightning. Beggars in France rubbed their faces and arms with crushed clematis leaves to create sores, hoping that people would be generous. In the Victorian language of flowers, clematis was the symbol of artifice, trickery and deceit.

The Book of Shaker Medicinal Herbs lists the Clematis *c. virginiana* (Virgin's Bower) as Traveler's Joy. "leaves: stimulant Nervine. Used in severe headaches, cancerous ulcers and as ointment for itches." Western white clematis was called pepper vine by travelers and early pioneers because they used the seeds and acrid leaves as a pepper substitute. The white clematis (*c. ligusticifolia*) is toxic, but the American Indians used small amounts of it to treat migraines, nervous disorders and skin infections. The entire genus contains compounds and oils that are irritating to the skin and mucous membranes. If ingested in large amounts, these compounds in the seeds and leaves can cause internal bleeding in the digestive tract.

Clematis belongs to family Ranunculaceae and is native mostly to the northern temperate regions worldwide. Many are named for their originators or their particular characteristics. The flowers have no true petals – they are actually brightly colored sepals. Sometimes it takes up to two years for clematis to bloom, so try to buy a two year old plant. They prefer a slightly alkaline soil. Dig a hole 18-21 inches deep and wide and at least two feet away from a wall and three feet away from a tree. Work in moist compost and plant so that two sets of leaf nodes are

underground. This encourages the plant to send up more stems, making a thicker plant. Follow the old clematis rule: head in the sun; feet in the shade. Clematis needs 6 hours of sun a day, and a 4 inch layer of mulch will keep the roots cool. A well fed clematis puts out quite a show of flowers and foliage. In the early spring, give the plant a shovelful of compost and then once or twice more during the growing season. A water soluble fertilizer works also. Richard Nunnally says that clematis should not be fed when in bloom.

The vine climbs by twisting petioles or leaf stems around a support. Anything over $\frac{3}{4}$ of an inch in diameter is too large. Nylon fishing line around a pole will help, or if you have a nice trellis, add some twine or cover it with a grid of trellis netting.

Pruning is important. Clematis will survive and bloom with no pruning, but it will bloom more vigorously with the correct pruning. Don't prune in the fall. If you don't know what type your vine is, watch it for a year. Notice when it blooms. Does it bloom on old wood or new? If it dies to the ground over winter or if the flowers are only on top with dead foliage and bare stems at the base, it is probably group C. To keep it full and lush, cut the entire plant down each spring to within a foot of ground, leaving two to four sets of buds per stem. If your plant doesn't die back in early spring and blooms on old wood, it is group A. After blooming, prune stem tops to keep the plant in bounds. Never remove the main stems. Always cut out damaged wood. Large flowered doubles and re-bloomers are usually group B. Trim weak and dead stems back to a set of new strong buds. Most group B plants grow ten to twelve feet tall and are excellent for covering structures like arbors, fences or pergolas. There are more than 250 clematis species and even more hybrids. Colors range from white to deep red, lavender to deep purple, and there are even a few yellows. Blooms can be up to 5-6 inches across, doubles, and some have bell-like flowers.

Some clematis are subject to wilt. If part of the vine wilts quickly (often when the plant starts to bloom), cut the entire stem to the ground as soon as you notice it. The fungus enters the stem usually just above the soil line. Also a systemic fungicide will help to prevent the wilt spread. Among the cultivars that are resistance to wilt are:

Nelly Moser (pale mauve pink with darker stripe)

Betty Corning (pale blue)

Jackmanii (deep reddish purple)

The President (pale, lavender blue)

Ville De Lyon (rich red)

Not many plants are more spectacular than a clematis in bloom. Plant a sweet autumn clematis for fragrance and spidery seed heads when the season ends.

Getting to know Caroline Lockerby

Caroline became a master gardener in 2009, and she is the newly elected first vice president of the H.M.G.A. Her master gardener activities have included serving on the new master gardener training committee, Smart Lawns and Tree Smarts. Flower gardening is her favorite as well as houseplants. Her favorite flower is the marigold, and her other favorites are Vitex and Weeping Willow.

Caroline grew up in Henrico County and graduated from J.R.Tucker High School. She has a degree in Math from the University of Richmond and a law degree from the University of Virginia. In fact, she practiced law for 12 years before retiring to be a full time Mom.

She has three children. One daughter, a college graduate, lives in New York. Another daughter is a senior in college. Her son is a senior in high school. Caroline says that after 28 years of marriage, her husband has finally become interested in gardening! Her other hobbies are kayaking, walking and traveling.



Henrico Master Gardener Helpline at the Extension Office

As the new Helpline Coordinator for the Extension Office line, I have mighty big shoes to fill following the great job Gwen Hipp did for so long. Many thanks, Gwen, from us all!

To volunteer for the EO Helpline, please contact me at rickgenne@msn.com or 364-2866. I still work, so the best time to reach me is evening. We still have many time slots available and I love to plan ahead, so please continue to volunteer your time!

Please let me know if you are an Intern needing to set up the two required training sessions with a veteran Master Gardener; otherwise, I will not know to schedule you with a trainer.

If you need to re-schedule your time, it is your responsibility to find a replacement. Contact lists of all MG are available from reception at the Extension Office. Please inform me of the calendar changes.

Ruth Wilson (Thank you, Ruth!) will continue to make reminder phone calls each weekend for the coming week. If you do not wish a reminder call, please let me know when scheduling your time.

Jody Taggart provides additional assistance by posting the helpline calendar to our website (www.henricomga.org). The current calendar is also posted in the Helpline Office. Please contact me before making additions as I may have already filled the slot!

The Helpline is a wonderful service we provide free of charge to Henrico residents. Thank you for making it available!

Genne Johnston

Too Many Insects?

-Patty Campbell

Many of us are noticing insect damage in our gardens and wondering what we need to do about it. Should we try to kill the pests causing the damage? The PMG says a key decision in any integrated pest management plan is whether or not the problem is important enough to make controlling it worthwhile. Some problems, according to the PMG “can even be ignored or eliminated by replacing the host plant.” (p. 1-1) Deciding how much insect damage we can live with is as important as any gardening decision we make.

Did you know...

- Insects dominate all terrestrial environments and are our most significant competitors for food and other natural resources.
- Today, more than 1 million different species of insects have been named and described by scientists, and hundreds more are being described every year.
- Insects represent more than half of the total number of animal species on the earth, and many entomologists believe they may account for as much as 80% of the earth's biodiversity.
- Insects are believed to have been on earth for more than 400 million years.
- Scientists estimate there are 10^{18} insects on earth which means insects may outnumber humans by 1 billion-to-1.
- Mosquito-borne diseases like malaria and yellow fever kill more than 1 million people each year.
- Dung beetles help break down manure from large herds of cattle. Ranchers in Australia, Hawaii, and the southern U.S. have imported dung beetles from East Africa to speed up the decomposition of manure on pasturelands.

Whether for good or ill, insects are a significant factor in all our lives. To learn more, you can listen to the lectures and view the course materials of a NC State entomology class at <http://www.cals.ncsu.edu/course/ent425/index.html>. As the late Dr. Thomas Eisner of Cornell University said, “Insects aren't going to inherit the earth. They own it now -- so we might as well make peace with the landlord!”

Fun for a Rainy Day

by Sandra Walton

Some time ago, I discovered an amazing website that seems to have everything you can imagine, and then some, on virtually any gardening topic. The website address is:

<http://www.digital-librarian.com/gardening.html>

To give you an idea of the wide variety of topics available, the index for the site includes:

Awards	Magazines and Journals
Databases	Media
English Gardens	News
Ethnobotany	Nurseries and Catalogs
Events	Organizations, Associations and Societies
Full-texts	Pests and Diseases
Garden Writers & Blogs	Reference
Gardens and Arboretums	Research Centers
General Gardening Sites	Shopping
History	Specialized Sites
Images	Subject Guides
Landscape Designers & Landscape Architects	Trees
Libraries	Vegetables
	Webcasts

Within these subjects, there are thousands of resources, references, photographs and articles available. You will find an incredible array of subject matter from an obscure 1854 guide to gardening & landscaping to current botanical research from leading universities such as Cornell, Harvard and Purdue. You will find information on subjects as widely diverse as heirloom seed exchange, worldwide nurseries and catalogs, All American Selection winners from 1933-2011 and Ecological flora of the British Isles.

This is a wonderful and fun resource for anyone interested in gardening. However, heed my warning: wait for a rainy day or when you have several hours to devote to this website because you won't be able to stop once you get started!

HMGA Public Relations Committee Gets to Work:

Needs Your Help

A Public Relations Committee has recently been formed by the HMGA to help bring greater recognition to the Henrico Master Gardener program's activities in the community, recruit new master gardeners, and increase participation in VCE-MG programs such as the Helpline, SMART Lawns, Tree Smarts and Gardens Growing Families. The members of the committee are: Harriette Davidson, Doug Green, Ruth Goehring, Kitty Johnson, Jill Lockard, Jody Taggart, Sandra Walton, and Patty Campbell (chair).



The committee will be seeking the support of all master gardeners in its efforts. Already, we have asked master gardeners to submit a short write-up that we provided about the Helpline to their neighborhood associations, and we want to say a big “thank you” to all those who were able to do that. In addition, we’re asking that everyone think about their friends and neighbors who might be interested in becoming master gardeners and make sure they know about the program. Very soon we’ll send you a copy of the brochure and application for next year’s class via email so that you can pass them along to others you think might be interested in becoming Henrico Master Gardeners. While we’ll be working to get articles in newspapers and information on the radio and television, we recognize that one of the most influential and important means of communication is still word-of-mouth, and we’ll be relying on all current master gardeners to help.

In early August, we’ll be going online with a Twitter account. As soon as it’s active, we’ll be in touch via email to ask you to check it out, contribute Tweets, and for those who have Twitter accounts of their own, consider passing the HMGA Tweets along to your followers.

The committee welcomes your participation. Henrico Master Gardeners are doing a lot of terrific things in the community, and all of us can help make sure more people know about it. If you have ideas for stories and/or Tweets, let us hear from you. Together, we can spread the word far and wide about the great things Henrico Master Gardeners are doing. Feel free to call Patty Campbell at 288-3641 with your ideas and stories.

From The Reader’s Digest

“Maria Spivak, an entomologist of the University of Minnesota, says that the country’s bees are being given a new lease on life. Bees are hygienic – they have an innate ability to detect other ailing bees, pupae, or larvae, and kick them out of the hive before they can infect the rest of the colony. By breeding bees highly endowed with this trait, Spivak has created a new strain that is more resistant to certain illnesses. Now she travels across the U.S. teaching bee keepers how to make their hives stronger, too, without creating a bee monoculture. ‘We need healthy bees but also lots of genetic diversity;’ she says.”

Peggy Lowry

Peach Butter



1 lb. fresh peaches (about 7 medium)
½ tsp grated orange zest
¼ cup orange juice
¾ cup sugar (scant)
2 tbs honey
Dash of allspice

Peel and slice peaches; simmer in the orange juice for 15 minutes. Buzz in a blender to puree'. Return to saucepan and add remaining ingredients. Bring to a full boil. Reduce heat and simmer gently, uncovered, until thickened (15 – 30 minutes). Stir frequently. Cool and pour into containers.

Makes about 2 cups. Can be frozen.

Peggy Lowry

Cookbook: Call for Recipes

The Henrico Master Gardener Association will publish a cookbook. The goal of the cookbook is threefold: to share delicious recipes; to educate the reader about produce that can be grown in Central Virginia; and to raise funds for the ongoing programs of the Association.

In order to complete the cookbook in time for publication next summer, the committee is asking for recipe submissions from the HMGGA membership. You may submit your recipe between now and November 9th, 2011 via email to Beverly Cochran (beverly987@aol.com); drop off your recipe in the Extension Office or bring it to the Association meetings between now and November 9th.

Please be sure that the recipes you submit are legible and contain your name, telephone number and your email address if you have one so that we can contact you if we have questions regarding the recipe. Only your name will be included in the cookbook. The instructions should be written so that a novice cook can understand and follow them.

You may contact Tatter Hartmann (tatter@hotmail.com) or 804-741-0276 if you have questions

Meeting Date Reminders

Board Meetings

August 3, 1:00pm

September 7, 1:00pm

Association Meetings

August 10, 1:00pm

September 14, 1:00pm

Please submit your contribution to the next newsletter
by **September 20** to Jody Taggart
Jody.Taggart@verizon.net 360-2680

