



The Garden Gate Newsletter

December, 2009 – January, 2010

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Websites

www.co.henrico.va.us/agent

www.henricomga.org

Master Gardener Reception

You and a guest are invited to attend a reception in honor of you and your fellow Master Gardener volunteers on Wednesday, December 9, from 3:00pm to 5:00pm in the afternoon. The reception will be held in the Demonstration Kitchen. Please RSVP to Caryn or Barbara at 501-5160.

Congratulations!

Members of the 2009 class who have completed their volunteer service commitment will be presented their 50-hour certificates at the reception. This event will also be an opportunity to show appreciation for the service volunteered to our office by all Henrico Master Gardeners.

**No January Association Meeting.
Advanced training begins January 27.**

The board meets at 1 pm on January 13.

**February Association Meeting
Advanced training speaker.**

President's Message

At the November MG board meeting, I shared a vision that had been on my heart for quite a while – MG training scholarships.

My vision began when I attended a VA Green Festival. At that event I had an opportunity to talk with Lisa Taranto who started the Tricycle Gardens. On the way home, the idea came to me about MG's partnering with existing horticultural endeavors by providing scholarships for MG training.

My original thoughts were for us as MG's to offer a scholarship for MG training to a long-term homeowner/resident from one of the neighborhoods near a community garden. That person would then become a resident resource person for that garden.

I shared my vision with Lisa not realizing that she had already launched Gardens Growing Families in Henrico County. Needless to say, we became excited about how my vision dovetailed with her garden project! We would now have our own Cooperative Extension community garden to support with a MG training scholarship. Thoughts about the possibilities and impact on Henrico County were quite exciting.

In November I shared my vision with the MG board. The matter was discussed and the board voted to set aside \$1,000. to be designated "The MG Scholarship Fund". We even added a second type of scholarship. We want to also offer scholarships to deserving students who desire to go into horticulture as a career.

There is also a secondary blessing to these scholarships. As state budgets continue to tighten, agencies are turning more to grants for additional resources to implement goals. As Lisa applies for grants, she will be able to state on the application that Henrico MG's are striving to offer Henrico County what we do best – horticultural education. It shows that we desire to be partners and not just recipients.

A scholarship committee comprised of board members has formed to work out the logistics of offering these new MG scholarships beginning in 2010. Stay tuned to further developments of this exciting new educational contribution from Henrico Master Gardeners!

The President Responds...

Q: Are we going to have another Henrico Harvest Fair?

A: The answer is...yes and no! We will definitely be doing more MG projects, but it will not be a Harvest Fair in the fall of the year. Recently, Jack Kelzer graciously offered to moderate a meeting of MG's who volunteered to further evaluate the Harvest Fair and make decisions on where we go from here.

The meeting was a great success with the conference room full of both volunteers and ideas. A number of changes were suggested. First, we all agreed our project needs to be in the spring. Another big issue was matching the project to our current resources so we eliminated vendors, green elephant booth, and a few other things. This new streamlined version will be much more manageable and easier to successfully implement. We also discussed the possibilities of partnering with Hanover Co. MG's as they have mentioned this in relation to their plant sale.

Lisa shared with us Henrico Extension's Plan of Work, their goals and objectives for the next few years. This is an important component because any project we choose to do should align itself with those goals. Basically, our project would fall in their category of "living greener in Henrico County". We even toyed with a few possible names such as "Families Saving Green". We want to offer families horticultural and environmental education that is relevant and could also help them during these tight economic times.

We agreed that it would be almost impossible to do a project successfully in spring 2010. So our new target date is spring 2011. That gives us lots of time to plan and prepare adequately.

Doing a project of this type can be a wonderful adventure! It involves bonding with friends in a common cause. These projects also enhance our MG Association by providing opportunities for leadership, formation of friendships, and great camaraderie as we work together as a team.

-Ann Dutton annforddutton@mindspring.com 740-2514



A Little Bit About Tansy

by Peggy Lowry

Tansy, a perennial herb, is native to Europe and Britain and grows up to five feet with feathery leaves and clusters of flat yellow flower heads with no petals. It was cultivated by the ancient Greeks for a variety of medical purposes. The name, *Tanacetum vulgare*, is probably from the Greek, Anthanasia, meaning immortal or the Latin *Tanazeta*. The gods employed tansy when giving eternal life to humans. It was given to Ganymede, a handsome young Trojan, when he was made cup bearer to the gods, and he was then immortal.



In the 8th century, tansy was grown in the gardens of Charlemagne and as early as 1205 in Benedictine Abby gardens. By then it was used to get rid of intestinal worms, to relieve rheumatism, for digestive problems and fevers. High doses were used to induce abortions. During the 12th century the name was contracted to tanesie in the old French and German herbals. Tansy flowers are long lasting, keep their color in dry arrangements, and the entire plant was used in preserving dead bodies from corruption. Before refrigeration, meat was preserved with tansy leaves to prevent decay, discourage worms, and repel flies. In the early 1500's it was listed as necessary for the garden in Great Britain. Also Christians began to serve tansy cakes during Lent to commemorate the bitter herbs eaten by the Israelites. Tansy was widely used in England and France for medicinal purposes, and even then herbals cautioned users that an overdose could be dangerous.

Gerard recommended tansy sweetmeats as “an especial thing against the gout, if every day for a certain space a reasonable quantitie thereof be eaten fasting.”

In the 16th century Dr. Andrew Boorde, an Oxford graduate, thought that doctors in London were not trained as well as they should have been and charged so much that the average person could not afford them. He put together a simple medical herbal with directions for using plants grown in gardens and along the roadsides. Tansy was listed and highly recommended for various ailments. This herbal was taken to Massachusetts by Governor Winthrop to be used as a medical guide in the colony, and it remained a medical authority for two centuries in many country households.

Tansy was also used as a stewing herb to stimulate digestion as well as to treat headaches, arthritis and insect bites. Gerard wrote, “In spring time the leaves of tansy newly sprung up with eggs, cakes, or tartes, be pleasant in taste and goode for the stomache.” Shredded young tansy leaves were a favorite flavoring for puddings and omelets. Young flowers as well as leaves were used as a substitute for sage in liqueurs, sausages and in cooking fish. Tansy and caraway seeds were traditionally used in biscuits served at funerals.

Tansy was grown in the English colonies along the Atlantic and escaped to fields and roadsides. In the late 1700's it was listed as naturalized plant, and today it is a common weed in the north east. It had long been used as an insect repellent and it is highly toxic to arthropods. In colonial America bunches of tansy were hung indoors to repel insects and to freshen rooms. It was scattered over floors to keep them free of flies and fleas and on window sills and beds for the same purpose. It was planted around doorways to keep our ants, and people put some in their shoes to ward off the ague and fevers.

In Victorian times, tansy was included in face washes to purify the skin and in baths to ease joint pains. A Victorian recipe for beauty said, "If maids will take wild tansy and lay it to soak in buttermilk a space of two nights, then wash their faces therewith, it will make them very fare." Tansy tea was a drink used for ulcers, hysteria, dropsy, constipation, as a sedative, and for "woman's weakness." Poultices were made to treat bruises, sunburn, skin eruptions, sprains and swellings. It was widely used as a remedy for gout. The roots were mixed with honey or sugar and sometimes added to the seeds and dry flowers and steeped. Doses were a teaspoon or two three times a day. Up until recently in some localities tansy infusions were used to treat colds and jaundice.

In 1846 old coffins of some of Cambridge divines and some eminent members of the Harvard faculty were to be moved from "God's Acre" to another burial place. It was not known which grave belonged to which person, but tansy identified Harvard's first president who had been interred in 1668. His coffin had been filled with tansy that still retained its shape and spicy odor after 178 years. It was firmly packed around the skeleton and a circle of it wreathed the skull. The custom of using tansy as a substitute for embalming was carried on well into the 19th century in rural New England. It was packed into coffins and wrapped in funeral sheets as an insect and worm warding type of embalming. In some villages today, mourners bring bunches of it to funerals. By the end of the 19th century the use of tansy at funerals was so prevalent in New England that people began to despise it for its morbid association with death.

Today most medicinal uses of tansy have been discredited, but it is listed in the U. S. Pharmacopoeia as a treatment for fevers and jaundice, and it is still a component of some medicine. When crushed, tansy leaves have a pleasant savory sweet odor, but they contain volatile oils that can cause dermatitis. The plant contains thujone (a compound). The F.D.A. limits its use in alcoholic beverages – Jack Daniel enjoyed drinking his own whisky with sugar and crushed tansy leaves.

Volatile oils and their amounts in Tansy vary from season to season and from one plant to another. Too much thujone can cause hallucinations, spasms, convulsions and even death. You could enjoy chili flavored with tansy for years without side effects and then one day become violently ill or dead. The chemical compounds in common tansy's volatile oils also include cineole with a long list of biological activities, and myrtenole used in insect trapping and as a beverage preservative, flavoring and fragrance. Camphor found in tansy has various uses including moth repellent, preservatives in cosmetics and pharmaceuticals, root canal injections, in lacquers and varnishes, in explosives and as an active ingredient in Vicks VapoRub. In the 1940's distilled tansy oil was mixed with fleabane, pennyroyal and alcohol as a mosquito

repellant. Research shows that tansy extracts do indeed repel mosquitoes—somewhat. Planted along side cucumbers and roses it helps repel beetles and other flying insects. One study found that tansy planted with potatoes reduced the potato bug population sixty to one-hundred percent.

Some insects, especially the tansy beetle, have developed resistance to tansy and live almost exclusively on it. Tansy is one of the plants included in gardens for the blind because of its pleasant scent similar to camphor with hints of rosemary. The flowers are used in yellow dyes and retain their scent and color in dry arrangements. Cows and sheep will eat it, but horses, goats and hogs will not.

Tansy will thrive in most any soil, and roots will creep and overspread the ground if permitted. It prefers full sun to partial shade and appreciates a general fertilizer if the soil is poor. Water is needed only in very dry periods. Both heat and drought tolerant, it will still produce clusters of small golden button like flowers in mid to late summer. Once grown for so many uses, tansy today is little known , almost ignored, and considered a common weed.

Traveling News

Pat Remley and Janie Vincent have returned from a trip to the Galapagos Islands. Pat won the trip in the Jeopardy contest, and she invited her daughter, Susan, and Janie Vincent to join her. Their journey with Alex Trebeck on a national Geographic ship was fantastic! They will tell us all about it at a later date.



Pat Remley



Janie Vincent

Getting To Know Vickie Bell

Vickie became a master gardener in 2008. Since then she has worked in S.M.A.R.T. lawns, the Speaker's Bureau, the M.G. Training Committee, and she is now Recording Secretary in the H.M.G.A.

She loves native species plants. Her favorite tree is the Sweetbay Magnolia; she can smell the blooms' aroma over her entire yard. Her favorite shrub is the sweet pepperbush (*Clethra anifolia*). Hers has large racemes with small pink flowers, and the butterflies and bees are drawn to their aroma. She has counted ten different bees and wasps on the shrub at the same time. Her favorite flowers are the hardy geraniums, and she has several varieties that come in many colors and have a long bloom period.



Her garden has many native plants that she has supplemented with others that provide nectar for insects and cover for birds. She and her husband built a small pond in their back yard to attract other wildlife. Her biggest back yard attraction is a ceramic jar fountain that provides water for birds, deer, raccoons and her cats.

Vickie was born and grew up in Bedford, VA. near the Peaks of Otter. She attended Liberty High School and then Virginia Tech where she majored in biology. Then she worked for Phillip Morris and Altria for 27 years. Her last job there was as Director of Corporate Responsibility. Now she enjoys time to pursue the passions in her life. She met her husband when they were freshmen at college and they were married seven years later.

They have lived in Richmond since 1981 and were married the following year. Their children are their three cats. She and her husband love to play golf. Vickie does genealogy research and plans to be a professional genealogist. She also likes to make beaded jewelry and has sold and donated some of her works.

Being Hokie fans, she and her husband have season tickets to the football games. Vickie also has served on a Virginia Tech women's alumni group, "Women in Leadership and Philanthropy" for four years. They both support the University Honors program and have served on a committee that awards scholarships to students for work overseas after their junior year.

Henrico Christmas Mother

Again this year the Henrico Christmas Mother Program is asking for help in providing a happy Holiday season for many in our area. This organization began during World War II when many items were rationed. Realizing that many people in need could be helped, Mrs. George Nelson, a Henrico school teacher, asked her students in December 1942 to fill Christmas food baskets for local families. So, this program began and it continues sixty-seven years later providing clothes, toys, and food to low-income families, the elderly, and those with disabilities. Last year about 5,000 individuals were helped by the Henrico Christmas Mother Program.



The HMGA will continue our tradition of contributing to this organization. At the December 9th meeting we will have a basket available for anyone who wishes to donate cash or checks for this cause.

If you will not be at the December meeting and wish to contribute, you may leave contributions in the Extension Office. Make checks out to “Henrico Christmas Mother” and make sure they are left to my attention. (Barry Hayes) For more information on the Christmas Mother Program, go to www.henricochristmasmother.org or call them at 804-236-9741.

Cranberry Pecan Muffins

2 cups flour
1 cup sugar
1 ½ tsp baking powder
1 tsp nutmeg
1 tsp cinnamon
½ tsp baking soda
½ tsp ginger
½ tsp salt



2 tsp orange zest
½ cup butter or margarine
¾ cup orange juice
2 eggs beaten
1 Tbs vanilla
1 ½ cups coarsely chopped
cranberries
1 ½ cups chopped pecans

Combine the first 9 ingredients. Cut in the butter until crumbly. Stir in the eggs, orange juice and vanilla until just combined. Fold in the cranberries and nuts. Fill greased or paper-lined muffin cups 2/3 full. Bake at 375° for 18 to 20 minutes. Cool in pans for 10 minutes before removing to a wire rack.

Yield 1½ dozen

Peggy Lowry

Meeting Date Reminders

Board Meetings

December 2, 1:00pm

January 13, 1:00pm

Association Meetings

Reception: December 9, 3-5pm

No January Assn. Meeting

Please submit your contribution to the newsletter

by **January 20** to Jody Taggart

Jody.Taggart@verizon.net 360-2680