



The Garden Gate Newsletter

February – March 2009

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Gardeners
Faye Derkits & Pat Baskins

Plant Clinic
Dave & Joanie Brobst

SMART Lawns
Teddy Martin

Special Events
John Simmonds & Judy Burton

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

Board Meetings:

**Please note these changes to the board meeting
schedule as follows:**

February 11, 12:00pm
(not Feb. 4)

March 4, 12:00pm
(not 1pm)

April 8 12:00pm
(not April 1)

Association meetings:

February 11, 1:00pm

Association Meeting/Advanced Training Topic TBA

March 11, 1:00pm

*Advanced Training: Smart Lawns Training & Weed ID
Karen, Lisa and Teddy, Demo Kitchen*

9am-12 noon: SMART Lawns Advanced Training

1pm-4pm: Team Development & Logistics

Looking forward to April 8

At April's meeting we will have a 'round table' discussion. We will try to personalize and answer any pertinent gardening questions that our members may have about their own gardening. So that I may get knowledgeable moderators to field and answer questions, please send any questions about spring lawns, gardens, perennials, vegetables, etc. to my e-mail:

Erica.Gilliam@comcast.net

-Erica Gilliam

President's Message

During 2008 our Master Gardener Association witnessed the passing of two special volunteers – June Walker and Lou Weissbecker. It was difficult to tell these good friends and fellow volunteers goodbye.

After June's death, our Board of Directors began a new tradition of reading a verbal tribute at the next association meeting following the passing of a volunteer. The Board wanted a specific gesture to honor our volunteers who have gone on before us.



Even though the tributes to June and Lou were understandably different, two basic themes emerged. These themes are commitment and faithful service. Today there is an extremely wide array of very deserving organizations with which a person can work. To commit to one of these groups as a volunteer is an intentional decision to devote one's focus, time and energy to the group's cause and mission. We indeed saw this in both June and Lou in a very demonstrable way. The other element of their volunteerism that was so outstanding was their faithful service. They displayed this in their virtues of dependability and responsibility. They followed through faithfully when they committed to a volunteer assignment.

We who are left behind should soberly be reminded that we are the current generation of Henrico County Master Gardeners who carry the baton. May we carry it with the same virtues that these two special ones so beautifully displayed to us.

-Ann Dutton annforddutton@mindspring.com 740-2514

From *The Smithsonian*

“ Why do butterflies have two sets of wings? Not to stay aloft, it turns out. Scientists from Carnegie Mellon and Cornell found that cabbage white butterflies with their hind wings removed could fly as far and as high as before. But they were slower to turn. This suggests hind wings are the key to aerial agility, a trait that helps butterflies evade hungry birds. ”

-Peggy Lowry

Remembering Lou Weissbecker



Lou Weissbecker was a native New Yorker, but he had lived in Richmond for over 45 years. He became a master gardener in 1993 and at one time was the Association treasurer. He wrote many articles for our newsletter, keeping us up to date on the latest pesticide practices. Also, he was a weekly volunteer on the Helpline. He did a great deal of work for the Department of Public Works involving the West Nile Virus.

Those of us who saw him frequently could expect a big smile. Lou was always available to master gardeners, friends and neighbors to answer questions about chemicals, especially those we should use that are earth friendly. He was always so cheerful and went out of his way to be helpful.

He will be greatly missed.

-Peggy Lowry

Vanilla Wafer Cake

2 sticks butter or margarine
1 ½ cups sugar
6 eggs
1 tsp baking powder

½ cup crushed pineapple with juice
7 oz grated coconut
1 – 1 ½ cups chopped nuts
*12 oz box vanilla wafers, crushed



Cream the butter and sugar. Add eggs, one at a time, beating well after each. If using a mixer, the cake will have a better texture if the remaining is done by hand:

Add crumbs alternately with the pineapple, beginning and ending with the crumbs. Add the baking powder to the last portion of crumbs before adding to the mixture. Stir in the nuts and then the coconut. Blend well.

Bake in a greased and floured (Baker's Joy is good) tube pan 1 ½ hours at 300°. Let rest in the pan on a rack for 15 minutes. Run a knife around the edges and turn out on a rack to cool completely.

*If using a blender or processor to crush the vanilla wafers, be careful not to make the crumbs too fine. For more control, put wafers in a plastic bag and crush with a rolling pin for coarse crumbs. Work in batches.

-Peggy Lowry

This is the cake served at the Reception that so many people liked.

Many thanks to the hospitality committee members for all the special help they provided in the past year, especially at the Reception. Thanks! -Peggy Lowry

Members:

Shelby Earehart – co-chair

Pat Remley

Allen Earehart

Shirley Schulze

Jackie Dean

Janie Vincent

Lettie Muncie

June Walker (deceased)

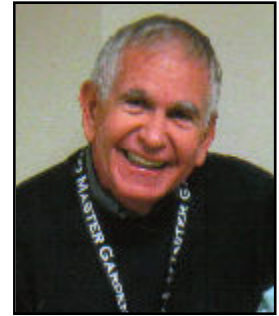
Carol Patterson

Ruth Wilson

Thank-You!

Getting to Know Jim Smith

Jim grew up in Charleston, W.Va. and graduated from Marshall University and George Washington University with degrees in engineering and engineering management. He worked for the federal government for 32 years before retiring in 1990. His last position was Director of the Buildings Systems Division with the U.S. Department of Energy in Washington, D.C. He represented the U.S. on Buildings and Community Systems Working Agreement of the International Energy Agency. Next he was the Director of Energy Programs for the National Home Builders, followed by a consulting contract with the Virginia Department of Mines, Minerals and Energy. He then became the director of the Division of Energy for that department. Jim is also a retired army officer of 30 years, where most of his time was spent with special forces and special operations units.



Jim moved to Richmond in 1991 and became a Master Gardener in 1996. He was a member of the committee that formed the HMGA and served as its first treasurer, and later as president. He has managed the Lawn Knowers Program (now Smart Lawns) and served as the Master Gardener representative to the Extension Leadership Council. Since then he has been involved in a number of committees including working as a co-chair of the Henrico Harvest Festival and now on the New Master Gardener Training Committee. Jim continues to offer the Association his leadership skills, attention to detail, and willingness to help. When you work with him, you benefit from his graciousness and spirit of cooperation.

Perennials and Oriental grasses are Jim's favorites along with evergreen shrubs and trees that border his garden.

Jim and his wife, Judy, have two sons who live in Northern Virginia and four grandchildren. He still loves to garden, volunteer at Lewis Ginter, exercise and travel. We are fortunate to have him in the Master Gardener Program and as a co-worker and friend.

Jim is our Chairman of the New Master Gardener Training Committee.

Meeting Date Reminders

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Please submit your contribution to the newsletter
By March **20** to Jody Taggart
jody.taggart@comcast.net 360-2680

A Little Bit about Lettuce

by Peggy Lowry

Lettuce has probably been cultivated longer and used more widely than any other vegetable. It is the most popular salad plant that was in use before recorded history.

Euell Gibbons said that *L. canadensis*, an edible wild lettuce, is native to North America, but other sources say that edible wild lettuce originated in the Near East. Ancient Egyptians grew it and used it as a sedative. Ancient Greeks called it “tridax”, and it was a festival herb reserved for ritual dishes. Mixed with saffron and olive oil, it was often served at funeral feasts. Later it became part of the celebrations of Adonis and the coming of spring. Pots of lettuce were carried through the streets with music and banners and displayed in gardens and homes as we do Easter flowers.

According to Herodotus, Persian kings ate lettuce at feasts, and ancient Hebrews served it with paschal lamb. When it became more widely cultivated, Greeks and Romans enjoyed it at the end of the meal to calm down the appetite and induce sleep. Later it was consumed at the beginning of the meal to stimulate the appetite, probably with the development of improved varieties that contained less of the narcotic substances. It was most often served as a salad, sometimes pickled in brine, and sometimes served as a cooked vegetable. By the 1st century A.D., there were at least a dozen distinctly different sorts of lettuce being grown. When the Romans left England after 500 years of occupation, lettuce was one of the plants that continued to survive and thrive.



The original reason for cultivating lettuce was for medicinal purposes. The milky juice (a weak sedative) was used for insomnia, coughing, to calm the nerves, and to relieve pain. Lettuce seeds were used also for the same purposes and to this day are still used in the parts of the Mid East. The name of our cultivated lettuce is *Lactuca sativa*. *Lactuca* is from the Old French “laitus,” meaning milky and /or from the Latin root word “lac”, meaning milk; and *sativa* means cultivated. Romaine means Roman, and it is sometimes called *Cos* from the Greek island of Kos where it is said to have been first grown. A Benedictine abby in Switzerland in the ninth century listed among its vegetables celery, leeks, cabbage, parsley and lettuce. These were grown in Charlemagne’s garden as well as every kitchen garden of medieval castles. Lettuce was often served in a salad of violets, rose petals, mint, sage and calendulas with a dressing of oil and vinegar. Lettuce was thought to “lighten the stomach”, was often mixed with poppy and henbane for relaxing, and sometimes served in a broth mixed with chicory.

Later, one Elizabethan herbalist recommended eating lettuce at mealtime to help digestion and before indulging in drink because “it staith the vapours that disturb the head and cooleth the hot stomache which some call heart burn.”

Columbus probably carried lettuce to the New World for its culture was reported in the Bahamas in 1494. It was common in Haiti in the 1500’s and in Mexico and Brazil in the early 1600’s. By the 16th century lettuce began to take the forms we know today, and by the 17th century there were varieties of cut loaf, oak leaf, some headed, light and dark green, red and spotted. In France, cores of full-grown lettuce were often candied to make “gorge d’ange” (angel’s throat) – a popular confection. Also popular at that time was cream of lettuce soup.

In the new world, lettuce was grown in all of the English colonies along the Atlantic, by the Dutch in New Netherland, the Swedes in Delaware, and the French along the St. Laurence. A typical colonial French dinner

consisted of soup, several meats, fish, wild pigeon, fruit and a salad mostly of lettuce. In the English colonies lettuce seeds were in great demand; five types were listed in the gardens as Governor Fauquier in Virginia and the College of William and Mary. By 1789 the Shaber Seed Wagon supplied rural areas with seed packets including lettuce with advertised use as a diuretic, narcotic, sedative, a condiment, and a salad.

During World War II, the British were cut off from their source of lactucarium, but they found a local source in the wild lettuce, *L. virosa*, which was sprouting on bomb sites. It was quickly gathered and grown in gardens for the war effort. The common name of lactucarium is “lettuce opium” although it contains no opiates. It was produced by pharmaceuticals during the 1940’s for pain relief, a mild sedative, and a cough suppressant. In time it fell from favor until the hippie movement promoted it in the mid 1970’s as a legal drug producing euphoria. Wild lettuce is quite bitter, but some herbalists today use this wild lettuce group in soaps and in teas as a mild sleep tonic.

Most of our present commercial lettuce is of the several Imperial strains. These strains have been developed to resist mildew and brown blight; diseases that were seriously wrecking the lettuce industry about twenty years ago. In the home garden we can grow loose leaf lettuces that are highly perishable after harvesting and not suitable for shipping. Lettuce grows well in cool weather and tolerates frost. The four main types to choose from are Bibb, Romaine, Iceberg, and Looseleaf. They mature quickly and are ready for harvest in more months of the year than any other vegetable. Hardiness and resistance to bolting will vary among varieties, and some remain tasty in the heat longer than others. To achieve a longer harvest, plant different varieties with different maturity times, and plant small plots of favorites every two or three weeks. Many people believe that lettuce contains little or no nutrients, but it does contain vitamins A, C, B6 , thiamin, calcium and riboflavin. Today there is a selection of a multitude of shapes, colors and textures, specialty blends and mixtures to choose from to make your salads endlessly appetizing and varied.

**Thank you to everyone who contributed to the 2008
Christmas Mother gift from the MG Association.
We received a “thank-you” for our donation of \$162.00.**

Welcome to the New Master Gardener Trainees!

We are looking forward to having you as part of our MG Association and getting to know you better. Welcome!

HMGA Fundraiser



Botanical Interests is a seed company that offers great vegetable, herb and flower seeds, all untreated with pesticides. These are exceptional seeds that are unconditionally guaranteed and come in beautifully illustrated packets which contain much more information than the usual seed packet. The seeds are available at many retailers (never at discounters like Wal-Mart), but I want to encourage you to order them directly from the Botanical Interests website. The folks at Botanical Interests have offered us the opportunity to earn **15%** of all seed sales made to our members (and any of your friends who use the link). There is no tax on the seeds and the shipping is a flat \$3.95 for any size order; so you many want to combine orders with your friends. There are two ways to place an order:

Go to their website at www.botanicalinterests.com and click on the box in the top right corner that asks if you would like to see a % of your order go to a charitable organization. That will bring up a page that lists Henrico Master Gardeners Association—click on it.

OR

Go to their website through this link: www.botanicalinterests.com/nonprofits.php and then click on Henrico Master Gardeners Association as your non-profit organization.

Once you do this and place your order it will be automatically recorded and 15% will be donated to HMGA. This money will then be donated from the Henrico Master Gardeners Association into the VT Coordinator Endowment Fund.

For those of you who are relatively new to gardening and may have a “fear” of seeds, each order comes with a seed starting guide and the packaging itself is an encyclopedia of information that can help any seed gardener become more successful. I once had that same “fear”, but have had great success with Botanical Interest seeds.

The HMGA started this program last year and received almost \$50.00 from Botanical Interests. This may not sound like a lot, but in these times, every little bit helps. So, if you’re planning a flower or vegetable garden for this summer, think about ordering your seeds from these folks and encourage your friends and neighbors to do the same.

Thanks from your Henrico Master Gardeners Association

-Beverly Cochrane