



The Garden Gate Newsletter

October – November 2010

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Special Events

John Simmonds & Judy Burton

Websites

www.co.henrico.va.us/agent

www.henricomga.org

October 13 Association Meeting

Carolyn Sullivan will speak about Hydrangeas with a focus on types of hydrangeas and planting tips. Carolyn owns Carolyn's Gardens in Mechanicsville. Her nursery specializes in perennials, particularly hydrangeas, hosta, hellebores and peonies. She holds free seminars on each Saturday in September and October on various subjects.

For additional information about Carolyn's Gardens:

www.carolynsgardens.com.

November 10 Association Meeting



John & Carolyn Coe will speak on birds and preparing your garden for winter birds. John is the current president of the Virginia Audubon Council and an active member of Richmond

Audubon Society. Carolyn is a director of the National Audubon Society, an officer in the Richmond Audubon Society and past president of the Virginia Audubon Council. They are both Pocahontas Master Naturalists and John is a Henrico MG.

Lewis Ginter Plant Sale

Thank you to everyone who planned, prepared, taught a class, helped to clean-up, spoke to the kids and adults and showed up to make our time a success at the Lewis Ginter Botanical Garden Plant Sale. Your hard work is appreciated.

HMGA-sponsored Bus Trip to
Monticello, Tufton Farm & Ivy Nursery
Wednesday, October 20th 8:00am – approx 6:45pm

All are welcome! See details inside....

President's Message

Hi everyone, I hope you're doing well!

I always enjoy this time of year. Even though the length of daylight is decreasing, the color of the sunlight is so nice.

As I type this, we're expecting record high temperatures again today. But cooler temps will arrive in a couple of days, along with a decent chance for rain. Thank goodness for the arrival of the State Fair!

It's been a tough year in my garden. Had beautiful flowers & tons of potential fruits in the spring. Nice crops of strawberries & plums & tomatoes over the summer.

But despite my best efforts, the summer's heat and lack of rain killed several of my smaller azaleas and rhodos. Worse, bacterial infection & heat stress killed two of my peach trees. Oh well...

Persimmons will be ripe soon. Going to have a small chestnut crop this year for the very first time. *Very excited about that.*

I'm starting to plant anew - planning for next year & years to come. Perhaps this year hasn't been as tough as I first thought. You know, gardening is such a basic endeavor. Hands in the soil. Helping friends. Sharing. Close to Creation!

There's a lot for which to be thankful. Even in tough years, we have each other. Happy Thanksgiving everybody!
b

Barry Hayes
barryjhayes@comcast.net
314-1998



HMGA-sponsored Bus Trip
to
Monticello, Tufton Farm & Ivy Nursery
Wednesday, October 20th 8:00am – approx 6:45pm

\$15.00 per person for HMGA members (*up-to-date on dues*)

\$25.00 per person for non-HMGA members & guests (*available beginning Oct 1st if seats still available*)

All are welcome! Cost includes:

- Bus transportation (***bus has 44 seats total – don't delay!***)
- Admission to Monticello gardens and house
- Visit to Tufton Farm
- Visit to Ivy Nursery

Lunch may be purchased at the Monticello Visitor Center café or feel free to bring your own.

FIRST, please contact Flo Grigg ASAP to let her know you plan to attend.

804-646-1624 (work) 804-513-6613 (cell) griggft@ci.richmond.va.us

If you signed up at the Sept 8th association meeting, Flo has the sign-up sheet.

NEXT, please submit payment by October 10th to HMG office. Make checks to "HMGA".

If you paid in May for the trip, Doug Green (HMGA treasurer) has your check. (*Please reconfirm with Flo.*)

THIRD, let's have great fun together!

Itinerary

8:00am	Depart	Parking lot at Extension Office, Dixon Powers Drive
9:30am	Arrive	Monticello for guided tour of gardens with Peter Hatch
11:00am		Visitors Center, Gift Shop, Lunch (brown bag or eat in the Café),

Tour of the House is included in ticket price, so individuals can take their ticket and exchange it for one with a time on it and tour the house if they wish

1:30pm	Arrive	Tufton Farm research and propagation of historic plants <i>Tour given by Dennis Whetzel or assistant</i>
3:40pm	Arrive	Ivy Nursery in Charlottesville
5:15pm	Depart	Ivy Nursery
6:45pm	Arrive	Parking lot Dixon Powers Drive

A Little Bit about Lilacs

by Peggy Lowry

Throughout the temperate zone, lilacs are popular in public and private gardens alike. A member of the olive family, lilacs are native to the regions of the southeastern Europe to eastern Asia. Over 2500 years ago lilacs, among other goods, were carried on the caravan trails from China to Persia where they were sold in the bazaars and became a favorite in Persian gardens. The name, lilac, is a corruption of the Arabian word laylak or nylac which was a blue dye of Arabia, the same color as the lilac blossom. The plants escaped gardens and eventually spread throughout the Persian empire which at one time reached west to the Mediterranean and south east to India.



The common lilac, *Syringa vulgaris*, spread throughout the Balkans and became a “wild” shrub. The Turks were the pre-eminent horticulturists during the 15th and 16th centuries, and they supplied Europe with plants and information on growing them. Botanists and avid gardeners took lilac cultivars to Germany, Austria, Italy, Bohemia, France and Flanders. These cultivars spread rapidly, and Henry VIII boasted that his garden had “6 lelak trees.” By the 17th century, lilacs were growing in everyone’s garden in England.

In 1576 the lilac was classified as *Syringa*. This word comes from the Greek word syrinx, meaning pipe; the folk name “pipe tree” is still used in parts of the eastern Mediterranean area. The shepherds hollowed out the stems of wild lilacs to make pipes, and Ovid claimed that the lilac was used to make the pipes of Pan. The first tobacco pipes in Europe were made this way when pipe smoking became popular after tobacco was introduced in the late 1500’s. Lilac wood is extremely hard and dense. It was used in making musical instruments, knife handles and in engraving.

During the Middle Ages the English yeoman had the privilege of planting ornamentals in his front yard to show the importance of his class, and this habit followed English settlers to the New World. It is not known when the first lilacs were planted in the New England colonies. It is said that it was the first shrub (after the rose) to be imported to the New World in the 1600’s. New Englanders planted them in their front yards where they thrived, enduring harsh winters and welcomed spring with their blossoms. George Washington grew lilacs at Mount Vernon and recorded, “Feb. 10, 1786, Buds of lilac much swelled and seem ready to unfold.” Jefferson noted in his journal – “April 2, 1729. Planted lilacs.” John Custis was said to have had “undoubtedly the best collection of lilacs in Virginia.” In the early 1700’s a tradition began in the governor’s palace in Williamsburg of placing a bowl of white lilacs by the portrait of Catherine of Braganza, queen of Charles II of England. As part of her dowry, she had brought him entry to the ports of Canton and Bombay. Thus many plants were shipped to England and later to the plantations of the early south. When the country expanded, plant peddlers followed the pioneers and sold them lilacs among many other plants. Written in one old account book was: “Purchased from Peddler – Mar. 1880 – Double Lilacs, 40¢ each.”

Some lilacs can live for hundreds of years, and today they mark many abandoned farms. The most common color is a light shade of purple, but there are cultivars that have blooms of deep purple, pink, white, pale yellow and dark burgundy. The Persian lilac is a more compact plant than the common lilac and has smaller leaves and flowers. French lilacs were created by Victor Lemoine from the common lilac, and they have double and semi-double blooms in white, purple/pink, pale purple and violet. Canadian lilacs, *S. prestoniae*, were developed by Isabelle Preston in 1920 in Ottawa. They are also late bloomers that extend the bloom time a few more weeks.

Lilacs prefer full sun but will tolerate part shade and prefer neutral to slightly alkaline soil that drains well. They flower on old wood, and unpruned, they flower every year. If pruning is needed, it should be done immediately after flowering before next year's buds are formed. Deadheading will stimulate better flowering the following year. Trim out old branches and suckers from the ground level. It is said that old lilac wood, burning, gives off the scent of the blossoms. Some growers cut back the tallest canes every five or six years to better see the blooms. Low growing varieties need little pruning – remove only dead or misshapen branches. Then there are growers who advise removing 1/3 of the tall branches each year for three years if you want to improve the shape of the plant.

During colonial days, the Atlantic states traded with the West Indies, and people here were using oranges, lemons, and limes while they were still considered a luxury in Europe. Although lilacs perform better in the north than in the south, they spread rapidly in the Caribbean Islands when they were introduced there. Flowering branches were hung over doorways because their fragrance was thought to ward off any evil.

Most lilacs won't bloom in the lower south because winters there are not long and cold enough, but there are a few that will accept the heat and bloom anyway: Lavender Lady, Blue Skies, and White Angel. There is also a fairly new cultivar, Betsy Ross, that has a greater resistance to powdery mildew, a disease problem in lilacs. Betsy Ross has fragrant white blooms, compact growth habit, disease tolerance, and it adapts to warmer climates. Lilac flowering varies between mid spring to early summer depending on the variety. Then there is Boomerang, a purple-pink 4 to 5 foot shrub that reblooms until frost, zones 4-7.

Many places in North America hold yearly Lilac festivals. Among them are: Rochester, N.Y., Mackinac Island, Michigan, Spokane, Washington, and Lombard, Illinois. The Arnold Arboretum in Boston celebrates Lilac Sunday every May and shows off over 422 lilac plants of 194 varieties. Highland Park in Rochester, N.Y. is the scene of an annual two week long lilac festival featuring over 500 varieties and more than 1200 bushes. Lilac is the state bush of New York and the state flower of New Hampshire. E. H. Wilson, the man responsible for the collection at the Arnold Arboretum, said, "Lilacs have truly entered into their kingdom in the gardens of North America."

Fall Fruit Crumble

-Peggy Lowry

2 cups fresh or thawed frozen cranberries
2 ripe pears peeled and cut into ½ inch pieces
2 apples peeled and cut into ½ inch pieces
1 cup sugar, divided
1 ½ tbs. cornstarch
¾ tsp. vanilla
1 cup old fashion oats
½ cup flour
¼ tsp. salt
1 stick unsalted butter, softened



Stir together the fruits, ½ cup sugar, cornstarch, vanilla and spoon into a buttered shallow 2 qt. baking dish. Stir together the oats, flour, salt and ½ cup sugar. Blend in the butter with fingertips until the mixture forms small clumps. Scatter this over the fruit and bake at 425° about 20 minutes until juices are bubbling and topping is golden brown. Cool slightly before serving.

Serves 6

Greening Up My Grass and Repelling Critters

by Sandra Walton

After our heavy winter snows melted, I was shocked to see moles had tunneled throughout my grass, creating their telltale “hills” all over my yard. Previously I have had a few moles, but never as many as this past spring. While researching how to treat my entire yard to repel moles, I came across antidotal evidence that MILORGANITE was an effective deterrent for moles, voles and rabbits (all problems in my garden). Additionally, it has been proven as an effective deterrent for deer!

Not being familiar with Milorganite, I researched the product and found that it had been around since 1926 and has effectively been used as a turf and landscape fertilizer (6-2-0) and contains 4% iron. Recently a Cornell Extension Agent in New York tested Milorganite on ornamentals that deer liked to eat and found it effective as a deer deterrent. His plot included yews, tulips and hosta. He broadcasted 5 lbs per 100 sq. ft. every 2 weeks and reduced deer damage during the summer. (It has not been proven effective as a winter deterrent.) Milorganite has also been proven effective in reducing deer damage to chrysanthemums when applied at the rate of 4 oz. per plant.



I was a bit disgusted to learn that Milorganite is processed sewage sludge that originates in Milwaukee. Sewage sludge is the residue of organic matter generated as a by-product of wastewater treatment. After treatment, the water is removed and the waste is heated and dried and made into small granules. The heating process kills viral and bacterial pathogens.

I decided to try it to deter all the critters I didn't want in my yard and garden and found IT WORKS!! Because it adds natural nitrogen slowly to the lawn, it will not burn and will not leach into groundwater. It does have a bit of a smell to it (which may be what repels the animals), but the smell seemed to disappear after a couple of days. Milorganite needs heat to release the nutrients, so it doesn't work well in very early spring or late fall. I applied it twice between April and June and my grass has never been greener. Best of all, the moles, voles, rabbits and deer have gone to someone else's “all you can eat buffet”.

Obviously my experience is not scientific evidence, but I can attest that on my little piece of earth, Milorganite was an inexpensive way to green up my grass while repelling the critters!

Presbyterian Punch

(from Shelby Earhart; served at the June Meeting)

1 gallon container to contain concentrate

1 46 ounce can pineapple juice

1 3 ounce package strawberry Jello dissolved in about 4 cups boiling water

2 12 ounce cans lemonade concentrate, thawed

2 12 ounce cans orange juice, thawed

6 large (2 liter) bottles gingerale

Ice rings

Combine pineapple juice, lemonade concentrate and orange juice concentrate in the one gallon container. Add enough Jello mixture to fill. Stir well to combine. Chill. Empty juice mixture into large punch bowl and add 1/2 gallon of cold water. Stir. Add the six chilled bottles of gingerale and stir. Add ice ring. Makes approximately 100 cups of punch.

Getting To Know Doug Green

I am a member of the Class of 2009 and, like many master gardeners, I had to wait until retirement to be able to take the training course. A city resident, I am glad to have been adopted by HMGA. I have a degree in Economics from the University of Virginia and an MBA from Virginia Commonwealth University. I had an enjoyable career in technology as a project manager and consultant in banking and insurance and wrapped up with five years as technology director for Richmond Public Schools. My wife, Jane, will confirm that I'm still a geek and love to play with all the new tech gadgets.

In addition to gardening I enjoy woodworking, genealogy and I teach ballroom dancing for both Henrico and Chesterfield Recreation Departments.

I enjoyed the master gardener training classes so much I joined the training committee and helped organize this year's mentor program. I've also worked with Smart Lawns though my personal lawn doesn't look very smart. I'm honored to serve this year as the Association treasurer.

I have a small vegetable garden and enjoy talking to the tomatoes and okra. My latest venture is rooting cuttings of boxwoods that have been in my family for several generations. Each time I go to the garden I realize how much more there is to learn and am beginning to understand the joy Thomas Jefferson was expressing when he wrote, "Though an old man, I am but a young gardener."



Strawberry and Rosemary Scones

Joy Voss brought these to July's meeting

Ingredients:

- 2 cups all-purpose flour, plus more for dusting
- 1/2 cup sugar
- 2 teaspoons baking powder
- 1 tablespoon finely chopped fresh rosemary leaves
- jam
- 1/4 teaspoon fine sea salt
- 6 tablespoons unsalted butter, cut into 1/2-inch pieces
- 1 cup heavy cream
- 1/3 cup strawberry



Directions

Special equipment: 3-inch cookie cutter(s)

Place an oven rack in the middle of the oven. Preheat the oven to 375 degrees F. Line a baking sheet with parchment paper. Set aside.

In the bowl of a food processor*, pulse together the flour, sugar, baking powder, rosemary, salt, and butter until the mixture resembles a coarse meal. Transfer the mixture to a medium bowl. Gradually stir in the cream until the mixture forms a dough. On a lightly floured work surface, roll out the dough into a 1/2-inch thick, 10-inch circle**.

Using a 3-inch cookie cutter, cut out pieces of dough and put on the prepared baking sheet. Gently knead together any leftover pieces of dough and roll out to 1/2-inch thick. Cut out the remaining dough and add to the baking sheet. Using an index finger or a small, round measuring spoon, gently make an indentation in the center of each scone. Spoon a heaped 1/2 teaspoon of jam into each indentation. Bake for 18 to 20 minutes or until the edges are golden brown. Transfer the cooked scones onto a wire rack and cool for 30 minutes.

Serve or store in an airtight plastic container for 2 days. Makes 14 scones.

*Cook's Note: The dough can also be made by hand by stirring together the flour, sugar, baking powder, rosemary, and salt in a large mixing bowl. Add the butter. Using your fingertips or a pastry blender, work the butter into the flour until the mixture resembles a coarse meal. Gradually stir in the cream until the mixture forms a dough.

**Another easy way of cutting out the scones- Roll dough out and press gently into a jelly roll pan 1/2:" thick. Seal with plastic wrap/or other and put in the freezer for 15-20min. to firm it up. Remove and slice into desired shapes and proceed with recipe above for baking, etc.

Behind the Shed

This is a section of the newsletter where members can offer plants, cuttings, seeds and other garden items to other members. You could also find a partner for a trip or maybe someone to help with a special project. Send in your contribution to Jody.Taggart@verizon.net!



Free to good home...

Oenothera Siskiyou – pink.. aka ‘Mexican oenothera’ flowers in May and September

Oenothera ‘lemon drop’ Blooms in May- yellow

Rudbeckia hirta (black eyed susan) blooms in July, Aug, Sept)

Rudbeckia herbstone- Blooms Aug and September

Callicarpa Americana (Beautyberry- purple) Berries in August /Sept/October

And many others....Coreopsis Sheffield pink Garlic chives Seeds for cleome

Bring pots/potting soil...and we will pot them up together

- Erica Gilliam Erica.Gilliam@comcast.net

I'll have some persimmons to share sometime in October. NOT the sour kind. Good when fresh; mild flavor. Great in banana-nut breads & similar.

I have a couple of small apricot tree “volunteers”. 4-5 feet tall. Beautiful white flowers in very early spring (often before forsythia). Will grow anywhere, but will need a warm spot if you hope to have any fruit. Late-winter overnights tend to kill blossoms before they're pollinated. Come over & we can dig one up together.

- Barry Hayes barryjhayes@comcast.net or 804-314-1998 cell

Crepe Myrtle 'volunteers'. They are free, but call me first to make sure that I am at home. I will furnish the tools but you must dig your own since I am not able to do that.

- Joyce Brannon 266-9065

Four 6 feet tall Burgundy Fringeflower, *Loropetalum Borgona*, purchased to create a screen - could be cut back to a foundation plant. Cluster of hot-pink flowers, purplish-green oval leaves. Part sun, (morning sun only). Bloom time, winter to spring, non deciduous. Free to good home, will deliver (within reason).

- Gwen Hipp, 828-0478 or 852-2782

“Please, make me divide my perennials this Fall! I have white “David’ phlox, penstemon, blue stoke’s aster, white roof iris, tall white bearded iris, variegated lacecap hydrangea, light pink astilbe groundcover, wild ferns, giant hosta seeds, cleome seeds, and lots of mostly white Lenten roses. ”

- Betty Fahed, 288-0759 or fahedbetty@aol.com.

Meeting Date Reminders

Board Meetings

October 6, 1:00pm

November 3, 1:00pm

Association Meetings

October 13, 1:00pm

November 10, 1:00pm

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