



The Garden Gate Newsletter

December 2008 – January 2009

OFFICERS

President
Ann Dutton

1st Vice President
Erica Gilliam

2nd Vice President
Suzanne Pericle

Treasurer
Beverly Cochrane

Recording Secretary
Brenda Orton

Corresponding Secretary
Shelby Earehart

COMMITTEES

Master Gardener Training
Holly Hartley

Programs
Erica Gilliam

Continuing Education
Suzanne Pericle

Horticulture Helpline
Gwen Hipp

Finance
John Simmonds

Communications
Jody Taggart

Hospitality
Peggy Lowry & Shelby Earehart

Service and Recognition
Joyce Carole Brannon

Historian
Joyce Carole Brannon

4-H Youth / Junior Master
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

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 10, from 3:00pm to 5:00pm in the afternoon. The reception will be held in the Demonstration Kitchen.

Congratulations!

Members of the 2008 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 Association Meeting in January.

The Board will meet on January 14.

President's Message

Congratulations to our Henrico County Master Gardener volunteers! The Henrico Harvest Fair was a wonderful gardening event and would not have been possible without a lot of hard work from many dedicated volunteers. Special thanks go to Sally Stockslager and her planning team who poured themselves into reaching their goal – successfully. They all need to take a bow!



You may question using the word successful when the turn out was less than what we desired. The fair's success, however, can also be measured by other valuable standards. One of these is that intangible element of bonding that forms when a group works together as a team to achieve a goal. Another measurement of success is the positive interaction of members when they work together. We have heard many positive comments about volunteers meeting other volunteers for the first time or deepening friendships with acquaintances. Both of these elements greatly strengthen our association.

Lastly, we did it! We successfully created, designed, organized and produced a major public gardening event, which had no major glitches and which truly brought great pleasure to all who attended. Having proven that working together as a team we can achieve such a goal, what does the future hold for us now?

-Ann Dutton annforddutton@mindspring.com 740-2514

If you haven't already joined the HMGA, dues are \$12.00. 2008-2009 Year Books for members are in the office at the front desk.

(note the following in your yearbook)

John Simmonds is the Finance Chairman, 747-1397 simmondsmg@msn.com

Faye Derkits and Pat Baskin are co-chairs Jr. Master Gardeners/4-H Youth
360-5732 patfrank@mac.com

Free Crepe Myrtles

Call Joyce Brannon at
266-9065 or e-mail:
j.brannon70@verizon.net

Remembering June Walker



June was Canadian, lived in Massachusetts and moved to Richmond in 1969. She was quite active in the Canadian schools. June found out that one of the neighborhood schools had no library or books for the children to read. She worked very hard establishing a library there and continued working there until the family moved. One daughter, Joan, still lives in Canada and her other daughter, Linda, and sons Jim and John all live in Virginia.

June became a master gardener in 1989; one year after her husband, Ted, had joined. She was one of the group who formed the Henrico Master Gardener Association in 1997 and was a member of the first board of directors as chairman of what was then called the Membership Committee. At a later date she served as corresponding secretary. She was a dedicated master gardener taking part in plant clinics, special projects, 4-H judging and as a long-time member of the Hospitality Committee. She refused to accept emeritus because she wanted to participate as long as she was able. At our last meeting in September, she insisted on making iced tea even though she had no feeling in her hands or feet and couldn't walk too well.

June was always so cheerful and had a great sense of humor. Two years in a row she was awarded a 500 hour certificate. Her remark was, "How nice to be honored twice for the same thing. I feel so special!" At visits to her doctor she would ask on leaving, things like - "Is it o.k. for me to renew my magazine subscriptions?" or "Is it safe to buy some green bananas?" At the hospital two days before she died, the light shone down on her hair that was beginning to grow out. Janie Vincent said, "June, your new hair looks blonde." June's reply was, "Oh, good – I always wanted to be a dumb blonde!"

A Jesuit priest* said in the 16th century:

"Friendship multiplies the good in life and divides the evil. Tis the sole remedy against misfortune – the very ventilation of the soul."

We shall all deeply miss her special friendship.

*Baltazar Gracian

Virginia Gardener Magazine

Virginia Gardener Magazine is looking for writers for their magazine, specifically the back page column and they have asked the Master Gardener units to get this information out to anyone who may be interested. Check out page number 54 of both the October and November/December issues to read the current articles. If you don't subscribe you can check out their website to view some of the articles in the magazine. www.vagardener.com

More information and guidelines are available. You can contact me at beverly987@aol.com and I'll email them to you, or you can email the magazine's editor, Jennifer Estes, at editorial@statebystategardening.com.

Beverly Cochrane

From *National Wildlife*

In the first comprehensive, global census of bees in more than a century, scientists at New York's American Museum of Natural History have compiled information on more than 19,200 species. That's 2000 more than we believed to exist only eight years ago. "Most people know of honeybees and a few bumble bees", says John Ascher, a zoologist at the museum who helped organize and classify the species list. "We have documented that there are actually more species of bees than of birds and mammals put together."

Peggy Lowry

Olive Onion Cheese Bread Appetizer

- 8 oz shredded cheese – cheddar and mozzarella mixed
- 4 lbs soft butter or margarine
- ½ cup mayonnaise
- 6 – 8 scallions thinly sliced
- 8 oz canned mushroom pieces, drained and roughly chopped
- 4 – 4 ½ oz chopped ripe olives
- 1 loaf (1 lb) French or Italian bread – unsliced

Combine all ingredients except the bread. Cut the bread in half lengthwise and place on an ungreased baking sheet. Spread with the cheese mixture.

Bake at 350° 15 – 20 minutes or until the cheese is melted. Cut into desired number of slices.

Make it your own – add chopped ham, pepperoni slices, sausages or chopped green pepper, etc. to suit your taste.

Peggy Lowry

Getting to Know Erica Gilliam

Erica's first major move was in 2001 when she and her husband, Bob, moved from Pound Ridge, New York, to Richmond. From birth until then she had lived in the Hudson River Valley.

In Erica's pre-Richmond life she was a multi-tasking Kindergarten teacher and a corporate wife who simultaneously raised two children, Margot and Rob, sang in the choir, organized and drove car pools, was a swim "MOM," planted 2 acres of pachysandra-hence earning her nickname "Queen Pachysandra," and volunteered in her children's schools.

Since moving to Richmond, Erica dove into her passion of gardening by joining the then active gardening group of the New Virginians. She took the MG course and in 2003 earned the title of Master Gardener Volunteer in Henrico County. She has enjoyed working with the Junior Master Gardening Team. As you know, they volunteer and primarily teach children at the pre-school level and at elementary schools.



Erica and Bob built a home in Goochland County where she designed, planted, and maintains her Colonial Friendship Cutting Garden. She is active in the Virginia Daffodil Society, PEO, JLR Sustainers, River Road Garden Club, and Heartstrings. She is taking courses offered from National Garden Club: The Virginia Landscape Design Council and Flower Show School. In 2008 she earned the title of Certified Landscape Design Consultant.

Erica enjoyed serving on the New Virginia's Board for three years, and was President of The New Virginia's 2005-2006. The New Virginians is a 500+ member club for women recently moved to the Richmond area. Unfortunately, its board meetings were the same time as HMGA.

She is on her church Altar Guild and sings in the choir. She loves to read, weed, make flower arrangements, cook, and enjoys visits with her children and first grandchild, Anne, and even sometimes squeezes in some golf.

She loves most any perennial flower, except those that are orange, but most favorite is the daffodil! She started planting daffodil bulbs in 1998 when they purchased their land, and to date she has planted about six thousand bulbs that bloom from late January until April. She says to come by in early March when most of them are in bloom!

A Little Bit about Witch Hazel

by Peggy Lowry

Winter blooming witch hazels are proof that gardens needn't shut down for the season. Their odd, soft scented fringed flowers defy the cold and snow. These blooms would probably be overlooked in the floral abundance of spring, but in mid-winter they dazzle, standing out against the snow or the dark needles of evergreens. Even during harsh winters the flowers last up to a month.



“Jelena” is a hybrid that flowers in mid-winter after the reddish-orange leaves drop; the burnished copper colored flowers are most welcome in the winter landscape. Another hybrid, “Arnold Promise”, bears abundant long lasting clear yellow flowers in February. Most familiar to us is the common witch hazel (*Hamamelis virginiana*) which sends out fragrant reddish to golden yellow flowers in the fall after the leaves have

dropped. When planted in full sun with good drainage, this small tree takes on a well-rounded vase shape. It also makes a good screen or unpruned hedge. It is a slow grower and blooms here from October to December. The soft scented flowers are more like twisted threads about one inch long arranged like tassels or pom poms on leafless branches, stretching out on milder days and curling up when the temperature falls. *Hamamelis virginiana* was one of the first new world plants to be adopted for ornamental use by European horticulturists. As early as the mid 17th century it was grown in private botanical collections in London and has been a perennial favorite ever since.

The name, witch hazel, is said to come from the Old English word, *wych*, or *wyche*, meaning pliable or bendable and hazel because of the resemblance to hazelnut trees. (*Wych* or *wyche* is also the root word for *wicker*.) Traditionally the branches have been, and in some places, are still used as divining rods to locate underground sources of water. The bark and twigs have also been carried as protection against evil.

When the seeds are mature, the capsule splits and forcefully ejects the glossy black seeds with sufficient forces to fly for distances up to twenty-five feet. For this reason the plant was also

called Snapping Hazel. The seeds were a favorite snack of the American Indians and have the taste similar to pistachios. If left on the ground and not eaten by birds or small mammals, the seeds will take up to two years to germinate.

The Iroquois made tea from dried witch hazel leaves and twigs which are astringent, and contain small amounts of tannic and gallic acids and volatile oil. 15% alcohol is added to the distilled extract to prevent spoilage. The extract's main use today is for soothing bruises and insect bites, as a skin freshener, in after-shaves, and as an active ingredient in hemorrhoid medications.

Witch Hazels range from Nova Scotia, west to Ontario and south to Texas and Florida. The ideal garden setting is in part sun to light shade in organically rich soil. The best flowering occurs in full sun, but this subjects the plant to possible scorching and burning. It is difficult to propagate by cuttings or seed, so it is better to buy from a nursery. Although there is usually no need, pruning should be done in the early spring once the plant is well established. Give it room to expand six to ten feet in height and width. In places where it grows naturally, the soil tends to be on the moist side and contains considerable organic humus. The delicate blossoms are best displayed by silhouetting them against a brick wall or a background of holly or yew. Plant them along a frequently traveled path or outside the kitchen window where you can daily appreciate their charm.

Meeting Date Reminders

Board Meetings

December 3, 1:00pm

January 14, 1:00pm
(This is a change
from the usual day!)

Association Meetings

MG Reception
December 10, 3:00pm

No January Meeting

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

Henrico Christmas Mother Program

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 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-six years later providing clothes, toys, and food to low-income families, the elderly, and those with disabilities. Last year 4,614 individuals were helped by the Henrico Christmas Mother Program.



Karen W. Moore
2008 Henrico
Christmas Mother

The HMGA will continue our tradition of contributing to this organization. At the December 10th meeting we will have a basket available for anyone who wishes to donate cash or checks for this cause. Also, the Extension Office will have a box for any goods you wish to donate such as new books, or toys.

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. If you’d like to contribute books or toys, please see Angela in the Extension Office. For more information on the Christmas Mother Program, go to www.henricochristmasmother.org or call them at 236-9741.

Martha's Ginger Cookies

Recently, I had the opportunity to have dinner at Martha Stewart's house in Bedford, New York. Yes, **THE** Martha Stewart. A friend's husband bought this at a charity auction and my friend invited me along. The house was decorated beautifully for Halloween, Martha was lovely and charming, the other guests were interesting, and the food was just "so-so". How can that be? Martha Stewart—Queen of the Kitchen--just "so-so"? That accurately describes everything except for the Ginger Cookies we had along with an inedible apple dessert. They were the best cookies I have ever eaten. I even smuggled one out and brought it home for my husband and he said the same thing. I got this recipe off the internet and tried it, and although I'm no Martha Stewart, my ginger cookies were pretty awesome. Enjoy!

Beverly Cochrane

Ingredients

- 7 ounces best-quality semisweet chocolate
- 1 1/2 cups plus 1 tablespoon all-purpose flour
- 1 1/4 teaspoons ground ginger
- 1 teaspoon ground cinnamon
- 1/4 teaspoon ground cloves
- 1/4 teaspoon ground nutmeg
- 1 tablespoon cocoa powder
- 8 tablespoons (1 stick) unsalted butter
- 1 tablespoon freshly grated ginger
- 1/2 cup dark-brown sugar, packed
- 1/2 cup unsulfured molasses
- 1 teaspoon baking soda
- 1/4 cup granulated sugar

Directions:

1. Line two baking sheets with parchment. Chop chocolate into 1/4-inch chunks; set aside. In a medium bowl, sift together flour, ground ginger, cinnamon, cloves, nutmeg, and cocoa.
2. In the bowl of an electric mixer, fitted with the paddle attachment, beat butter and grated ginger until whitened, about 4 minutes. Add brown sugar; beat until combined. Add molasses; beat until combined.
3. In a small bowl, dissolve baking soda in 1 1/2 teaspoons boiling water. Beat half of flour mixture into butter mixture. Beat in baking-soda mixture, then remaining half of flour mixture. Mix in chocolate; turn out onto a piece of plastic wrap. Pat dough out to about 1 inch thick; seal with wrap; refrigerate until firm, 2 hours or more.
4. Heat oven to 325 degrees. Roll dough into 1 1/2- inch balls; place 2 inches apart on baking sheets. Refrigerate 20 minutes. Roll in granulated sugar. Bake until the surfaces crack slightly, 10 to 12 minutes. Let cool 5 minutes; transfer to a wire rack to cool completely.

Note: I used Ghirardelli **bittersweet** chocolate and **light** brown sugar and I don't think there was a noticeable difference.