



The Garden Gate e-Newsletter

December – January, 2008

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Gwen Hipp

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Joyce Carole Brannon

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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

Association Meetings

December 12, 3:00PM

Volunteer Appreciation Reception

You and a guest are invited to attend a reception to say thank-you for all the hard work this past year. New MGs who have completed their volunteer hours will also receive their certificates. Please RSVP to Barbara at 501-5160 by Dec. 4.

There will also be an opportunity at the reception to sign up for the February Maymont Flower Show.

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 has existed for sixty-five years and helps thousands of families each year. They achieve their goals due to the work of volunteers and donations of goods and money. We will have a basket available at the December reception 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. Food, toys, and clothing are the items most needed. Angela Wigglesworth is coordinating this effort for the Extension Office, and if you have questions you may contact her.

For more information on the Christmas Mother Program, go to www.henricochristmasmother.org or call them at 236-9741.

No Association Meeting in January

**New Master Gardener Training Begins
Tuesday January 22.
Classes will be held on Tuesdays and Thursdays.**

President's Message



Master Gardening: A Year-round Volunteer Adventure

Being a master gardener is an unique opportunity to not only to educate our local community in sound environmental and horticultural practices but to personally improve our small bit of "earth" in soil quality, air quality, and water quality. In fact, I consider gardening education a full time job. Perhaps that is why my neighbors pick up speed as they walk pass my house, stopping might involve too much information about composting or the right plant for the right place.

I always hope that any MG who participates in the training program will remain involved in educating not only Henrico citizens but any group who will listen. Some of the formal ways that as a group, we undertake this mission are plant clinics, special events, community speakers bureau, and youth education. We are all excited about beginning a new year with so much educational potential. There are many ways to earn

twenty volunteer hours and all 93 of us working together would add up to 2000 hours. However, please try to answer the call for hours as the year progresses. Sometimes there is difficulty staffing plant clinics and special events that occur in the fall and winter months. Remember 20 hours is only the required minimum time to remain in good standing. Volunteering more that 20 hours helps us do more as a team and also supports those who have graciously gone the extra miles to oversee our many outreach activities.

Our "soon to be named" fall festival will require volunteering over and above staffing our regular activities. This October 2008 event will be a wonderful education event for Extension to offer the entire area. Help will be needed before the event, the week of the event and afterwards. I know you will all say YES I CAN.

So I am saying thank you in advance.

Mary E Vetovec mevetrovec@aol.com



Wanted

The Association still needs a publicity chairperson as part of the Communications Committee. Duties include submitting writer information to local publications to keep the community informed of Association events, master gardening training, Smart Lawn Field Day and any upcoming special events. Please contact Mary E. Vetovec or Lisa Sanderson if you are interested.

Getting to Know Gwen Hipp



Gwen became a Master Gardener in 2004. She was born and raised in St. Louis and was the only girl in a family of five. She moved to Richmond in 1971, and graduated from VCU with a degree in Business Management.

She worked for WTVR, Channel 6 for a few years and then worked for Reynolds Metals Company for 12 years in the Risk Management Department. She left Reynolds and moved to Lausanne, Switzerland for 4 years. While there she worked for an International Management Institute and conducted management training seminars on “doing business globally” for General Electric executives. She lived on Lake Geneva in a house that looked out over the lake. What a beautiful sight it was to look out her windows every day and see French Alps on the other side of the lake, and if she got her binoculars out, she could see the little village of Evian

where the bottled water comes from. Switzerland, being centrally located in Europe, afforded her the opportunity to travel a great deal throughout the continent. Living in Europe was an experience of a lifetime.

Upon returning to Richmond, she went to work for VCU. She had been there for 16 years and manages an education research company in the School of Education. Additionally, she volunteers a few hours a week with a group formed by the Geriatric Department at MCV called Elderfriends. She visits and runs errands for an 87 year old elder who is a shut-in.

She has a 39 year old son and a 21 year old daughter. She recently adopted a huge black dog from a rescue organization, and it seems that she is a magnet for stray animals. She has lost count through the years, but fortunately has found happy homes for all.

When time permits, she enjoys playing golf, working in her yard, walking everyday and rehabbing her house.

She is always amazed at the brilliant fall colors. Warm earth tones are her favorite; and as she drives the highways and through local streets, she is in awe of nature’s beauty this time of year.

Though she doesn’t have any, her favorite flowers are gardenias and she enjoys the wonderful scent of a deep velvety red rose.

Gwen is the Master Gardener Helpline coordinator. This was her first year as Helpline coordinator and she enjoyed it so much that she has signed up to do it again next year.

Saint Fiacre

by Peggy Lowry



So many statues of St. Francis appear in gardens all over the U.S. that many people think that he is the patron saint of gardening. The distinction rightly goes to St. Fiacre. Born in Ireland at about the end of the sixth century, and raised in a monastery, he acquired a great love of solitude, gardening and nature. He decided to establish a hermitage for worship, and so he chose a wooded area near the Nore River. People went to him for prayers, food and healing. Longing for more solitude, he traveled to France and arrived at Meaux near the Marne River. The bishop there, St. Faro, gave him a dwelling in his own patrimony called Breuil in the province of Brie.

The miracle that caused Fiacre's sainthood occurred when the bishop granted him as much land as he could entrench in one day. Legend has it that he dragged the point of his crosier across the ground and caused a complete clearing, toppling and uprooting trees and bushes. He made himself a cell with a garden, built an oratory in honor of the Blessed Virgin and made a hospice for travelers. Word of the miracle spread, and people flocked to him for food, healing and spiritual guidance. He entertained all comers, sometimes miraculously restoring to health those who were sick. Women, however were not allowed to enter the enclosure of the hermitage; and this prohibition was extended even to his chapel – a common rule in the Irish foundations. Even Anne of Austria, Queen of France, offered up her prayers outside the door among other pilgrims.

St. Fiacre's fame for miracles became widespread; he cured all manner of diseases by laying on his hands for blindness, fevers and especially a tumor or fistula since called "le fic de S. Fiacre." He lived a life of great mortification in prayer, fast, vigil and manual labor – especially in the garden. Disciples gathered around him and soon formed a monastery. They spent their days gardening – food for the hungry and herbs for healing. The fame of the saint's miracles continued after his death (around 670), and crowds visited his shrine for centuries. Bishops, nobles and royals attributed their healings to the medications of the saint.

His shrine at Breuil is still a resort for pilgrims with bodily ailments. In fact, many churches and oratories throughout France have been dedicated to him, and he is still invoked against all sorts of physical ills. In some places in Europe and Ireland his feast day (Aug 30) is still celebrated with special masses, pilgrimages and floral processions. He is also the patron saint of cab drivers (at least in Paris). In the middle of the 17th century, the first coaches let for hire in Paris, from the hotel de St. – Fiacre were called fiacres in his honor.

In this country, statues of the saint can be seen in some museums and public gardens including the Cypress Gardens in Florida and the Cloisters at the Metropolitan Museum of Art in New York. St. Fiacre has been an inspiration to European gardeners for centuries. Statues usually show him holding a Bible in one hand and a spade in the other.

Virginia Master Gardener Association, Inc.

The Virginia Master Gardener Association is a state-wide association of Virginia Cooperative Extension (VCE) Master Gardeners and VCE employees whose mission is to foster communication, education, and fellowship among Master Gardeners, and to give support and input to the state leaders of our program at Virginia Tech. VMGA, a non-profit organization, is guided by elected individuals who have an interest in the issues concerning the Master Gardener volunteer at the state level. While a Master Gardener does not have to belong to VMGA or a local association to be an active VCE Master Gardener, membership in the state association is an important way to show support for the Association's work and to give direct input to VCE in the issues concerning Master Gardeners in Virginia.



What the Virginia Master Gardener Association does for you:

- ☀ Communication and Networking among Virginia Master Gardeners and VCE staff, including on-going communication and semi-annual meetings with VCE and VT leadership; a newsletter (*The VMGA Report*), a web site (www.vmganet.net) containing news, calendar, links and event information and registration, a membership directory to help you contact Master Gardeners around the state, and bimonthly board meetings where issues concerning the VCE Master Gardener volunteer are discussed. Board meetings are open to any Master Gardener or VCE employee.
- ☀ Quality Education at a reasonable price. VMGA offers advanced training on timely and varied topics relevant to VCE-MGs, at locations throughout the state.
- ☀ Support for your unit with information on association organization, speakers, Master Gardener training, and project development and management.
- ☀ Representation, through the Unit Representative, in decisions concerning Virginia Master Gardeners.
- ☀ VMGA is leading the effort to fund an endowment at Virginia Tech. The purpose of the endowment is to partially fund the position of the state VCE-MG coordinator. Through this action, VMGA is ensuring the future of the Master Gardener program in Virginia.
- ☀ Through the P. Diane Relf Education Endowment Fund, VMGA funds a competitive Master Gardener College scholarship program for VMGA members

Help Wanted: Fall 2008 Festival



We will have a “Green Elephant Sale” at the event so anyone who is willing to donate gently-used gardening books, tools, or other related items is welcome to bring them to the Extension office. There is a box in the helpline office for storage.

Plan Ahead

Training classes for our new Master Gardeners will be held on **Tuesdays** and **Thursdays** beginning **Tuesday**, January 22, 2008 through **Tuesday**, March 25, 2008.

You’re invited to attend any of the classes. A copy of the schedule will be in your recertification packet.

Master Gardener Training
Cynthia Seal & Cheryl Bergh

CVNLA Short Course

The Central Virginia Nursery and Landscape Association Short Course will be held on February 6-8, 2008. The registration materials will become available shortly through the Extension office and at www.cvnla.org. You should receive a brochure by mail.



This class is offered for industry professionals, certified horticulturalists as well as master gardeners and qualifies for advanced training hours. The first day is not necessary for MGs since it is largely a recertification class for pesticide applicators.



Joyce and Peggy

Thank You to everyone who works to put this newsletter together and mail it: Nancy Penick, Barbara Tompkins, Angela Wrigglesworth and especially Joyce Brannon and Peggy Lowry. –Jody Taggart

Genetically modified ornamental plants for the future are in the works. Scientists in the U.S., Australia and Germany, for example, are working to produce clear, functional benefits for commercial growers and consumers – tougher, more reliable plants, not just novel flower colors or shapes. One German—U.S. Alliance aims to switch on existing plant genes that are dormant and see if the transformed plants are in fact more tolerant of drought, frost or cold air. So far, about the only genetically engineered ornamentals on the market are carnations injected with a petunia gene to give them purplish—blue hues not seen in nature. At this time they are only sold as cut flowers.

Gardeners, farmers and scientists have been manipulating plant genes for hundreds of years, and the new U.S.-German alliance is continuing the work with new techniques. Several obstacles make it difficult to genetically enhance or change flowers and shrubs. The cost of technology is high, and the ornamental plant business is only a small part of the agricultural picture. The cost would be hard to spread enough plants or seeds to make the proposition likely to succeed. Also, the alliance must get regulatory approval and persuade growers that new varieties are worth up to 50% more. “There are just better ways we could spend our research dollars,” said a spokesperson of Ball Seed, the largest U.S. company in the business.

Then there are those who oppose genetic engineering for other reasons. One is that some of the new plants could become like kudzu and crowd out naturally occurring varieties. But modifying the genetic make up of plants could make a great difference in the gardening world – a blue rose, petunias that are not killed by frost, poinsettias that tolerate cold air, geraniums that are disease free, and impatiens that can survive a drought. Nova – Flora of Philadelphia is devising new roses by scrambling their genes, a process called mutagenesis. The company has already created a new version of the popular Knock Out Rose, but it is several years from the market. Providing they don’t have detrimental side effects, genetically engineered plants could make a real difference. They could lure back those gardeners who have been turned off from gardening because of one or two bad seasons, and the plants could turn gardening into a more sure-fired pursuit. This presents a major challenge for the gardening industry in the future.

Cranberry Orange Chutney

1 cup fresh orange sections
¼ cup orange juice
4 cups cranberries
2 cups sugar
1 cup chopped, unpeeled apple
½ cup raisins
¼ cup chopped walnuts
1 tbs vinegar
½ tsp. ground ginger



½ tsp. ground cinnamon

Combine all ingredients in a large saucepan and bring to a boil. Reduce heat and simmer until berries burst. Chill until serving time.

Yield: about 5 ½ cups

-Peggy Lowry

Meeting Date Reminders

Board Meetings

No Board Meetings
for December & January

Association Meetings

December 12 Reception 3:00PM
No January Meeting

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