



The Garden Gate e-Newsletter

April - May, 2007

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Special Events
John Simmonds, Judy Burton

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

Association Meetings

April 11, 1:00PM

Ecosystems

Sylvia Wright, freelance lecturer and writer

Eco-scapes, outdoor living at its best!



Whether experienced or a novice, the challenge for the present-day homeowner is to create a landscape and garden from an eco-chic point of view, a “waste not, want not” ecological commitment. A caretaker for the environmental community, Wright teaches that for any style garden, plants should not simply be selected to provide contrast of structure, texture or color, but make an environmental contribution.

For more information about Sylvia see her website:

www.TheWrightScoop.com

May 9, 12:00PM

Lunch & Plant Swap

Pat Greene once again opens her home and gardens for our annual plant swap and luncheon. Don't miss this opportunity to see Pat's wonderful terraced garden and mingle with your fellow master gardeners. Bring a tasty dish to share.

See page 7 for all the details.

President's Message



Happy Spring fellow Master Gardeners,

In the winter months when hands-on gardening activities are less appealing, I enjoy reading about gardening. The magazine *Virginia Gardening*-state-by-state gardening is one that I look forward to each month. It is a state specific magazine with many authors you will recognize as extension agents or master gardeners from other counties. Our own Karen Carter is often a contributor. There is always a garden trip that I can take from my arm chair. Whether or not I actually physically make the trip, the time spent reading and seeing the pictures is enjoyable. The cost per month is about the same as a 6 inch pot of annuals and requires no watering. I would love to hear how you spent your winter months. I hope to see you at meetings, plant clinics and on the helpline. Spring is our busy season for Master Gardening so volunteer, have fun, and call or email me your feed back and ideas.

Mary E Vetrovec
320-4349
mevetrovec@aol.com

Savory Ham Cheesecake

Crust:

3 cups oyster crackers, crushed
1 cup grated Parmesan
1/3 cup melted butter
Combine and set aside 1/4 cup. Press remaining mixture on to the bottom and 2 inches up the sides of a greased 9 inch spring-form pan. Cover and refrigerate for at least 30 minutes.

Filling:

4 pks (8 oz ea.) cream cheese, softened
4 eggs, lightly beaten
2 cups finely chopped cooked ham
2 cups shredded Swiss cheese
1/2 cup snipped chives or finely chopped scallions
1/4 cup minced fresh basil or 3 to 4 tsp dried
1/4 tsp salt and 1/4 tsp pepper

Beat cream cheese until smooth. Add eggs until combined. Stir in the ham, Swiss cheese and remaining ingredients. Pour into the crust and sprinkle with reserved crumb mixture.



Place pan on a baking sheet and bake at 325° for 60-70 minutes. Turn oven off and leave the cheesecake in oven with the door ajar for 30 minutes. Cool on wire rack for 10 minutes. Run a knife around edge of pan to loosen and cool for 1 hour longer. Cover and refrigerate overnight for flavors to blend. Serve at room temperature or it can also be frozen.

-Peggy Lowry

Getting To Know Barbara Tompkins

Barbara was born in Washington, D.C. and lived in North Garden (south of Charlottesville) until 1967. She and her husband then moved to New Jersey where she remained until 1991 – then back to Virginia. In 1994 she moved to Louisa with her present husband of 9 years.

Barbara attended Albemarle High School and Averett Junior College in Danville, Va. In New Jersey she graduated from Stafford Hall School of Business. Then she was employed by Prudential Financial and worked her way up to Secretary to the President of Prudential Asset Sales and Syndications (PASS) in Newark. Since she didn't enjoy living in New Jersey, she relocated to Richmond in 1991 working for Prudential Property and Casualty Insurance Co. (PruPac). She remained with them as an Executive Administrative Assistant until 2005. Liberty Mutual had bought PruPac in 2003 and closed her office in 2005, so Barbara retired.

Tommy, Barbara's son, lives in New Jersey with his wife, Elise and two sons, Jake and Dylan. Barbara's husband, Johannes (John) Paffen was born in the Netherlands. He came to this country in 1959 and became a citizen five years later. Barbara's family includes an older brother in Ohio, a younger sister in Louisa, and a youngest sister in Ruckersville, whose older daughter is a graduate of Va. Tech and is a 4-H extension agent in Bath and Highland Counties.

At present Barbara and John have two horses and one dog. Barbara loves to read, do a little gardening and take walks with John and their dog, Peanut.

To quote Barbara, "I found that after all my projects were finished around the home, I was extremely bored, so I applied for my present job at Henrico Cooperative Extension -- and I love it! I am so fortunate to have found the right job with such amazing people."

Barbara --- we're so glad you're here!

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!

The International Master Gardener Conference will be May 2-5 in Little Rock, Arkansas. The website is <http://mg2007.uaex.edu/>. There are lots of classes and garden tours to choose from and registration is still open. I have already registered to go and would be happy to share a room with anyone from the HMGA who wants to go. – Beverly Cochrane Beverly987@aol.com



A Little Bit about...Candytuft

By Peggy Lowry

Blanketed with bright white blooms over an early to mid spring season, Candytuft is the perfect complement to spring flowering bulbs. The narrow foliage is showy even after the blooms fade, spreading to create a mounding plant that looks lovely in containers as well as the garden. We take it for granted because it thrives with little care and repeats its performance year after year. It has also been called Clown's Mustard, Poor Man's Mustard, and the folk names Candy Edge and Candy Turf. The name Candytuft comes from Candia, the ancient name of Crete where it still grows wild in abundance. A member of the mustard family, it was used by the ancients as a seasoning herb and the seeds as "mustard meat." Although the Romans used it, it took many years to reach northern Europe. Until the end of the 16th century it was only a little known wildflower on the shores of the Mediterranean.



In England, John Gerard, a horticulturist, received Candytuft seeds from a friend who traveled throughout the Mediterranean countries. The friend called it "Candie Mustard that grows wild along the highwaie sides in Crete, Spain and Italie." Gerald recorded in his journals that it was very good for flavoring home remedies as well as being a "comely" flower in the garden.

Since Candytuft was used as a cheap substitute for mustard and had the ability to grow in a variety of soils, it became popular with the common folk

and scorned by the owners of large estates and gardens. In the late 1600's, *Iberis semperflorins*, a perennial, was sent from the Near East and planted in the Oxford Botanic Gardens and proved to be an excellent edging plant. In 1739 an evergreen, *Iberis sempervirens*, was sent from Persia to Chelsea Gardens in London. Botanists recommended it for gardens and borders and it began to reclaim its popularity. There is also a variety of annual candytufts – some sweet-scented – with a wide range of colors developed in England and America.

Candytuft was brought to this country in the late 1600's. The first record of its planting here was in Williamsburg in the gardens of the Governor's Palace where it was included in borders and edgings. In the days of the great plantations, Washington, Jefferson, Custis, Randolph and Byrd grew *Iberis sempervirens* and made it as popular as it is today. In 1806 a seed house in Philadelphia was the first to advertise candytuft seeds, but colonial women surely traded and sold the seeds long before that.

Traditionally, candytuft was used in the treatment of arthritis, gout, enlarged heart and asthma. The seeds, stems, roots and leaves have all been used medicinally. Today in Germany it is widely used for treatment of dyspepsia. The term indicates chronic digestive distress that occurs in the absence of any identifiable cause. In several studies, herbal therapy using candytuft as the main ingredient showed that participants found some relief. Also in a number of studies, candytuft herbal mixtures were found to be more effective than placebos. Besides dyspepsia, candytuft combinations have shown potential for decreasing the side effects of medications prescribed for digestive tract disorders.

Even if it had no use as an herb, the dependable candytuft is beloved for its flowering and dependability.

Lisa Sanderson

Here is a little information on our new Horticulture Extension Agent

I'm really looking forward to working with the Henrico Master Gardeners. My dad was a master gardener in Hanover while I was in the horticulture program at NC State. I have a lot of respect for the amount of commitment and energy that Master Gardeners devote to educating the community.

I started in Math at NC State and, after some self evaluation, decided to move to something I really liked. I realized it was working in the garden with my dad. So I changed majors and graduated in Landscape Horticulture from NC State in 1994. I've had some great opportunities: working for the J. C. Raulston Arboretum (NCSU Arboretum at the time), Hungry Plants Carnivorous Plant Nursery, Homewood Nursery and for a landscape architect. After I graduated I had an internship to travel the gardens of England and spent two weeks there with a couple of friends. I worked for Pender Nursery in Garner, NC, and a landscape company in Durham managing the office and nursery. I enjoyed being a high school horticulture teacher for eight years – three in Rocky Mount, NC and five at Lee-Davis High School in Mechanicsville. I received my Masters in Agriculture Education from NC State in 2003.

I've been married 12 years to Ted Sanderson who I met at NC State. He also has a degree in horticulture, and we have a 10-year-old daughter, Gabrielle, who loves horses, reading and girl scouts. I think the jury is still out on her love for gardening.

My garden philosophy is that if a plant can survive in my garden in sandy soil, a lack of regular water and deer, it's meant to be. My husband and I are plant collectors but we always have a variety of Japanese maples in our gardens. I would have a very difficult time picking a favorite flower or shrub. I have a predisposition toward perennials, but need to rework my perennial border to include some more seasonal structure and color. I think that's a great thing about a garden – they evolve from year to year, and it's never boring.

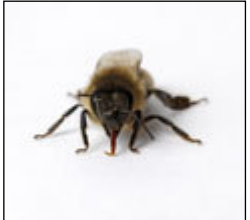
-Lisa

What Are Bugs Worth?

Most of the words in this article, including the title, are from an article in National Wildlife by Cynthia Berger.

Most of us react to insects with annoyance or fear – and the instinct to swat --, but according to two entomologists, a deep appreciation would be a more appropriate response. Cornell University’s John Losey and Mace Vaughan drew up a big spreadsheet and totted up the cash value of some ecological services that native insects provide here in the U.S.

By ecological services, these scientists mean work done for free by the insects we feel compelled to swat. Native bees do 3 billion dollars worth of pollination that would otherwise be assigned to hired honeybees. Farmers avoid four and a half billion dollars in crop losses when native insects chow down on alien invaders. Then there is the lowly dung beetle—unappetizing in name, but without it, cow patties would just pile up on the range attracting flies and parasites and preventing new plants from sprouting. Instead, thanks to the dozen dung beetle species found in the U.S., bovine waste is swiftly recycled back into the ground and converted to fertilizer that plants can use and farmers don’t have to pay for. Chalk up another 380 million dollars annual service for American ranchers.



All in all, Losey and Vaughan added up a cool 57 billion dollars in useful services that native U.S. insects perform each year. The scientists didn’t even measure every single beneficial thing that native insects do for us—just a few services that were easy to measure because the data were already available.

The main service insects provide for us is that they help keep America’s population of native wildlife alive and well. So many kinds of wildlife from trout to game birds rely on insects for food. If the insects needed for food were to suddenly disappear, there is just no way we could go out and feed those animals some other food. The wildlife species that rely on insects represent a 50 billion dollar slice of America’s outdoor recreation industry (including bird-watching and other kinds of wildlife watching, along with fishing and hunting.)

So insects are important to us, just by the nature of the ordinary things they do as they go about their daily lives. But scientists are also studying insects’ special talents with the idea of applying these skills in new ways to make our lives better or safer.

A team of researchers with the University of Georgia and the U.S. Dept. of Agriculture has developed a cup-sized device called the “Wasp Hound.” It’s big enough to hold a few of a kind of tiny parasitic wasp. This species doesn’t sting and can be trained (using a food reward) to detect any one of a number of chemical odors, including a chemical used in explosives. When the wasps encounter the target odor, they trip a signal inside the cup so that a light flashes. They’re cheaper than trained dogs (although they don’t live as long), and they’re more sensitive than so-called “electronic noses.” They can be trained to detect the smell of toxic fungi that infect certain crops and also the chemical odors associated with certain human cancers.

Scientists around the world have been trying for decades to figure out how insects fly. Based on what we know about how flight works, it seems almost impossible that insects get airborne. But if we can figure it out, we might develop a tiny unmanned aircraft. Applications range from wartime surveillance to checking for victims in burning buildings to search-and-rescue after disasters such as hurricanes and floods.

One more field where scientists are turning to insects for inspiration is therapeutic drugs. There are four million species of insects out there, and they use all kinds of biologically active substances. Mosquitoes make proteins that keep blood from clotting. Fireflies make proteins that glow in the dark. Termite soldiers squirt a compound with antimicrobial properties.

So – someday, after a tiny wasp makes your diagnosis, some other insect may cure your ailment, and they won’t even expect you to say thank you.

-Peggy Lowry

Attention MG Mentors

Have you had a chat with your MG trainee recently? Now might be a good time to contact him or her since they have completed the classroom portion of their training and they are planning ways to meet the fifty hour volunteer requirement. Sharing your experiences and expertise at this time could be most helpful.

Thank you for your willingness to be a Mentor this year. Members of the Class of 2007 have expressed their appreciation for the Mentoring program.

Cynthia Seal, Training Committee Chair

From Martha Stewart's *Living*:

Earthworms were wiped out in North America during the last Ice Age, but they made a comeback in the 1600s and 1700s as stowaways in the soil of plants brought over by the European settlers. When the pioneers moved westward so did the earthworms, their cocoons attached to wagons as well as horses' hooves. – submitted by Beverly Cochrane

Annual Plant Exchange and Potluck Luncheon

Wednesday, May 9, 2007

Noon until ?

Pat Greene's Home

9410 Sir Barry Court (off Pemberton Road three blocks north of Quioccasin)

Please bring:

1. **Luncheon dish or dessert** that does **not** require re-heating.
2. A **serving utensil** for your dish.
3. **Five plants to exchange**. Label them with as much information as possible. You may bring purchased plants (such as annuals).
4. **\$1 contribution** for drinks and paper products.
5. Your Master Gardener **nametag** to wear and meet new friends!
6. A **folding chair** if you want to be assured of comfortable seating.

Notes:

1. **Please RSVP with Sandra by calling 501-5160.**
2. **Rain date** will be Wednesday, May 16. Rain date is only in effect if it rains heavily on May 9.
3. Plant exchange will take place after lunch.

Meeting Date Reminders

Board Meetings

April 4, 1:00 PM

May 2, 1:00 PM

Association Meetings

April 11, 1:00PM

Plant Swap, May 9, 12:00PM

Please submit your contribution to the newsletter

By **May 20** to Jody Taggart

jody.taggart@comcast.net 360-2680