



The Garden Gate Newsletter

October - November, 2008

OFFICERS

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Ann Dutton

1st Vice President
Erica Gilliam

2nd Vice President
Suzanne Pericle

Treasurer
Beverly Cochrane

Recording Secretary
Brenda Orton

Corresponding Secretary
Shelby Earehart

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Holly Hartley

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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

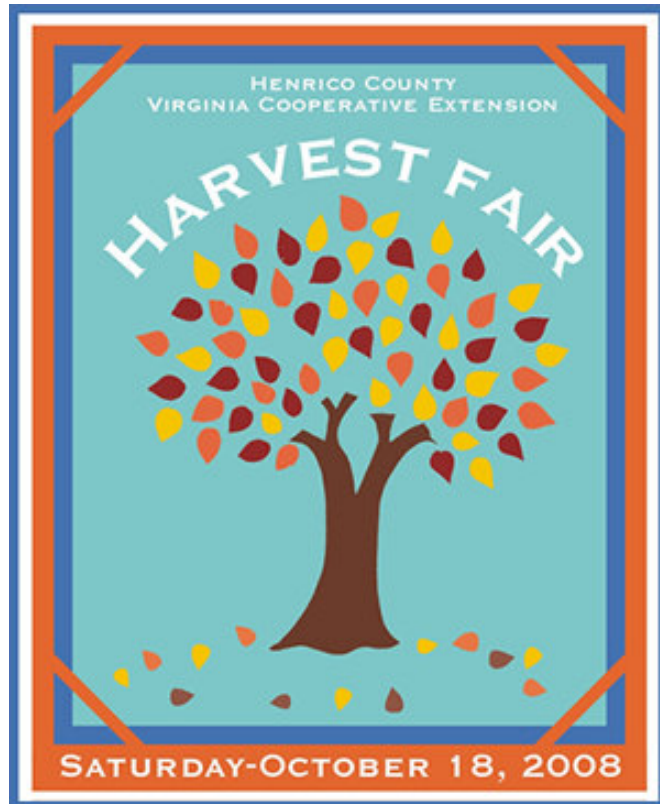
4-H Youth / Junior Master
Gardeners
Faye Derkits & Pat Baskins

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



9 a.m. - 4 p.m.

Armour House and Gardens at Meadowview

www.co.henrico.va.us/rec/Armour_House.html

Come early and stay all day! We need all the help you can give for our FIRST Harvest Fair. Contact Lisa Sanderson or Sally Stockslager if you want to help. Spread the word!

Association Meetings

October 8, 1:00pm The Great Big Greenhouse

Bonnie Pega, bulb specialist, will speak on container plantings and bulb companions. Meet at the entrance.

November 12, 1:00pm Demonstration Kitchen

Anne Little will speak on Virginia bluebirds. Anne is a member of the Virginia Bluebird Society.

www.virginiabluebirds.org/

President's Message

Those of you who have attended the last two MG Association meetings know that we are encouraging all members to participate in a survey. One of the questions asks for your suggestions for making our association even better.

A good suggestion in response to that appeal has already been given. It suggests that there be more opportunity for non-board association members to be in on the decision-making process of our organization.

What a great time to remind everyone that our MG Board meetings are open to all association members! They are not closed meetings. Any association member can join in the discussion of a topic and give his/her input. Board members welcome you to come be a part of board meetings and be involved in decisions that are made. You are also welcome to bring your concerns, questions and even disagreements about any policies and/or decisions.

Our monthly association meetings include a speaker and do not allow the time necessary for proper dialogue required in decision-making. There is a separate meeting the first Wednesday of each month at one o'clock that allows sufficient time for association business. This separate meeting does not imply that the MG Board exclusively makes decisions. Rather, it is a time issue.

Therefore, association members – come and join us! We welcome you and we welcome your interest in helping our association be stronger by involving a maximum number of members.



-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
j.brannon70@verizon.net

A Little Bit about Sassafras

Sassafras albidum is probably the most recognizable of all North American trees. Each tree can have either unlobed (common in young plants), two-lobed (resembling mittens), or three lobed leaves of six inches or more in length. There are different opinions on the root of the genus name, perhaps arising from the Latin, *saxum fragrans*, "stone breaker," referring to its early use in the treatment of kidney stones among other ailments. A botanist in the 16th century said that the name was a corruption of the Spanish word for saxifrage.

In the early 17th century, all the land from Newfoundland to Spanish Florida was called Virginia. One report from 'Virginia' included "Sassafras, called by the Indians Winauk, is a kind of wood of most pleasant and sweete smell, and of most rare virtues in phisick for the cure of many diseases." Sassafras was one of the first plant products exported from the New World. The Spanish sent it to Europe where it was cultivated for medicine and flavorings. The American Indians used it in infusions to kill worms, to treat syphilis, colds, diarrhea and to reduce fevers. The young leaves were also boiled to make eyewash. The Cherokee, Choctaw and Chippawa also steeped the barks for tea and used the leaves and bark to flavor foods.

Sassafras can be found from Southern Ontario south to Texas and central Florida and west to the Plains. We are all familiar with Sassafras tea made from boiling the roots and/or the bark to a deep red color. The bark can be peeled, dried and used later. This tea was used as a spring tonic and was at one time thought to help one lose weight:

"I got so thin on Sass'fras tea
I could hide behind a straw,
Indeed I was a different man
When I left Arkansas."



Oil of sassafras has been used in food flavoring and was the basis of root beer. The oil contains safrole which has caused abortions, is a possible carcinogen, and is now forbidden in the U.S. and Canada for use in foods and beverages. However, one wonders about the many generations of sassafras tea and root beer drinkers who died at an advanced age from something other than cancer.

Filé powder, made from the dried, ground, sassafras leaves is still used as a condiment and soup thickener in gumbo and other Cajun dishes. Filé powder does not contain enough safrole to be dangerous and is still available commercially. Also, you can make your own:

Gather leaves in the spring. Do not wash unless they are dusty. Strip away coarse veins and stems and spread them in a single layer on clean window screening, cheesecloth or nylon net. Place in a dry, warm, dark place with good circulation. When dry and crisp, crumble to a powder in a food processor. Pack in small jars with tight covers. When using, do not boil food after adding filé.

Sassafras is, however, still used for other purposes. The orange wood has been used for cooperage, buckets, posts, and furniture and the bark, twigs and leaves have been used to make fabric dyes. In the 1920's and 30's the wood was used extensively for building boats. Sassafras chips repel moths, and a farmer in Pennsylvania said that mites never bothered his chickens because he made their roosts out of sassafras wood. All parts of the tree are fragrant, and the bark, leaves and twigs are important wild life food in some parts of the country.

Little more than a shrub in the north, it grows larger in the Great Smoky Mountains and on moist, well drained sandy loams in open woodlands. It is important to wild life as a shelter plant forming thickets in old fields by

the parent tree sending out runners. It is one of the first plants to pioneer land following a fire. If given space to colonize, it is an excellent plant for screening or for naturalized plantings. A member of the laurel family, it usually grows twenty to thirty feet. When quite young, it begins flowering before leafing out in early spring, and it is popular with honeybees. Small, greenish yellow blooms give way to fleshy dark blue drupes quickly eaten by birds. It is also a host plant of the Spicebush Swallowtail Butterfly.

Highly susceptible to fire, the sassafras is damaged mainly by foliage diseases. Insects also do their part to damage the tree, from leaf feeders to borers and sucking insects. The gypsy moth also attacks it, and it is probably the favorite forest tree of the Japanese beetle.

Other names for the sassafras include chewing stick, tea tree, cinnamon wood, spice tree, sweet bay, Ague Tree, and in the Orient – camphorwood. It is hard to transplant having a deep taproot, but is drought tolerant and a fast grower – 15 ft. in 4 years under the right conditions. It naturalizes readily, prefers mostly sun and assumes a neat symmetrical form as a specimen tree in the open.

Apart from being part and parcel of the natural heritage of North America, *Sassafras albidum* offers several reasons to use it in the garden. It appeals to birds and butterflies, displays outstanding yellow orange autumn color and has an elegant winter framework.

- Peggy Lowry



The Henrico Master Gardeners Association received a total of \$76.40 from the Ukrop's Golden Gift program this year. Thanks to all of you who helped us by donating your certificates. Please keep us in mind for next year's program. This is a great way to raise funds to help your association.

Peach Cobbler

3 cups sliced fresh peaches (about 10 medium)	½ tsp salt
1 tbs lemon juice	1 beaten egg
1 cup flour	6 tbs butter or margarine, melted
1 cup sugar	

Place peaches on bottom of 10 x 6 inch baking dish. Sprinkle with lemon juice. Mix dry ingredients. Add egg, tossing with fork till crumbly. Sprinkle over peaches. Drizzle with melted butter. Bake at 375° for 35 to 40 minutes. Serve with vanilla ice cream.

-Peggy Lowry

Getting to Know Brenda Orton

Welcome, Brenda, our recording secretary. Brenda became a master gardener in 2003 in Fayette County, Georgia. She worked mostly as a tree steward identifying diseases of trees, tree installation, etc. Her favorite tree is the Japanese Maple, three of which she brought here from Georgia. Her favorite shrub is the rainbow Leucothoe and “all things beautiful”, especially the peony.

Brenda grew up in Berkeley, California and received a B.A. in communications and journalism at U.C. Berkeley. She completed one year of law school but dropped out because of the demands of taking care of her nephew and working. Before college she traveled throughout the U.S. and spent one year in West Africa and Europe supporting herself doing background singing for various vocal artists. When she returned to the U.S. to attend Berkeley, she brought Tony, her 3-year-old nephew, with her. Three years later she met her future husband, Dennis, when he had transferred to U.C. Berkeley from Columbia. They were married shortly thereafter and have been married for 35 years. They adopted Tony when he was nine. Tony now has a trucking business in Georgia. In the early 80's Brenda operated her own word processing and medical billing service with up to six employees; and she also was an independent paralegal. Sixteen years ago she became a realtor, and from 1998 until retirement last year she owned and operated her own company. For five years until her death, Coretta Scott King was one of Brenda's clients. Brenda says that Mrs. King was a “most wonderful and amazing woman.”

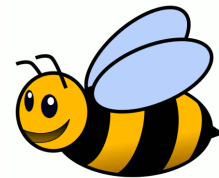


Brenda's husband, Dennis, is a labor consultant, and he arbitrates labor disputes between workers and management. Brenda and Dennis have a daughter, Nadia, who graduated from Duke University with majors in history and political science, and is now working on genealogical research for both sides of the family. She is also pursuing a master's degree in library science and lives in Richmond.

The Ortons moved to Richmond in December, 2007 – Dennis is especially happy to be here where he grew up. In addition to gardening, Brenda enjoys singing, reading, cooking, and walking almost daily.

To quote Brenda, “Since moving here and getting involved in the Master Gardeners Association, I have met many wonderful people and am very excited by the enthusiasm of the volunteers and the strong interaction between the Association and the extension office. I am thoroughly happy here in Richmond and do not plan to ever move again!”

Attracting Pollinators



“Flowers sway in the breeze to beckon pollinators a study suggests. Plants with slim stems fluttered the most and attracted the most insects. Flowers with average stems set the most seeds though, apparently because pollinators visited more stable flowers longer. The study is the first evidence that ‘waviness’, like color and scent, influences a flower's attractiveness.” (from the Smithsonian)

-Peggy Lowry

Fall Seed Sale



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. There is still plenty of time to harvest vegetables by sowing cool season varieties such as chives, cilantro, parsley, beets, kale, all lettuces, mustard, peas, radishes, or any of the leafy greens. Perennial flowers can also be sown now for next year bloom.

The BI website has recently added 30 new varieties for the 2009 season. You can buy them SOONER than if you waited for them to show up next spring at a retail store! There are also new canvas bags with the beautiful BI artwork available. The more canvas bags you buy, the fewer plastic bags go into landfills (and the more money we make for our association)!

The **Henrico Master Gardeners Association** earns **15%** of all seed sales made through the link at the website. There is no tax on the seeds and the shipping is a flat \$3.95 for any size order, so you may want to combine orders with your friends.

Go to their website through this link: www.botanicalinterests.com/nonprofits.php and then you will 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. This money will then be donated from the Henrico Master Gardeners Association into the VT Coordinator Endowment Fund.

This is a great way to have some late season vegetables or to get a head start on your 2009 spring planting plans and help with funding our VT Coordinator position at the same time.

Seeds Go Glamorous

You can buy your seeds at a local store, online and now at the make-up store too. Cargo Cosmetics sells a line of botanical lipsticks which come in flower paper boxes embedded with flower seeds. The tubes are made of corn also. So when you are done making yourself beautiful, you can also add to the beauty of the landscape.

www.cargocosmetics.com/product_44.html



From our friends at Maymont...

Deck the Halls

A New Holiday Tea and Silent Auction

Thursday, November 20, 2008 10-11:30am

Maymont Garden Hall

Find unique holiday decorations while helping a great cause! Wind your way through a silent auction of beautifully decorated wreaths, tabletop arrangements, and other seasonal items created by local floral designers, garden clubs and Maymont volunteers as you enjoy tea and light refreshments. Participants will be treated to a design demonstration once bidding is closed. Proceeds benefit the Maymont Foundation.

\$10 per person/\$8 for members

Registration required by November 18;

call 804-358-7166, ext. 310.

Visit www.maymont.org/ for directions.

Saturday Seminars at

Carolyn's Garden

9379 Sarah Shelton Lane

Mechanicsville, VA

(804) 746-8496

www.carolynsgardens.com

October 4, 2008, 10:00 am **Hosta, Helleborus, Heuchera**

Learn what will grow under your trees—see all the perennials that will grow in your shade garden. Free class on how to select and maintain shade perennials. Experts will be available to answer all your questions on perennial gardening.

October 11, 2008, 10:00 am **Hydrangeas**

Hydrangeas aren't just white and blue and pink anymore. Increase your know-how on all types of hydrangeas. Come to this free class on the care and cultivation of hydrangeas—and allow a little extra time to quiz the hydrangea experts.

October 18, 2008, 10:00 am **Planning and Planting Perennials for Spring**

Now is the perfect time to get your perennials ready for their Spring return! Learn what perennials will grow where to show off the best blooms. Free class on how to plant and maintain perennials. Garden experts will be available to answer all your garden questions.

Carolyn's Garden is a nice little nursery in Mechanicsville that has lots of hostas, hydrangeas, sedums and other sun and shade perennials at reasonable prices. For more information and directions, call the number above or go to their website.

Meeting Date Reminders

Board Meetings

October 1, 1:00pm
November 5, 1:00pm

Association Meetings

October 8, 1:00pm
November 12, 1:00pm

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