

IN AND OUT OF THE GARDEN

The January 2009 Monthly Journal
Rockbridge Area Master Gardeners' Association
Volume 13, Number 1



"A garden is a friend you can visit any time." Anonymous



ANNUAL RAMGA BUS TRIP

Spring is not far away and, along with the daffodils, comes the annual RAMGA bus trip (is it the 7th or 8th annual trip?).

This year's trip is a bit earlier than usual – **Tuesday, April 28th** – to take advantage of the wildflower display at the Carrier Arboretum at JMU in Harrisonburg. Plans are in the works for the remainder of the day and details will be forthcoming in the February newsletter.

Mark your calendar and look for more information soon. Questions? – call Becky at 463-1728 or Doris at 463-5427.

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THE PRESIDENT'S COLUMN

By Barbara Thomas

Happy New Year to all gardeners! The celebration of the New Year appears to be the oldest of all holidays still celebrated.

It was first observed in ancient Babylon about 4,000 years ago and used to be celebrated at the beginning of spring. After all, that is the season of rebirth and of planting new crops. The tradition of making resolutions also dates back to the early Babylonians, whose most popular resolution was to return borrowed farm equipment.

Although the current date for New Year's Day is not the same in every culture, it is always a time for celebration and customs to ensure good luck in the coming year. Most customs do not center around plants, but traditional Japanese practice "kadomatsu" does: decorating the house with a pine branch symbolizing longevity, a bamboo stalk symbolizing prosperity, and a plum blossom showing nobility.

Many people in the United States make a New Year's resolution this time of year. Some choose a perennial favorite like to exercise more, drink less or to quit smoking. Others might choose a new annual resolution such as learning an unusual language or redesigning an acre of garden space.

What resolution will you decide on this year? Will it involve RAMGA activities like volunteering time with an on-going project? Will it be to earn those eight hours of educational credit by attending a day at Master Gardener's College at Virginia Tech in June? Or maybe to turn in hours worked

to Carol Schoner four times a year, which by the way, is my New Year's resolution!

In fact, I even resolve to bring almonds to our next board meeting, on January 14 at 2:00 pm, as a Norwegian custom of good luck. Come join us as board members take a final look at the revised By Laws before publication to the general membership. The current plan is to e-mail a copy of those revisions and post paper copies at the Extension office in mid-January and to take a vote at the February meeting.

However you celebrate the New Year, whatever you resolve to do (or not), whatever plants you are salivating about while planning your spring garden, please know that I sure appreciate all the volunteer time given to the activities and projects that you work on. I wish all 'Good Luck' in the coming year and with your varied activities.



WORDS HAVE MEANING (BUT DON'T QUOTE ME)

By Jim Davis

I read somewhere that the words *cult* and *Agriculture* have the same Latin root and that gardening therefore could be considered a kind of worship. Well, that's quite an etymological leap, though many of us enjoy the complex process of growth as an expression of a deity. The origins of words, however, can reveal attitudes important to humankind as we developed.

Take *agriculture* itself, for instance. We get *agri-* from Latin for *field*. *Culture* comes from Latin also, but ultimately from the earliest ancestor of our language, Indo European. Meanings developing from that root are, among

others, “revolve” or “move around,” as the soil is moved with plow in gardening or farming. But we also get “dwell” and “colony.” My guess is when our ancestors began cultivating the soil they were able to end the wandering necessary for hunting and gathering as subsistence. Their new life didn’t require all members of the community to forage; instead, some could write poetry and music or make decorative pottery. Such attention to higher things created manners and a life of the mind. In short, it gave rise to a culture and civilization. Agriculture, then, made possible a great leap for humankind. Surely, then, there is a connection between the manual process of gardening and a more significant aspect of human life.

The word *garden* itself offers some other interesting speculations. The earliest root means “to grasp,” with derivatives meaning “enclosure.” From the same root we get *yard*, *orchard*, *kindergarten*, *courteous* and *choir*, as though we had somehow to get things together in order to create something of use or worth. How did we get the *ch-* sound? Early roots began with *gh-* or *k-*. Alice Morse Earle, well-known historian, wrote that since the root meaning of *garden* is “an enclosed space,” to claim an open garden would be a contradiction in terms. She was probably right. We like our gardens fairly tight, and when they get loose we call them “landscape,” “park” or “grounds.”

An early Greek translation of the Bible gave us the word *paradise* in reference to the Garden of Eden. For the Greeks the word meant “garden” or “enclosed park.” These entities had religious associations for them and other early civilizations as well. In fact, the word had gone through a process linguists call amelioration, in which a word comes to refer to something better than what it originally referred to. Incidentally, the last syllable of *paradise* derives from the Indo European word meaning “to form or shape.” On all counts, then, the word was chosen appropriately, for Genesis tells us that

Adam was put “into the garden of Eden to dress it and keep it,” to form and shape nature, as we form and shape it in our gardens today.

Other garden words have less impressive associations, but examining them shows how attitudes shape the choice when it comes to naming something. For instance, *Corn*, the British word for grain in general, goes back to Indo European *-ker*, “to grow.” The same root gives us “cereal,” “Ceres” (Roman goddess of agriculture), “crescendo,” “create” and “accrue.” The importance our forebears placed on corn is obvious.

In contrast, though, some of our most common or important plants have names with fantastic or prosaic origins (your call) or no known origins at all. The Poinsettia is named after Joel Roberts poinsett, a diplomat. Its generic name, *Euphorbia*, comes from an ancient physician; the specific, *pulcherrima*, is just Latin for “very pretty.” We get *Hosta* from a botanist named Nicolas Host. Host, I mean *ho*, hum. Apples, native to central Asia, bear a name similar in nearly all the areas of Europe and North America where they’re now widely grown. Our word stems from *aepfel* and the earliest form of English. The botanical name, *Malus*, is what the Romans called it, and we know little more. (The Romans had another word *Malus*, an adjective meaning “evil,” but even if Latin had been around when Genesis was composed, and even if there were some connection between the two words, the fruit illicitly eaten by Adam and Eve is not named specifically in the Bible.)

I’ve given up trying to remember the botanical names of plants. I can recall that *alba* means “white” and *lacteus* “milky white,” and even that *luteus* means “yellow.” I’ve got *bi-*, *tri-* and *quad-* under my belt and *-oides*, meaning “similar.” Take me much beyond these, however, and I’m lost. My trash-basket mind just goes for what really matters—the

impractical conjecture of language, custom and attitudes.



**THE UNITED STATES BOTANIC
GARDEN
THE NATIONAL GARDEN
BUTTERFLY GARDENING**

Why create a butterfly garden? With their grace and beauty, butterflies fill our gardens with excitement, joy, and life. Yet there is much more to be gained. When gardening for butterflies, we are creating healthy garden ecosystems that supply food and safe havens for other pollinators, as well, including hummingbirds which are attracted to many of the same flowers as butterflies. While producing abundant sources of nectar, our gardens will be supporting green lacewings, ladybugs, and a myriad of other beneficial insects that help us with pest control. And as more people plant these gardens, we will be creating corridors that assist with the migration of butterflies and hummingbirds.

BUTTERFLY GARDEN BASIC REQUIREMENTS

- 1) Pesticide-free environment
- 2) Plenty of sunshine
- 3) Flowers to provide nectar for the adult butterflies
- 4) Host plants to provide food for the butterfly larvae—better known as caterpillars!

Remember, butterflies go through metamorphosis. Yes, to have butterflies we must have caterpillars. Butterflies go through four life-cycle stages: adult, egg, larva, and pupa (chrysalis). Fortunately, few butterfly caterpillars are considered serious pest insects, and some are as colorful and fun to watch as the butterflies. Plants that are eaten by caterpillars are called “host plants.” Probably the most well-known host plants are the milkweeds (*Asclepias*

spp.) required by the Monarch butterfly. Monarch butterflies only lay their eggs on milkweed, and the caterpillars that emerge will only eat milkweed leaves.

First step to butterfly gardening: avoid pesticides. Avoid using toxins that kill a broad range of insects, and avoid those that are specific to caterpillars. Plan for some feeding by caterpillars and place host plants where leaf damage can be tolerated aesthetically. Avoiding pesticides will make your garden attractive to beneficial insects that will help you with pest control.

Plant your butterfly garden in full sun. Most of the recommended nectar plants require at least six hours of full sun. In addition, butterflies need sunshine to help them regulate their body temperature, as they cannot fly if their bodies are too cold. You can often see them, wings outstretched, soaking up the morning sun in preparation for a day of searching for nectar.

PLANTS FOR THE BUTTERFLY GARDEN

Butterflies love brightly colored, fragrant flowers with abundant nectar. Many butterflies are attracted to red (as are hummingbirds), and some have a preference for yellow flowers. In addition, butterflies are usually attracted to blue, hot-pink, purple, and orange flowers. Composites (flowers in the aster family) are particularly favored as they supply a relatively flat “landing pad” with lots of tiny flowers in the center to supply nectar.

Plant host plants to provide food for the caterpillars. See plant list below for suggestions.

Mix regional native plants with other plantings. Just by growing a wide variety of

native plants you will be supporting the larval stage of many types of butterflies, as well as supplying fruit, nuts, and shelter for birds or other wildlife.

Plant a diversity of plants. Include plants with a variety of heights and growing habits and with bloom times from spring through fall. In windy areas use plants such as the Eastern native conifer, *Juniperus virginiana*, or the many ceanothus shrubs native to the West Coast to supply protection from wind and offer secure areas for resting butterflies.

TIPS

- Create a damp area of exposed earth or sand to supply minerals and moisture for butterflies.
- If you don't have room for a garden, you can attract butterflies by planting in containers on a patio or balcony or in window boxes.
- Some butterflies are attracted to overripe bananas, oranges, or other fruit. Hang a shallow dish from a tree or place fruit on a platform that can be viewed from a window.
- Having some good field guides handy, such as those listed below in Further Resources, will enhance you and your family's enjoyment of your butterfly garden.

RECOMMENDED BUTTERFLY PLANTS

Many of the following plants can be seen in the USBG National Garden. Most of the plants in this list are native to eastern and/or central United States; a few are western natives and a few are non-invasive plants that are not native to North America. To check the nativity of the plants go to <http://plants.usda.gov/>, the USDA's Plants Database. For further plant recommendations, go to www.naba.org/pubs/bgh, the North American Butterfly Association's site for regional butterfly gardening brochures and regional PDF files of plants and the butterflies they attract.

PLANTS FOR NECTAR SOURCES

Shrubs

Abelia spp. (glossy abelia)

Ceanothus spp. & cultivars (most ceanothus species are native to California; *Ceanothus americanus* is native to eastern and central North America)

Clethra alnifolia (summersweet)

Caryopteris spp. (bluebeard)

Note: Butterfly bush (*Buddleia davidii*) is no longer recommended due to its invasive nature.

Herbaceous Perennials

Aster spp. (*Symphotrichum* spp.) (aster species)

Coreopsis spp. (tickseed)

Echinacea laevigata (smooth purple coneflower)

Echinacea pallida (pale purple coneflower, prairie coneflower)

Echinacea paradoxa (yellow coneflower)

Echinacea purpurea (purple coneflower)

Echinacea simulata (wavy-leaf purple coneflower)

Dracocephalum spp. (dragon's head)

Gaillardia sp. (blanket flower)

Gaura lindheimeri (Lindheimer's bee blossom)

Helenium flexuosum (purple-head sneezeweed)

Heliopsis helianthoides (smooth oxeye)

Hibiscus laevis (smooth rose-mallow)

Hibiscus moscheutos (swamp rose-mallow)

Nepeta grandiflora (giant catmint)

Oenothera spp. (evening primrose)

Phlox carolina (thick leaf phlox)

Phlox paniculata (fall phlox)

Parthenium integrifolium (American feverfew)

Rudbeckia spp. (black-eyed Susan)

Sedum spp. (sedum species & cultivars)

Verbena spp.

Annuals

Asclepias currasavica (blood flower)

Helianthus annuus (sunflower)

Lantana (use sterile cultivars)

HOST PLANTS FOR BUTTERFLY LARVAE

Trees

Asimina triloba (pawpaw)
Betula nigra (river birch)
Carpinus caroliniana (American hornbeam)
Cercis canadensis (Eastern redbud)
Cornus florida (dogwood)
Juniperus virginiana (Eastern red cedar)
Ptelea trifoliata (common hop-tree)
Sassafras albidum (sassafras)
Quercus spp. (oak trees)

Shrubs

Ceanothus spp. & cultivars
Lindera benzoin (spicebush)
Mimulus aurantiacus (sticky monkey flower; Oregon & California native)
Rhus glabra (smooth sumac)
Rhus typhina (staghorn sumac)
Viburnum spp.

Herbaceous Perennials

Antennaria dioica (pussy toes)
Aristolochia serpentaria (Virginia snakeroot)
Aster spp. (*Symphotrichum* spp.) (aster species)
Asclepias incarnata ssp. *pulchra* (swamp milkweed)
Asclepias tuberosa (butterfly weed)
Asclepias verticillata (whorled milkweed)
Chelone glabra (white turtlehead)
Chelone lyonii (pink turtlehead)
Penstemon digitalis (talus slope penstemon)

Further Resources

Books:

The Audubon Society Field Guide to North American Butterflies, by the National Audubon Society
The Butterfly Book: An Easy Guide to Butterfly Gardening, Identification, and Behavior, by Donald & Lillian Stokes and Ernest Williams

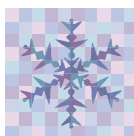
Butterfly Gardening: Creating Summer Magic in Your Garden, by the Xerces Society and Smithsonian Institution
The National Wildlife Federation Attracting Birds, Butterflies and Other Backyard Wildlife, by David Mizejewski
Peterson First Guide to Caterpillars of North America, by Amy Bartlett Wright and Roger Tory Peterson

Websites:

North American Butterfly Association, www.naba.org
 North American Pollinator Protection Campaign, www.nappc.org
 National Wildlife Federation, www.nwf.org ("Why Garden for Wildlife," www.nwf.org/backyard)
 The Xerces Society for Invertebrate Conservation, www.xerces.org.



<u>Jan</u>	CALENDAR
14	RAMGA Board Meeting – 2:00pm
17	Practical Gardening: Botany for Beginners*
22	A Rosa By Any Other Name*
24	Practical Gardening: Soil Basics*
* See Educational Events Calendar this issue	



Calendar of Educational Events – January 2009



Date	Event/Credits	Content	Location/Contact
January	RAMGA – No Program		
January 17 9:00 am - Noon OR Feb. 19 6:00 – 9:00pm Cost: \$40	Practical Gardening: Botany for Beginners <i>Credits: 3 hrs</i>	Learn about ‘the secret life of plants’: how plants make food, grow, and reproduce. Includes a copy of Brian Capon’s <u>Basic Botany</u> .	Lewis Ginter Botanical Garden, Richmond, VA http://www.lewisginter.org Register online
January 22 6:00-7:30 pm Cost: \$20	"A Rosa by Any Other Name... De-mystifying Plant Nomenclature" Dr. Holly Scoggins, <i>Credits: 1.5 hrs</i>	Botanical names can give wonderful insight into to the nature of the plant and its relationship to other plants. Glimpses of the history of plant exploration can also be revealed within a plant's name.	Hahn Horticulture Garden Virginia Tech Blacksburg, VA http://www.hort.vt.edu/hhg/events.html
January 24 OR March 3 9:00 am - Noon Cost: \$35	<i>Practical Gardening: Soil Basics</i> <i>Credits: 3 hrs</i>	Everything starts with the soil! Learn soil types and characteristics, amendment techniques, drainage, more!	Lewis Ginter Botanical Garden, Richmond, VA http://www.lewisginter.org Register online
LOOKING AHEAD:			
February 4, 5, 6, 2009	25th Anniversary Symposium: Gardening in an Era of Climate Change <i>Credits***</i>	Are we really living in an era of extreme changes in climate? This course focuses on design and operational practices for sustainability and environmental stewardship.	Lewis Ginter Botanical Garden, Richmond, VA http://www.lewisginter.org
March 22-26 Cost: \$290	International Master Gardener Conference <i>Credits***</i>	“New Frontiers” in horticulture and gardening	Las Vegas, Nevada www.unce.unr.edu/imgc
April 21	3rd Biennial Horticulture Horizons Symposium: Conserving the Commonwealth, Keeping Virginia Green <i>Credits***</i>	Advanced MG programs: water, tree and land stewards American Forests @ Global ReLeafProgram, Protecting and promoting pollinators in your backyard, Landscape plants for conservation and habitat	Lewis Ginter Botanical Garden, Richmond, VA http://www.lewisginter.org For more information: Susan Edwards, Chesterfield County MG Coordinator 804-751-4401, suedward@vt.edu
Credit *** Contact Kip Brooks for credit questions: kipb@rockbridge.net or 462-6160			

2008-2009

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IN AND OUT OF THE GARDEN

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In and Out of the Garden is published monthly by the Rockbridge Area Master Gardeners Association. Items to be published in the newsletter must be submitted not later than the twentieth of the month prior to publication. Articles, Letters to the Editor, and inquiries about subscriptions may be addressed to the Rockbridge Area Master Gardeners Association, c/o Sherry Smith, 225 Dalewood Drive, Lexington, Virginia 24450 or e-mail resmith575@aol.com.

Subscription rates: \$8.00 per year.

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