

# IN AND OUT OF THE GARDEN

The June 2009 Monthly Journal  
Rockbridge Area Master Gardeners' Association  
Volume 13, Number 6



"If you want to be happy for a year, plant a garden.  
If you want to be happy for a lifetime, plant a  
tree." Anonymous

**THE ANNUAL BUS TRIP - APRIL 28**  
By Sherry Smith

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Early Tuesday morning, April 28, our bus load of Master Gardeners set off on the annual bus trip. The bus was buzzing with talking and laughing. Everyone was excited to go see James Madison University's Arboretum. When we arrived, we had a guided tour of the park. It was nice, but very much in need of volunteers to help with it.

The highlight of the day was a visit to the private garden of an 80 year old man living in the JMU area, who had an absolutely gorgeous – steep – hillside of flowers. It was amazing!

I've never seen a garden that was planted on such a steep slope. And there were flowers of all kinds – peonies, irises, azaleas, dogwoods, and on and on. There were two ponds on the hillside. I only saw the pond made out of heavy stones with koi in it and a statue of a crane. The whole hillside was absolutely covered in flowers! It took him years to plant. He indicated that his daughter helped him.



On the patio of his house, yes, after we climbed the hill, he had photos of “before and after.”

I was absolutely astounded at the “before” pictures and then looking at the “after.” I am constantly amazed at other people’s gardens!!



## THE PRESIDENT'S COLUMN

By Barbara Thomas

Once again, our RAMGA Plant Sale was a rousing success. Even though there were a few sprinkles of rain, the weather did not deter the hordes of plant shoppers. The organizational and deliberate digging efforts made by members before the sale certainly paid off.

What a delight to see plants grouped not only by “Sun” or “Shade,” but also by “Spring,” “Summer,” and “Fall.” Plants flew out of the parking lot at Waddell Elementary School. I would estimate that almost half of the plants were bought by 9:30. Words cannot express the thankfulness this President feels for all RAMGA members who help out with our one fundraiser, but here’s a hearty “Thank You” to all who volunteered.

Don't forget to check out our website: RAMGA.org. There is information about our organization, forms to send your hours into our records coordinator, our new membership directory, an events calendar, newsletter archive, board minutes and a picture gallery (please send your pix to keep it up to date). Wow, all that information at your fingertips in the comfort of your own home, assuming you have a computer!

Because we voted and passed new bylaws that changed our calendar to a January to December year, our picnic will be in September this year, NOT JUNE. Although more details will follow in late summer, let's start a new tradition of having our own plant swap at the picnic. Bring half dozen or a dozen plants in pots that have outgrown their spot in your garden and see what other members bring that you just have to make room for. If a member wants a particular plant, don't forget you can ask Sherry Smith, our newsletter editor, to put in a “Wanted” ad. I would love to have more Heucheras (coral bells) so I'll be asking Sherry to do just that.

If you raise vegetables, please remember that our local food pantries can use all the excess vegetables you have. Or better yet, plant an extra row or two just with that goal in mind. Several of our members did that last year and the fresh produce was certainly appreciated.

Master Gardener College is still open for registration. It's an easy way to earn educational hours while not traveling too far away (remember one needs eight hours every year). Some units travel five hours to attend and have 10 members traveling & learning! Here are the relevant websites

- [www.cpe.vt.edu/reg/mastergardener](http://www.cpe.vt.edu/reg/mastergardener) (this link can be submitted online, by fax, mail or phone).
- [www.hort.vt.edu/mastergardener/newsletter/InSeason\\_Spring2009.pdf](http://www.hort.vt.edu/mastergardener/newsletter/InSeason_Spring2009.pdf).



## WANT AD

**Wanted:** Heuchera (coral bells) & bloodroot

**Have:** Stella D'oro day lilies; white, sweet smelling Iris; Lychnis

Contact Barbara Thomas at [bethomas@hughes.net](mailto:bethomas@hughes.net)

## PLANT SALE 2009

By Jim Davis



We've had another very successful plant sale.

The assertion sounds routine, but

it should quicken pulses if not bring shouts of joy. After all, the spirit of cooperation and teamwork required for this success mark us as a unit of great strength.

When asked to comment, Ted Jenks, team leader of the sale, said, "This event is successful because of the outstanding support we get from all our Master Gardeners and the community. It is RAMGA's only event where we have 70% of our enrolled Master Gardeners participating." One could add that the sale is an enjoyable social event and a morale booster as well.

There were innovations this year. Ted and his committee worked to decrease the number of plants but to increase their quality; MG's were

assigned to answer questions about all plants; two checkout tables were maintained; more parking space for the public was provided. Innovations last year maybe were responsible for the enthusiastic crowd this year; we had excellent attendance despite the threat of rain and even a shower. (Compost was sold out by ten o'clock.) Of course, our usual attractions, such as native plants, orchids, tool sharpening and a plant clinic, always help.

Ted went on to say that we probably must improve every year to hold and increase our clientele. Better quality plants result from digging in the fall so that fresh-looking, healthy plants come to the sale. For this improvement we need, he said, volunteers to dig and others to keep plants over the winter. Suggestions identifying sites to dig would be helpful also.

There's no room to acknowledge the hard work of every MG, but Ted's committee who worked all year on the project, and whom Ted greatly praised, should be listed: Mary Adkins, Dave Buckner, Tamara Cummins, Linda Davis, Heather Marion, Caren Nash, Anne Riffey-Buckner, Katherine Smith, Tracey Smith-Oliver and Penny Wilson. Thanks also go to Rockbridge County Schools who provided tables for us, delivered and picked up free of charge—48 this year.

Let us rejoice at a gross of over \$6,000.00 and a unit working smoothly together.



## ON DAHLIAS, PART II

### By Jim Davis

Now that you have your Dahlia tubers in the ground, horizontally, four to six inches deep, and we're all through with late frosts, let's take up the matter of their nurture.

Of course you remembered not to water them until sprouts appeared. Unfortunately, though, Mother Nature did not remember, and there's always danger of rot. So far, in my experience I've not had that problem. Don't mulch the tubers until the plant is well up, as mulch will keep the sun from warming the soil. Add phosphorus to the soil at planting, but no other fertilizer until the plant is well developed, and then keep the nitrogen low, using maybe a 5-10-10 product. Three or four weeks later, apply more. Do not over-feed.



single

The tall Dahlias, remember, need staking. Do that now, while the giant is still tiny. I circle each plant with a two-foot diameter of wire fencing, supported by a metal fence post.

When the plant is about eighteen inches tall, it should be topped (the terms *stopped* and *pinched* are sometimes used to describe this process). The growing tip of the plant is removed. Buds in the axils of all leaves are then stimulated to grow, and this side growth produces more blossoms on bushier plants with better stems for cutting. Topping also causes the plant to bloom sooner, and if you have several Dahlias, you can spread the flowering dates by not topping all plants on the same day. To make larger blossoms, disbudding is necessary. At the end of every flowering stem you'll find several buds. Pinching off the smaller ones will, of course, allow the largest to get bigger than it otherwise would. For even

greater size, pinch off all but one of the side shoots on the flower stem. Both steps are good ideas if you're putting Dahlias in a show.

I've read two different ways to treat the cut flowers. My catalog says to put stems in two or three inches of very hot water (160-180 degrees F.) and let them stay for an hour or more. Another source says to plunge them immediately (wouldn't you know) in cold water. MG Maureen Becker, who knows about such things, says hot water or flame is used for cut stems that exude thick or milky sap. It seals the ends and preserves fluid vital to the blossom. But a long stay in hot water probably would steam the blossom. Neither she nor I have had any complaint with using cold water.

You may hear two pronunciations of *Dahlia*. The plant was named in honor of the Swedish botanist Andreas Dahl, a student of Linnaeus. But botanical names are given in New Latin, pronounced like old Latin. So regardless of what the Swedes would say, the Latin pronunciation would be with the broad Latin *a*,

<u>June</u>	<i>CALENDAR</i>
4-6	The Coalfields Folk Life Festival*
13	Hydrangea Walk & Talk in the Garden*
16-21	Master Gardener College*
20	Growing & Using Herbs: Seasonings for Your Health*
NO RAMGA BOARD MTG IN JUNE - NEXT MTG JULY 8	
* See Educational Events Calendar this issue	

like the *o* in *doll*. You don't hear that pronunciation very often. The most common intonation is with a short *a*, "dahl." Dictionaries list this first, as the preferred pronunciation. Nevertheless, I wanted to title this article "Guys and Dahls," but Sherry wouldn't let me.

**By Sherry Smith**



**Kensington Gardens in London**



## Calendar of Educational Events ~ June 2009



Date	Event/Credits	Content	Location/Contact
<b>June 4, 5, 6</b> Cost: Free	<b>The Coalfields Folk Life Festival</b> <u>Credits: ***</u>	Various offerings, some of interest to Master Gardeners. Check web-site for more specific information.	The Buchanan County Extension Office 276 935-5093 <a href="http://www.bcbirdclub.org/folklifefestival/Index.htm">http://www.bcbirdclub.org/folklifefestival/Index.htm</a>
<b>June 13 9-10:30</b> <b>OR June 23 4-6 pm</b> <b>OR July 14</b> 6:00-7:30pm Cost: \$14	<b>Hydrangeas Walk and Talk in the Garden</b> <u>Credits: 1.5 hrs</u>	The Garden has an impressive collection of these favorite summer shrubs. Richard Waiton leads this discussion and walk through the Garden's hydrangea collection.	Lewis Ginter Botanical Garden, Richmond, VA <a href="http://www.lewisginter.org">http://www.lewisginter.org</a>
<b>June 16 – 21</b> Cost: Varies	<b>Master Gardener College</b> <u>Credits: ***</u>	New workshops every day! <a href="http://www.hort.vt.edu/mastergardener/newsletter/InSeason_Spring2009.pdf">http://www.hort.vt.edu/mastergardener/newsletter/InSeason_Spring2009.pdf</a>	Virginia Tech, Blacksburg <a href="http://www.hort.vt.edu/mastergardener/mgcollege.htm">http://www.hort.vt.edu/mastergardener/mgcollege.htm</a>
<b>June 20</b> 1:30-3:30pm Pre-registration and fee of \$15.00, two for \$25.00	<b>Growing and Using Herbs: Seasonings for your Health!</b> <u>Credits: 2 hrs</u>	Learn how to have a successful kitchen garden including choosing the best herbs to grow and how to incorporate herbs into your recipes creating dishes with incredible flavor and a healthy zip!	Viette's Nursery Fishersville, VA (800) 575-5538 <a href="http://www.inthegardenradio.com/v.php?pg=9">http://www.inthegardenradio.com/v.php?pg=9</a>
<b>LOOKING AHEAD:</b>			
<b>July 9 – 22</b> Cost: \$3,950	<b>Gardens and Castles of Germany</b>	The trip spans hundreds of years and periods of gardens, art, and architectural history.	Sponsored by Virginia Tech <a href="http://www.mcduff.hort.vt.edu/Germany2009/Index.html">http://www.mcduff.hort.vt.edu/Germany2009/Index.html</a>
Credit *** Contact Kip Brooks for credit questions: <a href="mailto:kipb@rockbridge.net">kipb@rockbridge.net</a> or 462-6160			

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 Ted Jenks – Plant Sale  
 Sherry Smith and Jeanne Eichelberger, Newsletter

**IN AND OUT OF THE GARDEN**

Editor-in-chief Sherry Smith  
 Managing Editor Jeanne Eichelberger

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