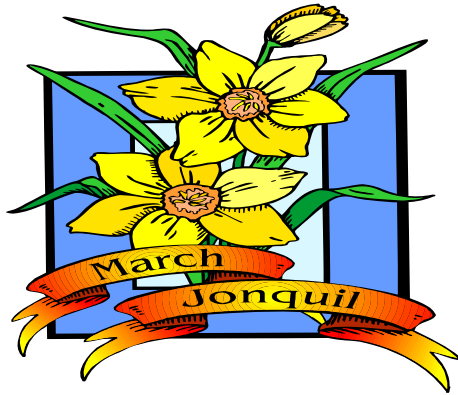


# IN AND OUT OF THE GARDEN

The March 2009 Monthly Journal  
Rockbridge Area Master Gardeners' Association  
Volume 13, Number 3



**"Half the interest of a garden is the constant exercise of the imagination." Anonymous**

**PERMACULTURE: CREATIVE DESIGN  
NATURALLY & LANDSCAPING with  
HERBS**

**Saturday, March 28, 9:00am to Noon**

The presentation will be on **Permaculture: Creative Design Naturally (sustainable gardening methods, including soil preparation) and Landscaping with Herbs –**

Vicky Peterson and Pierre Constans, Blue Ridge Permaculture Network, will discuss permaculture as a design system that gives us the framework and tools to redesign gardens and

communities for sustainable and abundant living. Applicable to any size garden, this introduction will present principles and examples that allow for, not just sustainable, but regenerative gardening.

James Blythe, Golden Owl Herb Farm, will discuss using herbs in the Virginia landscape to establish groundcovers, hedges, backdrops, and points of interest in a wide array of environments. Recommended sources and ideal growing conditions for each type of herb will be examined, as well as problems typically associated with establishing specific types of

plants. Finally, some ideas will be offered on combining different types of herbs in the landscape to achieve specific effects.

The presentation will be held in the Turman Room at the VMI Library. There will be a complimentary breakfast prior to the workshop and also mid-morning refreshments. Parking is available on the lot between VMI and W&L. Handicapped parking is also available just outside the Library entrance.



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**THE PRESIDENT’S COLUMN**

**By Barbara Thomas**

The fishponds have unfrozen and the sound of running water returns. What is it about the sounds of water? Whether it’s the sound of waves crashing on a beach, gently rippling water in a stream or water rushing down a rocky fall, it is an entrancing sound. Then there is the plop of a rock hitting water and those beguiling circles that emanate from the center...

Those emanating circles are an intriguing subject matter. Sometimes they stop suddenly at a close shore (like our cancelled classes) and other times they widen across an entire pond or lake. Peggy Dyson Cobb has just thrown a rock into the RAMGA waters and where will it take us? She came to the last board meeting to tell us about an exciting new proposition for gardeners in Rockbridge County. “Every House a Garden” is in the later planning stages but they

are hoping to create about six gardens around the county starting this spring. Rockbridge Area Relief Association (RARA) will help to find willing families who want to grow vegetables in an earth-friendly manner. These families will be chosen from among those who receive services from RARA such as food baskets from food pantries. A consortium of groups will provide tools, seeds, plants, labor, fencing.... We have been asked to provide expertise and act as garden mentors to these new gardeners. The board voted to approve hours expended on this project to count toward our VA Tech hours and our extension agent, Jon Repair concurred. Would YOU like to become further involved? Contact me (or any board member) and as more information becomes available, we’ll let you know. Where will Peggy’s ripples end? Hopefully with some tasty green beans from the garden!

Katherine Smith also spoke to the RAMGA Board about having a work day to remove invasive plants here in Rockbridge County on May 2. Several organizations like the Native Plant Society, Boxerwood, Master Naturalists and Fish & Wildlife will be taking part in this effort (which will also be going on around the state on that day). When the sites are finalized, we will let you know. In the meantime, mark it on your calendar and get ready to attack ailanthus! Ailanthus (derived from ailanto, an Ambonese word probably meaning "tree of the gods" or "tree of heaven") is quite the misnomer as the odor tends to resemble the smell of strong cat urine.

Remember to schedule time to attend the Saturday Garden Symposium sponsored by RAMGA and the Herb Guild on March 28 from 9-12. What a great way to obtain educational hours in our own backyard as the program is being held at the Preston Library on VMI’s campus. Because both of our organizations are sponsoring this program, we were able to line up some great speakers!

◆◆◆◆◆  
**MY GARDENING MISTAKES  
 AND HOW THEY GREW**

**By Jim Davis**

In 1999, I wrote an article for *In and Out of the Garden* on mistakes I'd made in gardening. Ten years is a long time between confessions, and I have long list of sins for a second article. However, I've selected just a few; they share no similarities, but still might save somebody some grief.

A major rule: don't trust nurseries. Wait—of course you can trust Faith Vosburgh, a Master Gardener, after all, and any other business with which you've had good experience. Consider, though, this anecdote. My son asked me to choose some shrubs for his new house in Tidewater and to supervise their planting. The nursery salesman was polite and helpful, listening attentively as I explained how I wanted the digging to be done.

The nursery crew showed up on time, led by a bright young former lieutenant in the Israeli army. Catch 22: none of my instructions had been passed on to him, and following company policy he was ready to dig into the subsoil (the only soil left by the contractor), poke the shrubs down and fill the holes with his topsoil. For all he knew about planting, he should have continued his military career. I'm glad I was on hand and glad he was as cooperative as he was intelligent. I was amazed, however; a major nursery didn't have a policy for proper planting. Notice, too, that his method is the same commonly found on wholesalers' labels.

I've not *always* been holier than almost everybody. In my 1999 article I told of planting a maple tree in my pasture, long before my ordination by the Master Gardener Class. A neighbor used his tractor and auger to dig a big hole in the clay. I crammed the root ball in and

filled it with lovely humus just like my Israeli lieutenant wanted to do.

Remember K.B.'s instruction? Never dig a hole, but always a saucer. Then back fill the soil you removed. Otherwise, you'll have created a clay pot in which roots will soon become pot bound and the tree stunted or moribund. With this knowledge, I took action to save the tree. I began to convert the top clay to topsoil by regularly applying manure, wood chips, oak-bark mulch and straw (whatever was available and convenient) to the surface around the tree. The results, now published for the first time: It worked. The roots, especially the feeder roots, which normally grow near the surface, have spread outward and allowed the tree to thrive. Note: If you want to amend our clayey soil at time of planting, do so for the diameter of the tree's drip line at maturity.

No need to beware of catalogs; just be sure to research anything you buy. I'm a fan of spurges, the interesting family *Euphorbia*, which ranges from Donkey's Tail to Poinsettia. *Euphorbia corallioides* seemed to be a good choice. The catalog gave no advice, but there seemed no need to consult any books. Too late I happened on a passage in Pamela Harper where she calls the plant "weedy." She's right. It had no beauty to justify its existence, and it reproduced more abundantly than any spurges I've seen in this prolific family. After five years I still find seedlings reminding me of the need to check out the experts before buying. How boring for those of us who lust after most any new plant.

Crows eat my peaches. Why don't they eat the Japanese beetles instead? Are they vegetarians? Solution: Buy netting and stretch it over the trees. This procedure would have been successful, perhaps, if the netting had been bag-shaped and I had been Tinkerbelle, able to fly over and drop it into place. I used a ladder and a long stick to position it among the branches.

Sort of—the crows found many openings. I was saddened when two Chipping Sparrows did *not*, were enmeshed and died. At season's end I had a bad time disentangling the net from the branches. Finally, I cut it away and trashed it. Aluminum pie pans flapping in the breeze are unsightly but undoubtedly better.

These mistakes—disparate, if not desperate—could help develop strengths. Take a dose of common sense also.



**News from the Records Coordinator**  
**By Carol Schoner**  
**RAMGA Records Coordinator**

**New to Master Gardeners (MGs):** Congratulations to new MGs from the Class of 2008. There are now seven who have completed their required 50 hours: Pam Gatlin, Ann Gruner, Laura Mattingly, Barbara Rollenhagen, Amy Scheuer, Travel Smith-Oliver, and Stephanie West. This represents 40% of the class. Way to go!!! And there are several Interns from that class who are very close to their required hours. Remember you have until the end of April 2009 to complete and report those 50 hours.

Please welcome our new MG transferring from Prince William County: Angelika Matiuk. She will soon be busy digging in the dirt along with the rest of us.

**Staying Active:** Do you have all your time sheets submitted for last year? There are still just a handful of MGs who have not submitted time sheets for their 20/8 hour requirement to stay active. If you do not get those hours completed and recorded, you will soon get a letter indicating that you are no longer considered an active master gardener.

**New Reporting Year:** Our new year of tracking hours began in January 2009 and will go through the end of the year. Please get those time sheets to me monthly.

**New Time Sheet:** I promised a new and revised time sheet for recording time from January 2009 and forward. The time sheet includes a new column for recording travel time. I know that many of you travel quite a distance for volunteering or for continuing education classes. The time spent in a car should be acknowledged and have some advantages. Here are the rules that apply to recording travel time.

1. The travel time does not count towards the 20 volunteer or 8 continuing education hour requirements to remain active; however the travel time does count towards Virginia Tech (VT) yearly awards. (VT acknowledges and rewards MGs who have volunteered 250, 500, 1000 hours; these awards are calculated and given at the yearly Master Gardener College held Virginia Tech campus in Blacksburg.)

2. Travel time should be reported in half hour increments.

3. The travel time reporting starts as of January 1, 2009.

4. You choose whether to report travel time or not.

5. You can still use the old time sheet.

So, go back to your garden planning, but remember to record those hours.



## GARDENING NEWS

### Save Our Pollinators

Habitat Loss, pesticide use and disease have taken a big toll on the creatures that pollinate our flowers and edible crops. As gardeners, we



can be a big help by making our yards pollinator friendly.

If you would like to pitch in but aren't sure where to start, visit [www.pollinator.org](http://www.pollinator.org) and download a free "Pollinator Friendly Planting Guide."

It's as easy as typing in your zip code. Each guide tells you how to create a yard that butterflies, birds, bats and insects will visit. In addition, there are plant lists so you'll know what to look for when you go shopping. Garden Gate magazine.



### Invasive Pear Trees

Callery pears (*Pyrus calleryana*) have been a staple in urban gardens for years. Varieties "Bradford," "Chanticleer" and "Aristocrat" have graced city streets and backyards with their beautiful spring flowers and fall foliage. Unfortunately, in natural areas, a wild hybrid has taken root that sets more fruit and has numerous sharp, thornlike spurs. The sharp spurs make it difficult to get rid of a tree once it has become established.

Thanks to genetic testing by Dr. Theresa Culley, a professor at the University of Cincinnati, we now know that this invasive pear occurs when "Bradford" hybridizes with one of the many other cultivars available. The trees have taken hold along roadways, park edges and railroads. So far, the biggest problem is in the South, but some states, such as Maryland, are no longer allowing Callery pears to be planted on city properties. You may want to think twice before

planting one in your yard. Garden Gate magazine



### BUTTERFLY GARDEN HELP NEEDED

Boxerwood is working with two Buena Vista elementary schools (Enderly Heights and Kling) on small-scale schoolyard improvement projects tied to science curricula. Both schools have teachers who would like to involve their 3<sup>rd</sup> or 4<sup>th</sup> grade students in designing and planting modest-scale butterfly gardens. The students will be doing planning in April and implementation in May or possibly June. We would welcome a gardener or two to offer some advice and/or help with planting (one intrepid teacher will be 8 months pregnant by May!). Contact Elise Sheffield for more information [education@boxerwood.org](mailto:education@boxerwood.org) or 463-2697.

### Boxerwood Children-In-Nature Volunteer Opportunities

Boxerwood will be hosting a volunteer tea on Tuesday, March 10, from 10:00 – 11:00 a.m. at Boxerwood for adults who would like to learn more about our work with schoolchildren. We will be giving an overview of our hands-on programs for children, including our PlayTrail programs for pre-schoolers and our soil, compost, and wetlands programs for grades 3 and 4. These small-group programs typically run 2 to 3 hours Monday - Friday throughout the fall/spring months and we welcome volunteers who can help out at least twice a month.

Currently we have volunteers who both lead and assist—whichever is best for you. Want to know more? Join us for tea—and a tour. Contact Elise Sheffield for more information [education@boxerwood.org](mailto:education@boxerwood.org) or 463-2697.



<u>Mar</u>	<i>CALENDAR</i>
3	<b>Practical Gardening: Soil Basics*</b>
4	<b>Diversifying your Treeholio*</b>
5	<b>The Beginner's Perennial Garden*</b>
7	<b>Master Your Garden *</b>
7	<b>Landscape Design Symposium*</b>
8	<b>Backyard Woods Workshop*</b>
10	<b>Intro to Organic Gardening*</b>
10	<b>Boxerwood Tea to Recruit Volunteers</b>
11	<b>RAMGA Board Meeting – 2:00pm</b>
22-26	<b>International Master Gardener Conf.</b>
28	<b>Landscaping with Herbs &amp; Permaculture: Creative Design, Naturally*</b>
<b>* See Educational Events Calendar this issue</b>	



## Calendar of Educational Events ~ March 2009



Date	Event/Credits	Content	Location/Contact
<b>March 3</b> 9:00am-Noon Cost: \$35	<b>Practical Gardening: Soil Basics</b> <i>Credits: 3 hrs</i>	Learn soil types and characteristics, amendment techniques, drainage, more!	Lewis Ginter Botanical Garden, Richmond, VA <a href="http://www.lewisginter.org">http://www.lewisginter.org</a>
<b>March 4</b> 8:00am–3:30pm Cost: \$55 for Master Gardeners	<b>Diversifying your Treepholio: The New Urban Forest</b> <i>Credits: 7.5 hrs</i>	Urban Tree Canopy, the Structure of our Future; Diversity Is the Answer; Recommendations for the Next Urban Forest	VA Western Community College, Roanoke Becky Woodson, 434- 220-9024; becky.woodson@dof.virginia.gov
<b>March 5 OR 12</b> 8:30am–12:30 Cost: \$40	<b>The Beginners Perennial Garden</b> <i>Credits: 4 hrs</i>	Introduction to hardy perennials, simple starter plans, & basics of soil prep.	Lewis Ginter Botanical Garden, Richmond, VA <a href="http://www.lewisginter.org">http://www.lewisginter.org</a>
<b>March 7</b> Sign-in 8:30am 9:00am-1:30pm Cost: \$15.00; boxed lunch included	<b>Master Your Garden</b> Patrick County Master Gardener's Association 2nd Annual Spring Gardening Symposium <i>Credits: 5 hrs</i>	Seminars: "Installing a Backyard Pond" "Organic Gardening" "Perennials & Herbs"	Pre-register by Feb. 20; send \$15, to: Treasurer, Patrick Co. MG Assoc., Master Your Garden, P.O. Box 408, Stuart, VA 24171 276-692-6175 (daytime)
<b>March 7</b> 8:00am–3:30pm Cost: \$35 Pre-registration is required by Feb. 28, 2009	<b>Landscape Design Symposium</b> Northern Shenandoah Valley Master Gardeners <i>Credits: 7.5 hrs</i>	There will be 4 landscaper/garden design professionals to speak on different aspects of landscaping your yard.	Shenandoah University, Contact Lynn Hoffmann @ <a href="mailto:gwendydog@gmail.com">gwendydog@gmail.com</a> Make our your check to NSVMGA, mail to Josie Engle at 501 Brill Road, Star Tannery, VA 22654
<b>March 8</b> 9:00am-3:00pm Cost: \$20/person or \$30/couple. Pre-registration required.	<b>Backyard Woods Workshop</b> Includes The Woods in Your Backyard manual. <i>Credits: 6 hrs</i>	Enhance natural areas around your home & be better stewards of your land. Convert lawn to forest, create wildlife habitat, or provide a useful outdoor space.	Manassas, VA , McCoy Conf. Rm, Sudley North Building, 8033 Ashton Avenue, Info, 703-792-7747 or <a href="http://www.pwcgov.org">www.pwcgov.org</a>
<b>March 10</b> 4 - 6 pm Cost: \$30 nonmember	<b>Sustainable Basics: Introduction to Organic Gardening</b> with Amy <i>Credits: 2 hrs</i>	Learn the basics of gardening the earth-friendly way!	Lewis Ginter Botanical Garden, Richmond, VA <a href="http://www.lewisginter.org">http://www.lewisginter.org</a> Register on-line
<b>March 28</b> <b>9 am – 12 pm</b> Free	<b>Garden Symposium: Landscaping with Herbs &amp; Permaculture: Creative Design, Naturally</b> <i>Credits: 3 hrs</i>	Permaculture: Creative Design, Naturally with Vicky Peterson Landscaping with Herbs with James Blythe	RAMGA VMI, Turman Room of Preston Library
Credit *** Contact Kip Brooks for credit questions: <a href="mailto:kipb@rockbridge.net">kipb@rockbridge.net</a> or 462-6160			

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 Nancy Smith, Vice President  
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**IN AND OUT OF THE GARDEN**

Editor-in-chief Sherry Smith  
 Managing Editor Jeanne Eichelberger

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