

IN AND OUT OF THE GARDEN

The March 2011 Monthly Journal
Rockbridge Area Master Gardeners' Association
www.ramga.org



" Springtime is the land awakening. The March winds are the morning yawn." ~Lewis Grizzard

THE PRESIDENT'S COLUMN By Amy Scheuer

I hope you all have enjoyed these last few weeks in February. It feels soooo good to be outside again, and getting lost in our gardens!

Right now our organization needs one more volunteer to audit the RAMGA financial records. This needs to be a person who is not now on the Board of Directors. You DO NOT need accounting experience! The full description is again under the "VOLUNTEER ALERT" column. In fact, this month I would like to direct your attention to the "VOLUNTEER ALERT" column, which has more to say than myself.

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Don't forget Daylight Savings Time begins on Sunday, March 13 more time in the garden - YEAH!

WISHING YOU ALL A HAPPY ST. PATRICK'S DAY!!



**HOLLOW CONCRETE SPHERES -
ROCKBRIDGE REGIONAL LIBRARY -
PIOVANO ROOM**

Thursday, March 24th - 7:00 pm

Debra Corrington will present a program on the process of making Hollow Concrete Spheres to display in your garden.

Debra and her husband own Rick's Custom Nursery in Lexington and their display gardens are complemented with the many rocks collected over the years from Maine to Michigan. The allure of rocks in their gardens has evolved into her blossoming passion for Concrete Garden Art. After years of admiring expensive Concrete Spheres she collected enough information to successfully make her own Hollow Concrete Spheres. Although it's impossible to complete a Sphere in one evening, she will share her experience with you and walk you through the step-by-step process of creating your own Concrete Sphere.

Handouts will be available with the information and resources offered during the program and Debra is optimistic her presentation will inspire you to create a Sphere for your garden!



**LANDSCAPING A HABITAT HOUSE -
VOLUNTEERS NEEDED
By Heather Marion**



You all are invited to the dedication of Melissa Carter's Habitat Home. March 13, 2011, 3:00 PM
1753 Hawthorn Avenue
Buena Vista

Melissa Carter is a young, single, working mother who will become a homeowner on March 13. She has worked hard toward her goal of providing a safe place for her daughter to grow up.

As you can see, **volunteers are needed to add some plants and shrubs to make the outside look as attractive as her new home.** It is a fun project, very rewarding, and lots of work. But then, MGs know about the joy of working to make things beautiful. All costs to buy trees are to be covered by Habitat or by the Lexington Garden Club's generous donation. And, best of all for MGs - you can count your hours. It is time to start planning. Contact Heather Marion (hmarion22@aol.com) or call 463-2005.

Contact Heather Marion as soon as possible. We need to start planning.



VOLUNTEER ALERT!

We need Master Gardeners to volunteer to:

1. Be trained on the new state reporting system. Should be comfortable with computers and the Internet. Contact Carol Schoner at cschoner@comcast.net or 463-4850.
2. Community Fair Chair or Co-Chair for this year (2011). Pat Kovach will fill you in on all the details. She can be reached at: patkovach@embarqmail.com
3. Assistant Records Coordinator - someone to help in implementing the new state reporting system and then eventually to take over the Records Coordinator position. Needs to be comfortable with computers and the Internet. Contact Carol Schoner at cschoner@comcast.net or 463-4850.
4. Continuing Education Coordinator - someone to find educational events for MGs to attend to earn the educational credits they need during the course of the year. These educational events are published in the newsletter. Contact Liz Gordon at saddleup4travel@comcast.net or 464-4901 for more information.
5. **Needed** - several volunteers to audit the RAMGA financial records.

This is to fulfill our obligations to Virginia Tech and VMGA and is not a reflection on the performance of past or present RAMGA Treasurers.

Time involved should be less than four hours. This is an easy way to get some extra

RAMGA volunteer hours this winter. No working out in the cold.

No accounting experience needed, as this is a fairly simple task. What you will do is check the records for backup information to support the checks issued; compare the bank statements to the records, etc. Write a simple report covering your findings.

All supporting documents will be provided by the Treasurer. You will not need to do any research.

Please contact me at (540) 464-1818 or email: ascheuer@embarqmail.com if interested in helping.

6. **Needed** - volunteers to help setup a Recruitment Committee. This committee will be separate from the Class Steering Committee, and is meant to compliment or enhance their efforts. If interested, please e-mail me, ascheuer@embarqmail.com. We would like to get this started ASAP.



TEACHING NATURE AT NATURAL BRIDGE

By Barbara Thomas

Each Spring about ten Master Gardeners head out to Natural Bridge Elementary School (NBES) and start teaching students about soils, fertilizers, seeds, plants and other subjects related to botany and gardening. We plant both flowers and vegetables in our garden, which includes an evergreen area, raised

beds for vegetables, an herb garden, an alphabet garden, an asparagus bed, and even a fishpond. It's the best time of the year—when we see those eager faces, wanting to learn about plants.

We start in mid-February with fourth graders who are the main beneficiaries of our efforts. They receive fourteen weeks of instruction with weekly hands-on science experiments or time in the garden. We start with soil and soil amendments, then move on to seeds, then plants and the fun subject of photosynthesis (how does one express irony in writing?). The various ways of plant reproduction are introduced, as are plant kingdoms and our famous herb lesson where students touch, smell and taste herbs from our gardens. Then they have to figure out what herb is inside of assorted dishes made by our volunteers. We have learned NOT to serve cilantro salsa but always to include rosemary lemonade! We usually plant spring vegetables, tobacco (it's an important colonial crop that saved the early settlements in Virginia, so the social studies teacher says), cotton and potatoes. There are many perennials that need tending and Hyacinth Beans that need to be planted to adorn our fences from summer through fall.

Fifth graders receive six weeks of instruction in the garden and classroom. In the spring, using a pretest, we brush up on their skills for the SOL test in

Science. Jeopardy, based on our curriculum, is a useful and fun tool for review as well. A service project for NBES related to gardening and the outdoors is chosen and also carried out in this season. And they LOVE to dig and eat the potatoes in fall that they planted in the spring as fourth graders. It is so fulfilling to see the growth in these kids after working with them for several years.

Since their science SOLs focus on soil and its components, three years ago we added classes for third graders. At the same time, we also give that grade an introduction to gardening. Talk about dovetailing--we also teach about soil layers and Virginia's natural resources. Just as with the fourth graders, these younger children get a bit of teaching and then hands-on activity or experiment, but only for four weeks. Third graders plant sunflower seeds in peat pots and avidly watch them sprout indoors. Later we try our best to gently transplant them around the schoolyard. For every sunflower that grows exceptionally, there are several kids who claim they planted it!

This past fall, profiting from additional volunteers from our most recent MG class, we added four weeks of education for second graders. The teachers at NBS were so happy at that expansion. Last fall we built three raised beds and the kids were able to plant spring bulbs,

much easier for little hands than teeny seeds. This spring we'll go out to see that growth and the entire seed-to-flower-to-fruit cycle (yeah, radishes). We have a draft curriculum for this year and will refine it as we find out what works with those younger wiggly kids.

Our original project was a 4-H classroom program, started in 1997 by new Master Gardener Caroline Norrington. She soon got an experienced master-Master Gardener to join the team--Chuck Norrington, her husband. He designed and built the first garden with vegetable, flower and compost areas. These two were truly great champions for this program and that's why the garden itself is named Norrington's Nook. Chuck and Caroline also designed the first curriculum based on the sequence of our MG handbook and 4-H publications. Several other MGs also helped to teach classes to fourth graders.

Of course, there have been changes and additions through the fifteen years MGs have been volunteering out at NBES. A second garden had to be built about five years ago (due to school construction covering our old one), and Chuck designed that one as well, just before lung cancer took his plant-filled life. I took over as team leader after that (and Caroline moved to North Carolina to be closer to family). The curriculum has been updated and revised, and new experiments have been added. And as

previously stated, more grades are now able to get their hands dirty in the garden! The one aspect that has not changed is the dedication and longevity of our volunteers, several of whom have been at this project since 2002.

Without them, it just couldn't get done. I know we make a positive impact on these children and enrich their lives, because when I see them in stores or at the library, they tell me (as do their parents, the teachers and staff).

Current Team Members are Maureen Becker, Lea Braford, Denise Gorsky, Ann Jones, Pat Kovach, Angelika Matiuk, Karen Orrison, Barbara Thomas, Nancy Trumps and Gerri Wenz. Working with 215 pupils, these eleven have logged a total of 600 hours in the last reporting year.



NEWS FROM CAMPBELL HOUSE

By Diana Losche

Ted Jenks became the team leader at Campbell House five years ago. After the first season working in the gardens it became evident that too much time and effort were required to maintain the flower beds. The group decided to figure out ways to reduce maintenance and to make the gardens a demonstration/learning experience for the team members and the general public. A major problem was watering. Dragging long hoses all over the property was, well, a real drag. Of immediate concern were the trees in the upper shade garden.

The hemlocks needed attention and Betty Besal led the group in a discussion of ways to forestall their demise. The dogwoods needed pruning; Ann Spivey and Ted Jenks demonstrated pruning techniques. The small herb garden was looking very sad so members of the group studied ways to improve that area. Landscaping all around the Sloan House was a mess, filled with vines and weeds. Ted, Ann Spivey and Pat Monroe spent some very hot hours pulling and cutting out the weeds.

Today most of the flower beds at Campbell House have timed drip hoses; hand watering is minimal. This is thanks to Ted Jenks who worked to install the system. Today the herb garden is inlaid with pavers. Today you can look at a garden bed while reading source material about the plants in that bed. Today the weedy area around Sloan House is neat and the beds are mulched.

Ted has recently retired as team leader. Like all past Master Gardeners who lent their hands, knees, skills and knowledge, he helped to make the Campbell House Gardens attractive, interesting and much improved over the period of his tenure. We are very happy to be able to announce that we now have two team leaders! John and Jeannette Matchette joined the group last spring. Despite a very busy summer for them personally, they managed to get it all together and created two new flower beds along Washington Street. We are very lucky to have them. Another reason to look forward to spring!

A NEW STATE REPORTING SYSTEM By Carol Schoner

I know that few of you know that we have a current state reporting system into which go all your hours by date and by project. I am the one who does the entry and it can be taxing at times. But I have been told that we have a new system coming; one in which you do your own entry and the coordinator approves or authorizes what you submit.

I have not yet seen the system (I am to be trained sometime in March), but it should be easier for you and way easier for me (since I no longer have to do any entry, I just need to approve and authorize, and maybe gather statistics for the project leaders when they request it).

I am hoping that those of you who are comfortable with computers and the Internet will have no problem with the new system and in fact this should make it easier to do the entries and to keep track of your own hours. (No more looking for those phantom calendar entries or trying to remember when you did what.) To those of you who are computer adverse, you will continue to use the time sheets as you do now.

I am hoping that a few of you will volunteer to be trained with me in March. Send me an email or give me a call and I will let you know when the training will take place.



Calendar of Educational Events -March 2011

Date	Event/Credits	Content	Location/Contact
March 1-May 21 \$45 per family includes materials and interaction	Online Woodland Management Class Credit: 1 hr for each hr of module	Learn at home in 12 weeks how to keep your woods healthy and productive Basic and advanced levels offered	cnre.vt.edu/forestupdate
March 2 10:00-11:30am Free Rain Date - March 3	Rose Pruning Credits: 1.5 hours	Gain experience pruning and growing roses. Take your own pruners and gardening loves.	Maymont's Italian Garden 804/358-7166 ext. 310 or register online at www.maymont.org
March 3 1:30-5:30 p.m. \$85/\$75member includes reception	Professional landscape practices for biodiversity: Developments in garden design Credit: 4 hrs	Dirs. from London College of Garden Design explain planting design strategies for environmental sustainability.	Lewis Ginter Botanical Garden www.lewisginter.org Richmond
March 5 9:00 a.m.-1:30 p.m. \$20 includes lunch, snacks, tea and coffee	Master Your Garden Credit: 4 hrs	Composting and Drought Protection: Greenhouses & Cold Frames; Wild Flora of Patrick County. Participants can shop at vendor displays for plants, plant-related books, etc.	Patrick Henry Community College, 212 Johnson St., Stuart, VA 276/694-6159
March 7 1:00-3:30 p.m. repeats Mondays until March 28 \$85, \$55 for members	Best Plants for Hampton Roads Credit: 1 hr.	Discover new ideas and get ready for fall planting with horticulturist Brian O'Neil..	Norfolk Botanical Garden 6700 Azalea Garden Road Norfolk, Virginia 23518 (757) 441-5830 www.norfolkbotanicalgarden.org (757) 441-5830

March 8 11:30 a.m.	Native Plants Meet each second Tuesday January-April Credit: 1 hr	Topics: identify plants, choose the right plants, where to buy plants, how to propagate, habitat loss and preservation.	Chris Wise (W&L) Sweet Treats Washington St Lexington
March 9 Noon -1:30 p.m.	Spring Pruning of Woody Plants Credit: 1.5 hr	Eric Wiseman	Hahn Horticultural Garden Virginia Tech, hort.vt.edu/hhg/events.html
March 9 reg by March 3 8:00 a.m.-3:30 p.m.\$70 (includes lunch) after March 3 \$80	Growing for Sustainability Credit: 6 hr.	Tree Care and Pest Mangement	Virginia Western Community College 3094 Colonial Ave, Roanoke 434/220-9024 www.treesvirginia.gov
March 10 8:00 a.m.-4:30 p.m. \$90	Tree Care Symposium Credit: 5 hrs	Looking into the future of our trees: insect pests, green space management, tree protection during construction, managing historic trees and more.	Lewis Ginter www.lewisginter.org
March 12 9:30-11:30 a.m. \$15	Apple Grafting Workshop Credit: 2 hrs.	Grafting is easy to learn and fun to do.	Monticello www.monticello.org
March 19 9:30 - 11:30p.m. \$15	Start a Vineyard Credit: 2 hrs.	Learn the basics for beginning a vineyard.	Monticello www.monticello.org
March 24 7:00-8:30 p.m. Free	Hollow Concrete Spheres Credit: 1.5 hrs.	Debbie Corrington will show how to create a hollow concrete sphere to show off your garden.	Piovano Room Rockbridge Regional Library Lexington
March 24 6:00-7:30 p.m. \$15/ \$10 members	Transforming difficult spaces Credit: 1.5 hrs	Catriona Erier deals with gardens on steep slopes, deep shade, too wet, too dry, too small	Hahn Horticultural Garden TBA, Virginia Tech, www.hort.vt.edu/hhg/events.html

Free online course	NPDN Website Course Credits: 1.5	Emerald Ash Borer Monitoring and Management	http://cbc.at.ufl.edu
March 26 9:30 a.m.-11 p.m. Free, but a contribution to the National Herb Garden would be appreciated.	The National Herb Garden Credits: 1.5 hrs	Christine Moore, curator of the National Herb Garden, talks about the largest designed herb garden in the United States. A gift to the US, it was a collaborative effort between the USDA and The Herb Society of America, Inc. Its mission is to show how these plants are useful around the world.	Preston Library 345 Letcher Rd VMI Contact Faith Vosburgh at faith@thepottingshed.biz
March 26 9:30-11:30 a.m. \$15 Prepayment req. Reserve by calling (434) 984-9880	Pruning practices for woody ornamentals Credit: 2 hrs	What to do and what not to do when it comes to pruning.	Tufton Farm www.monticello.org (434) 984-9822 Enrollment for Saturday Garden sessions are limited
Online courses available	Department of Plant Pathology, Ohio State University	Various Online Courses Available	http://plantpath.osu.edu/extension/outreach/online/index.html
Credit *** Contact Liz Gordon for credit questions: saddleup4travel@comcast.net , 464-4901			

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IN AND OUT OF THE GARDEN

Editor-in-chief Sherry Smith
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The newsletter may also be viewed at www.ramga.org

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ROCKBRIDGE AREA MASTER GARDENERS ASSOCIATION
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