

# IN AND OUT OF THE GARDEN

The September 2009 Monthly Journal  
Rockbridge Area Master Gardeners' Association  
Volume 13, Number 9  
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"Gardening is a way of showing that you believe in tomorrow." Anonymous



## THE PRESIDENT'S COLUMN By Barbara Thomas

Ahhh, the peace and quiet of September! The kids have gone back to college or jobs, the grandkids have gone back to school OR if we are still active in childrearing, there is the structure of school to help keep them busy during the day. Okay, there are still plenty of vegetables that need picking and preserving, beds to be weeded with all the rain we have been blessed with and many more yard chores that call out for completion.

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Filling our slate of RAMGA Board members and Committee chairs also calls out for completion. Please, be generous with your time when the nominating committee or our President-elect (Nancy Smith) calls asking for help. RAMGA truly is only as strong as our volunteers and there are many positions that need to be filled. We will be having a class this coming year, there are educational programs to be planned and public relations to be advertised so maybe you should think about which committee you want to work with, not if you volunteer additional time with a committee (how's that for a dream?).

September is also the month of our picnic, which is a great time to become better acquainted with master gardeners we're not real familiar with and to catch up with good friends from our assorted projects. Husbands/Wives/Partners are invited to partake of the wonderful food and company of RAMGA members. I truly salivate at the thought of the GREAT food from past picnics and this one to come!

**Also, please bring a favorite plant or two to share. We're trying a plant swap this year for the first time.** Basically, if one brings three plants, they would take home three plants from other MGs. I am planning on potting up some of my favorite and best plants to swap. Our election of new officers will take place that night as well. The shelter at

McKethan Park has restrooms, a covered shelter with picnic benches and plenty of parking.

How many of you have also been using abundant summer squash in some fashion most every night for what seems like weeks now? I have baked, broiled, sautéed, frozen, dried, pickled, curried, and casseroled and have disguised it in vegetable patties, salads, soups, lemon cookies and chocolate cake! I have even tried a new method of freezing it: unblanched, sliced and put in 4 layers of paper lunch bags!

Having done some quick research, I now know that zucchini squash probably came over to America with Italian immigrants just after WWI and that there are three basic types of green summer squash: Zucchini (dark green with little or no taper, Marrow (paler green and tapered in shape) and Cozelle (longer and thinner than zucchini with a bulbous end by the flower). Squash are considered to be "promiscuous" because of the myriad of crosses that can be made between the various types. Amazing that there are over 100 varieties of just zucchini! And don't even get me started on crookneck, straight-neck or scalloped squash - just share your favorite recipes at the picnic!



## EASY GUIDER: A REVIEW

By Jim Davis

*Broadleaved Shrubs and Shade Trees: Problems, Picture Clues and Management Options.* By Mary Kay Malinosky and David L. Clement. June, 2009. \$35.00.

This is the quickest and easiest guide to diagnosis that you're ever likely to encounter. Written by an entomologist and a plant pathologist, both with many years of experience, it uses a thoughtfully designed system with clear photographs to help you identify shrub and tree problems, whether diseases, insects, abiotic factors or wildlife. There's a section on miscellaneous organisms, too. Its spiral binding and size, only about five by eight inches, contribute greatly to its usefulness, but the system is its real triumph.

After a brief introduction including a sensible explanation of Integrated Pest Management, a key follows. Under separate headings (leaves, twigs/branches, stem/trunk, roots, whole tree/shrub), plant symptoms are pictured in one column. The possible causes are listed in a second, along with page numbers of the full discussions to come later in the book. The reader can then determine which possible cause is the probable one. Color coding makes everything easy to find. Very brief introductions precede each section of causes, for instance, an explanation of

differences between viral, bacterial and fungal diseases.

In the back there is a "Detailed Contents," really an index, not alphabetized but quite easy to use. Since even an easy guide must use some technical language, there's also a glossary. Some of us, after all, might need refreshing on terms taught in MG Class, such as *cambium*, *instar* and *adventitious roots*.

Everything is clear and concise. Never mind my column last month; the book's short paragraph on spider mites is all you need. (I think there's a lesson in here somewhere.) The price is a bit off-putting, especially to those of us who remember objecting when hardbacks went up to \$6.00. OK, then, use the copy that Becky English has stocked in our Extension office library (but remember—no borrowing for home use). You really ought to own it, however.

Both authors work for the Home and Garden Information Center of the University of Maryland Extension. Go to [plantdiagnostics.umd.edu](http://plantdiagnostics.umd.edu) for their very useful website—free, of course, and with a diagnostic method similar but not equal to the book's. It also offers free publications for downloading and gives an opportunity to ask questions. But I still prefer the book.



## RAMGA ANNUAL PICNIC

September is here and that means it's time for our annual RAMGA picnic. Please join us on **Thursday, September 24** at **5:00 p.m.** at **McKethan Park**. Remember that because we recently changed our calendar year from January to January, it makes sense to have our picnic in September, not June. This is our big social event of the year and we are looking forward to our first Plant Swap between members. For every plant you bring, you can swap for a plant from a different MG. The plant swap and social hour will take place before dinner (approximately 6:00). Elections will take place after dinner. This has always been a fun event so mark it on your calendar now!

Please bring a covered dish and your beverage of choice - alcohol is allowed. There are plenty of picnic tables and benches to sit on, and bathrooms are located right next to the pavilion. RAMGA will provide paper plates, napkins and plastic silverware. Please feel free to be creative in your category.

Desserts: A - F  
 Side Dishes: G - M  
 Main Dishes: N - U  
 Green Salads: V - Z

**Directions to McKethan Park:** Heading north on Route 11, cross the East Lexington Bridge. Turn right at the stop

light on Old Buena Vista Road (Route 631). You will drive 1.8 miles down Old BV Road, passing under Interstate 81 and past Mountain View Road on your left and some dumpsters on your right. At the crest of the hill turn right onto McKethan Park Road. When you come to the fork in the road, stay to your right and drive through the stone pillars with the McKethan Park sign. Proceed ahead to the covered pavilion and parking.



## OCTOBER EVENT

Mark your calendars for the Oct. 29th RAMGA meeting. (It will be the 5th Thurs. instead of 4th Thurs.)

Program: "Remarkable Trees of Virginia"  
 Speaker: Dr. Jeff Kirwan, Virginia Tech Professor of Forestry and 4H Extension Specialist  
 Date: Thursday, October 29, 2009  
 Time: 7:00 PM  
 Place: W&L Library

A Book Signing by the author will be held following the presentation during the refreshment time. The Book Signing will be conducted by The Bookery, a local bookstore in Lexington.

Helen Smith, Anne Riffey-Buckner,  
 Laura Mattingly - Program Committee

## BUY FRESH, BUY LOCAL

Did you know that Virginia has lost over 45,000 acres of farm and forest land annually to development and land conversion since 1987...and that figure is increasing every year.

It requires .2 to 1.2 acres of farmland per person to support a typical American diet.

54% of Virginia farms report a net loss of income.

If each household in the 11-county Shenandoah Valley region of Virginia spent \$10 per week on locally produced foods and farm products, it would generate \$113.2 million dollars annually of direct economic investment in our region's economy, farms, families, and communities!

Here are some local farmers' markets:

### Rockbridge County

#### Lexington Farmers' Market

Jefferson Street Parking Lot

May-October - Wednesdays - 8:00am to 1:00pm

### Orchardside Farmers' Market

273 Raphine Road

May-September - Saturdays - 9:00am to 1:00pm

Also u-pick

### Rockbridge County Farmers' Market

The Virginia Horse Center

May 23-October 31 - Saturdays - 8:30am to 1:00pm

I've been to these Farmers' Markets and, while small, they offer a large variety of produce, baked goods, arts and crafts, and meat. We bought our first locally produced meat from Buffalo Creek Beef and it was very good!



### PIN-UP PLANT - FABULOUS *SPOROBOLUS*

By Dr. Holly L. Scoggins, VT

"Where have you been all my life?!!" Every once in a while I come across a plant and simply fall in love. I am not alone on this particular species as the bandwagon is getting mighty crowded. *Sporobolus heterolepis* is the object of my affections; it even has an intriguing common name - Prairie Dropseed. It's native to much of North America, short of the West Coast. Though it is most widespread in the Midwest, there are isolated populations in Virginia, North Carolina and Pennsylvania. Now on to the juicy description: fine, green foliage forms mounds or tussocks up to a little over one foot tall and up to two feet wide. I describe it to my students as "pet-able." One just wants to run their fingers through the flowing locks. The tiny, fragrant flowers appear in late summer form a fluffy cloud above the

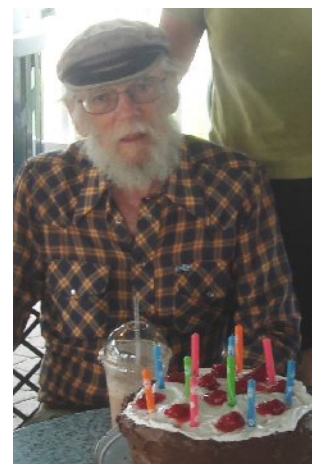
foliage and wave about on slender stems, even with the slightest breeze. Seeds form and then drop to the ground around the plant (hence the common name), at which point the birds scarf them up. There is very little actual germination; the species is, in fact, endangered or threatened in several states (USDA Plants Database). As the weather cools, the fall color can range from bronze to apricot - just gorgeous - and then turns a tawny buff for the remainder of the winter.

As with many prairie natives, this is a very tough character once established - puts up with lousy soil, little rainfall, and is definitely drought tolerant. We've added nearly 100 of them to Peggy's Meadow. At Chanticleer Garden (Wayne, PA), they're planted in huge drifts and are managed in the "natural" way, with controlled burns in the early spring.

Several fine Virginia wholesale nurseries grow *Sporobolus*, including Saunders Brothers, Bennett's Creek and Riverbend - so they're available at an independent garden center near you! Please note this is one of those species that does NOT look very exciting in the pot, but give it a growing season or two and *voila*, you'll fall in love too!



<u>Sept</u>	<i>CALENDAR</i>
5	Techs of Plant Propagation*
10	Vines & Ground Covers*
10	Trees: The Ultimate Stimulus Package*
12	Sustainable Garden Year*
12	Virginia Garden Festival*
12	Spring Into Fall*
15	Wetlands Stewardship Workshop*
18	History & Conifers in Richmond*
19	Discouraging Animal Pests*
19	Henrico Harvest Fair*
24- 26	Returning to Our Roots*
* See Educational Events Calendar this issue	



The BV Team Celebrated Gordon's 75<sup>th</sup> Birthday August 14<sup>th</sup>!!

## Calendar of Educational Events - September 2009

Date	Event/Credits	Content	Location/Contact
September 5 1:30 – 3:30 pm Cost: \$30 Pre-registration required	<b>Techniques of Plant Propagation: a Hand's On Workshop</b> <i>Credits: 2 hrs</i>	Plant propagation is an exciting, self-satisfying, and money saving activity. Learn how to landscape your property using your plants.	Fishersville, VA Viette's Nursery (800) 575-5538 <a href="http://www.inthegardenradio.com/v.php?pg=9">http://www.inthegardenradio.com/v.php?pg=9</a>
Four Sessions: 9/10, 17, 24, AND 10/1 4:00 – 6:00 pm Cost: \$120	<b>Vines and Groundcovers for Residential Gardens</b> <i>Credits: 8 hrs</i>	Vines and groundcovers add height, structure and layers of interest to the garden, so correct selection is essential to achieve the proper balance of texture and form.	Richmond, VA, Lewis Ginter Botanical Garden <a href="http://www.lewisginter.org">http://www.lewisginter.org</a>
September 10 8:00am – 3:30pm Cost: \$40 (\$95 after 8/31)	<b>Trees: The Ultimate Stimulus Package</b> <i>Credits***</i>	Soil Management for Increasing Tree Canopy; Landscaping in Limited Spaces; Assessing Soil in the Built Environment and more!	Waynesboro, VA Becky Woodson @ 434.220.9024 ext 3324 <a href="mailto:becky.woodson@dof.virginia.gov">becky.woodson@dof.virginia.gov</a>
September 12 9:00 – 11:00 am Cost: \$35	<b>Starting the Sustainable Gardening Year</b> <i>Credits: 2 hrs</i>	Basic principles of sustainable gardening & how to plan year-round cycle of gardening tasks.	Richmond, VA Lewis Ginter Botanical Garden <a href="http://www.lewisginter.org">http://www.lewisginter.org</a>
September 12 9:00 am – 4:00 pm Cost: Free	<b>The Virginia Garden Festival</b> <i>Credits***</i>	Educational programs, many demonstrations, garden vendors, food and fun!	Richmond, VA, Science Museum of Virginia 540-382-0943
September 12 9:00 am – 3:00 pm Cost: Free	<b>“Spring Into Fall” VA Beach Master Gardener Conference</b> <i>Credits: 4 hrs</i>	10:30 Herbs 11:30 Camellias 12:30 Turf Grasses 1:30 Sustainable Landscaping	Virginia Beach <a href="http://www.vbmg.org">www.vbmg.org</a> (757) 385-4769
September 15 9:00 am – 3:00 pm Cost: ? Register by 9/4	<b>Wetlands Stewardship Workshop</b> <i>Credits: 6 hrs</i>	Workshop highlighting the biological and physical characteristics of wetlands. Bring lunch and waders	Chesterfield, VA Pocahontas State Park (804) 698-4172 <a href="mailto:srfeaser@deq.virginia.gov">srfeaser@deq.virginia.gov</a>
September 18 5-9 pm AND 9/19 8am – 4pm Cost: \$175	<b>History and Conifers in Richmond, VA</b> <i>Credits***</i>	American Conifer Society Southeast Regional Meeting Garden tours and talks all about conifers.	Richmond, VA John Quackenbush – quack17@bellsouth.net or 706-310-0670
September 19 1:30 pm Cost: ?	<b>Discouraging Animal Pests: Deer, Moles, etc.</b> <i>Credits: 2 hrs</i>	No information on the website yet.	Fishersville, VA Viette's Nursery (800) 575-5538
September 19 8:30 am – 4 pm Cost: Free	<b>The Henrico Harvest Fair</b> <i>Credits***</i>	Landscaping with Native Plants Trees: Current Best Mgmt. Fall Vegetable Gardening	<a href="http://www.co.henrico.va.us/departments/extension/agriculture---natural-resources/harvest-fair/">http://www.co.henrico.va.us/departments/extension/agriculture---natural-resources/harvest-fair/</a>
September 24 – 26 \$320	<b>Returning to Our Roots: Planting &amp; Replanting the Historic Southern Garden</b> <i>Credits***</i>	Provides practical information on planting and maintaining the historic southern landscape.	Winston-Salem, NC 336-758-5900 <a href="http://www.oldsalem.org/index.php?id=286">http://www.oldsalem.org/index.php?id=286</a>

Credits \*\*\* Contact Kip Brooks for credit questions: [kipb@rockbridge.net](mailto:kipb@rockbridge.net) or 462-6160

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**IN AND OUT OF THE GARDEN**

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The newsletter may also be viewed at [www.ramga.org](http://www.ramga.org)

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