

IN AND OUT OF THE GARDEN



The September 2011 Monthly Journal Rockbridge Area Master Gardeners' Association

www.ramga.org

"If you are not killing plants, you are not really stretching yourself as a gardener."

- J. C. Raulston

THE PRESIDENT'S COLUMN

By Amy Scheuer



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SEPTEMBER is finally here, with the cool nights and warm days. Just perfect for maintaining our gardens and getting ready for the colder months.

ALSO, it's the RAMGA Annual Picnic! This year our event will be held at **McKethan Park**, on **Thursday, September 22 at 5:00 p.m.** More details can be found in this newsletter. This is our **BIG** social event (next to the Plant Sale, of course) where we can all share not only gardening tidbits, but other topics of interest. I hope you all can come!!

We are in the process now of gearing up for a new class of MGs. If you know of anyone who would be interested, please have them contact myself, Pat Kovach or Dave Buckner. Thank you, and

HAVE A SAFE LABOR DAY!!

As MGs, it hits home as to what we are trying to accomplish in our schools and community.

Again, please check out the VOLUNTEERS ALERT column.

PRAY FOR RAIN, BUT NOT A HURRICANE!!



Have You Tried the New Reporting System Yet??

To all of those of you who had tried the new reporting system and entered your time, I say a very big thank you. It is so much easier for you plus you know your hours at a glance.

To those of you who have not yet tried the new system, I ask you to do so soon. It is so much better for you if you record your hours as they happen. You will no longer have to keep a separate calendar and then get them onto a time sheet. Work the hours and record them. Keep current.

Do you have your required 20 volunteer and 8 continuing education hours completed yet? By the time you read this it is September with just a few months left to get those hours done. Take advantage of the autumn garden maintenance tasks and our two remaining RAMGA program meetings to get hours completed.

The Flag That Never Flew

This Floral Flag was planted by the Bodger Seed Company as a tribute after the September 11, 2001, tragedy. Located near Vandenberg Air Force Base, it covered 6.65 acres and was 740 feet long and 390 feet wide, maintaining the proper dimensions for the American flag as described in Executive Order #10834. It was the first floral flag to be planted with 5-pointed stars, which were comprised of White Larkspur. Each star was 24 feet in diameter; each stripe was 30 feet wide. The flag was estimated to contain more than 400,000 Larkspur plants, each with 4-5 flower stems, for a total of more than 2 million flowers.

Conifers and Deer by Diana Losche

Dr. Richard Bitner is the author of two best selling books: *Conifers for Gardens, An Illustrated Encyclopedia*(2007) and *Pocket Guide to Conifers*(2010). A newly released book, *Designing with Conifers, The Best Choices for Year-round Interest in Your Garden* contains information about growing conifers when coping with deer. If you can't(or don't want to) build a tall fence around your property to keep deer out, your best alternative is to select conifers that are deer resistant. In the mid-Atlantic region deer candy include two winners: Taxus (yew) and Thuja occidentalis (Eastern Arborvitae). Damage to yews is reversible but damage done to the arborvitae is not. That is because growth sprouts from new wood on yews but not on the arborvitae. For me, neither is an option. Deer eat 6-7 pounds of vegetation a day and grazing occurs in early spring on new growth as well as on established plants during cold, snowy winters. Not good.

Conifers seldom browsed by deer include: Abies(fir) Cedrus(cedar), Chamaecyparis obtusa(hinoki false cypress), Chamaecyparis thyoides(Atlantic white-cedar), Cryptomeria japonica,(Japanese cedar) X Cupressocyparis leylandii(Leyland cypress), Thuja plicata(giant arborvitae) and Tsuga canadensis(hemlock). Both Bitner and Dirr* agree that of the firs the Nordmanniana is magnificent and the Koreana 'Silberlocke' is elegant, though the latter does not like wet feet or compacted soil. Nordmanniana 'Golden Spreader' is slow growing, flat topped, round and bright golden-yellow in winter. Of the four cedar species, Cedrus atlantica is the hardiest and 'Glauca' and 'Glauca Pendula' the most popular. 'Glauca pendula' is very unusual; Dirr writes it can be trained and shaped to resemble a "daddy long-legs or a potato beetle", it is a living sculpture. Deodara 'Karl Fuchs' and 'Kashmir' are

landscape-sized trees. Dirr claims that these are the most popular landscape cedars because they are fast growing and densely fluffy in youth. Cedrus 'Feelin' Blue' is a dwarf, spreading form, growing to 1-3' in 10 years. Of the Chamaecyparis nootkatensis, Bitner remarks on two cultivars; 'Green Arrow', a narrow tree with branches that sweep downward and which if planted in groups would "cause a commotion" and 'Crippsii' which is in the C. obtusa genus, notable for its ferny, golden foliage. There are many more lovely cultivars in this group. Choice selections in the Cryptomeria Japonica genus are 'Black Dragon', 'Globosa Nana' and of special mention 'Yoshino' which is pyramidal to 20' and retains its branches to the ground. Both writers favor 'Naylor's Blue' Leyland cypress which turns blue in cold weather and is the "most open, loosely branched form"(Dirr).

Conifers almost never browsed are: Cephalotaxus (plum yew), Chamaecyparis pisifera(Sawara-cypress), Cunninghamia lanceolata(China fir), Juniperus(juniper), Microbiota decussata(Siberian cypress), Picea (except for the oriental spruce, p.orientalis), Pinus(pine), and Pseudotsuga menziesii(Douglas fir). Cephalotaxus Harringtonia 'Fastiglata' is an upright, formal, slow growing yew and 'Prostata' is low growing and bushy. Chamaecyparis pisifera includes many cultivars which are commonly available; of special interest are 'Boulevard', a blue, and 'Lemon Thread' and 'Gold Mop', both golden yellow. The China fir is a tree for collectors and, unless sheared regularly, needs a large landscape. Exceptional selections of juniper include a Exceptional selections of juniper include a horizontalis 'Mother Lode' which is slow growing, gold in summer then turning deep gold and salmon-orange in winter. The Siberian cypress is an underused and unusual tree. Unlike most cypresses, it likes shade and does well on shady slopes, a tough area to landscape. Of particular interest is P. Omorika 'Pendula Bruns, It is very narrow with strong pendulous side branches, likened by some to a Morticia Adams.

So there you have it. These are all great trees offering a wide range of size, color, shape, and habit and there are many more to choose from. I've planted *Cryptomeria Japonica*, two different cypresses and assorted junipers. So far, the deer haven't eaten any of them. I say "so far", mindful of the adage, hungry deer will eat anything!

* Dirr is Michael A. Dirr whose book *Dirr's Hardy Trees and Shrubs* is referenced in this article.

A Practical Program for Combating Deer Mixed Tactics Work Best By Brad Roeller, Fine Gardening

Despite gardeners' best efforts, deer do damage landscape plantings. The two questions most frequently asked are: "What can I plant that deer won't eat?" and "How can I stop deer from browsing on my favorite plants?" Well, if I had the answers, I'd probably become something of a horticultural legend. The simple answers are that there are very few truly deerproof plants and that, if deer are hungry enough, repellents, scare devices and gadgets, and poorly constructed physical barriers will all fail. Over the years, however, I have developed a repellent program that helps in the fight against deer. With a little diligence and a mix of strategies, you can achieve a "more-than-just-bare-stems" look in your landscape.

Early spring: Hang sachets filled with Milorganite fertilizer around the area, or apply Milorganite (at half the recommended rate) around emerging bulbs and spring ephemerals. Reapply a month later. Applications of liquid foliar fertilizers/repellents, such as Bobbex, work equally well; just don't apply them in late summer or fall. **Late spring/summer:** Apply spray repellents like Deer Solution, an odor-based,

systemic repellent, every three to four weeks once plants have fully leafed out. Spritz flower buds as they appear with an egg-based product like Deer-Off; systemic products are not taken up by flower buds. Deer-Stopper is a good alternative, or you can make your own repellent; mix and spray the following ingredients every 10 days: 1 egg, 1/2 cup of whole milk, 1 tablespoon of

cooking oil, 1 tablespoon of liquid soap, and 1 gallon of water. **Late summer/fall:** Continue your summer program. Evaluate environmental and biological factors (like the abundance of food sources or the increase in deer numbers) to determine if you should rely on repellents or physical barriers, like fencing or burlap wraps, for the winter months.

Winter: Apply a blood-derived spray repellent like Plantskydd during the dormant season (once in November and again in January). Odor- or taste-based repellents can be less effective during cold temperatures. Repellents containing thiram, like Bonide Deer and Rabbit Repellent, will also work; just be sure to add an adhesive like Vapor Gard because thiram does not withstand weather



PLANT CLINICS: WE ALSO SERVE

By Jim Davis

You mean one of our projects is plant clinics? Yep. And one of our oldest, too. We owe the origin of this project to Chuck Norrington, who with his wife, Caroline, (they came as a pair) had so much to do with the success of our project at Natural Bridge School. Chuck came to us from Virginia Beach, and soon after Katherine Smith, who established our unit here, was first president of RAMGA. A retired naval captain, pilot of the C-69 Connie, military version of the graceful four-engine Constellation, he arrived with thousands of MG volunteer hours and experience as a nurseryman. It's hard to imagine better preparation for holding plant clinics. (Is Chuck's military experience beside the point? Not if you love airplanes.)

One Saturday just after my MG Class of 1997, Chuck took several of us to Butch's Hardware Store in Buena Vista for a clinic. We didn't get many questions, but between clients Chuck lectured us on bedding plants racked outside the store. This project was clearly in the right hands.

Naturally, it was with considerable lack of confidence when my first opportunity to hold a clinic came in 2004. Debbie Lugar, RAMGA president, asked MGs to hold demonstrations and clinics that would attract attention to Master Gardening. The hope was to recruit trainees for the next MG Class. Early April found me, Bob Burguières and Karen Orrison at the Rockbridge Cöop. At nine, the RAMGA banner along with us shuddered in a brisk wind at forty degrees. No curious gardeners, however, were in sight. Only later did we learn that farmers alone come early on Saturday. A cold hour later, we had questions and accounted ourselves pretty well. Maybe plant clinics would work, even without Chuck (who, sad to say, died in 2007). More recently and with increasing confidence, we've held clinics at the

Lexington, Rockbridge and Raphine Farmers Markets, Boxerwood and for three years our RAMGA plant sale. This year we held a clinic in RAMGA's booth at the Rockbridge Community Festival.

We nowadays set up tent, table and special banner, bought for the team with RAMGA funds, and lay out pamphlets and reference books. At that point I usually go looking for coffee and a bakery booth. There are plenty of questions at these events, and while many are about the basics of growing tomatoes ("Why are my vines turning brown at the bottom?"), we get some interesting ones from some interesting and convivial people. Can we answer them all? Often not without the help of our handy reference books. If not then, of course we follow the first rule of Master Gardening and promise to find the answer and call the questioner with it as soon as possible.

Like most of our projects, I guess, plant clinics become social events, where we chat with our fellow MGs and with the public, some of whom just want to know what we're all about. One year, I had a lengthy conversation with a farmer from Kansas. He wasn't looking for useful information but had many questions about our amazing landscape and cattle farming. He felt, I'm sure, he'd landed somehow on another planet. We see old friends, too, and make new ones. Plant clinics are indeed an enjoyable and effective way to spread the word about the Master Gardening program. After all, other projects, however worthy, can't move around.

Loyal team members are Karen Carlton, Ann Gruner, Jean Matchette, John Matchette, Laura Mattingly, and Karen Orrison.

Note: This is the sixth in a series of articles reporting the activities of our unit's projects. The series was mandated by the RAMGA Board and is overseen by Vice President Pat Kovach. The purpose is to keep all MGs aware of how busy we are and what good work we do.

Downsizing with Dwarf Flowering Shrubs

by Diana Losche

They say perennials are low maintenance. Ha! During the growing season many require pinching back, deadheading, staking, spraying for bugs and fertilizing. Years of performing these chores takes a toll on knees and backs and so I set about looking for ways to keep our garden beds looking good with as little physical effort as possible. Sydney Eddison's book *Gardening for a Lifetime* inspired me to replace high maintenance perennials with dwarf flowering shrubs. Up came those plants that require more than two tasks and those that need staking, a job I have always disliked. And the tender tuberoses... if they don't survive over the winter with a hefty cover of mulch, forget about it.

In January I hit the books, browsed catalogues and surfed the internet to find out what shrubs are suitable and available. Freezing cold out and I'm thinking about what's hardy, when it blooms, sun or shade...you know what I'm talking about. What optimists we are! Fueled by visions of gorgeous flowers and interesting foliage, who cares that it's 24 degrees outside! The most comprehensive list of shrubs was in an article by Toni Leland on the internet site *Dave's Garden*.^{*} She writes a biweekly gardening newspaper column as a spokesperson for the Ohio State University Master Gardener program and for *Grit*, *Over the Back Fence*, and *Country Living*.

I choose to start with five shrubs. Little Henry Virginia Sweetspire (Lowe's) bloomed it's first spring in my garden. It's fall color is said to be as vivid as any burning bush. From *Garden Crossings* I purchased a Petit Bleu *Caryopteris* 'Minibleu' (yes, I was smitten by the name) which is now forming buds. A dwarf potentilla and Japanese spirea, both white, arrived by UPS and looked awful. Bare roots were brown and totally dry. They greened up slowly and the spirea is has been

blooming for a couple of weeks. The potentilla should bloom next summer. Finally, from Elk Mountain Nursery, I bought a dwarf fothergilla which will bloom next mid-May and will have, so I'm told, dramatic fall foliage. Surprisingly, Lowe's and Milmont stocked a few of these but since they don't provide a catalog, it's always catch as catch can, and I was on a mission.

There are many, many more. A recent email from the Village Garden Center featured vibrantly colored dwarf crepemyrtles in the Razzle Dazzle Series. If there's no room in your garden, plant one in a container. Then plant it out in the fall when your annuals have died back.

As Toni Leland says, "they're little, but they are mighty!"

^{*}To access this article, go to *Dave's Garden's* articles and search for "Dwarf Shrubs: Perfect Choices for Many Reasons"

NOMINATING COMMITTEE SUBMITS SLATE OF CANDIDATES

President Scheuer has announced that the nominating committee has submitted the following slate of candidates to be voted on at our Annual Meeting and picnic on September 22. New officers and the VMGA representative begin their terms on the first of January, 2012.

President, Pat Kovach (now serving as vice president)
 Vice president, Faith Vosburgh
 Secretary, Sally Nunneley
 Treasurer, Bob Kovach (now serving in that office)
 Representative to VMGA, David Mims (now serving in that capacity)

The Annual Meeting this year will be held at McKethan Park. Members of the nominating committee were Jim Davis, Heather Marion and Barbara Thomas.

RAMGA ANNUAL PICNIC

WHEN: Thursday, September 22, 2011

TIME: 5:00 - 6:00 p.m. Social Hour and Plant Exchange
6:00 p.m. Dinner will begin

WHERE: McKethan Park

Directions to McKethan Park: Heading north on Route 11, cross the East Lexington Bridge. Turn right at the Stop light onto Old Buena Vista Road (Route 631). You will drive 1.8 miles down Old Buena Vista Rd, 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.

WHAT TO BRING: Please bring a covered dish and your beverage of choice - alcohol IS allowed. The categories for food to share are:

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

There are plenty of picnic tables and benches, and bathrooms are located right next to the pavilion.

RAMGA will provide paper plates, napkins and plastic ware.

EVENTS:

Plant Exchange
Election of Officers for 2012 Board After Dinner

Volunteer Alerts

1. RAMGA is in need of a new Program Coordinator and committee for next year starting January. Duties include contacting prospective speakers for RAMGA meetings which are held on the 4th Thursday - Feb, March, April, May, October and November. Reserving the meeting place and setting up the room for the meeting. Writing an article for RAMGA newsletter and publicity. If you are interested please contact Caren Nash at nashva@comcast.net or see her at a board meeting.

2. Fall 'Dig and divides'- Tracy wrote an article in June's newsletter outlining our needs. This is our major fundraiser which allows us to maintain our projects. We would like more MGs involved so that this work does not fall onto one person. Please call or email Tracy for more info, (540) 348-6734, tsmitholiver@centurylink.net.



September 2011 Educational Programs

September 9, Saturday, "Water, Water Everywhere So Let's Take Care", Fall Gardening Festival, Va Beach Master Gardeners, Hampton Roads Research and Extension Center, Va Beach, 10am - 3pm. Free. Speakers, plant sales, displays and demonstrations, Arboretum tours. Info at www.vbmq.org *** 4 credit hours for all 4 speakers***

September 16,17, Friday, Saturday. Fall Plant Sale. Lewis Ginter Botanical Garden, Richmond, VA. Friday, September 16, 2011, 10 a.m. - 6 p.m.; Saturday, September 17, 2011, 9 a.m. - 3 p.m. No admission fee required for Plant Sale; regular admission to enter the Garden. For more info: http://www.lewisginter.org/events/event_detail.php?event_id=348

September 16, 17, Friday, Saturday. Fifth Annual Heritage Harvest Festival at Monticello, Charlottesville, VA. Workshops from 9am-6pm Friday and 9am-5pm Saturday. Workshops run the gamut from heirloom garlic and onions to making wine and vinegar to unusual edibles for your home garden, etc. ***Education hours*** determined by workshops attended. Check website for workshop fees. <http://www.monticello.org/site/visit/heritage-harvest-festival-workshops>

September 23, 24, Friday, Saturday. JC Raulston Arboretum 35th Anniversary Symposium "Horticultural Madness". Raleigh, NC. Friday from 8am to 9pm; Saturday from 8am-5pm. Speakers discuss an amazing year of living botanically; bizarre botanicals; attention grabbing plants and innovative combinations, etc. Cost: \$170-\$190. ***Multiple credit hours depending on workshops attended***. More

info:

<http://www.ncsu.edu/jcraulstonarboretum/calendar/2011/09-september/symposium/brochure.pdf>

September 24, Saturday. VMGA Continuing Education Conference on "Cultivating Community Food Systems", 8 am-3pm. Rockingham County Administration Bldg, Harrisonburg. Speakers, group discussions and interaction. Local foods lunch. Registration \$15-20; Lunch \$12. More info at www.vmqa.org ***3.5 credit hours***

Save the Dates:

October 10-11, Monday and Tuesday. NCSU Vermiculture Conference, Chapel Hill, NC. 8am-5pm Monday, 8am-4pm Tuesday. Earthworm farming and commercial vermicomposting taught by industry experts. A conference for beginners or seasoned earthworm farm operators. Early Bird Registration \$215. <http://www.bae.ncsu.edu/workshops/worm-conference> ***multiple credit hours***

October 11-14, International Master Gardener Conference, Charleston, WV. More info at <http://imgc.ext.wvu.edu/> ***multiple credit hours*

October 27th, Thursday - Rockbridge Area Master Gardener Meeting
W&L Campus Compost & Garden Projects 7:00 - 8:00 pm in the Piovano Rm -
Rockbridge Regional Library Bill Hamilton, Biology Professor and chair of the University Sustainability Committee, and Chris Wise, Environmental Management Coordinator will present an overview of efforts to make Washington and Lee more sustainable emphasizing the composting and Campus Garden project. Everyone is welcome to attend. Please visit our website at www.ramga.org for more information.

Officers

Amy Scheuer, President
 Pat Kovach, Vice President
 Bob Kovach, Treasurer
 Ann Gruner, Secretary

David Mims, Representative, Virginia Master Gardeners Association

Standing Committees

Carol Schoner, Records Coordinators
 Caren Nash, Programs

Faith Vosburgh, Publicity

Ted Jenks, Plant Sale
 Liz Maurer, Education coordinator
 Molly Delappe and Cecile West-Settle Newsletter

IN AND OUT OF THE GARDEN

Editors-in-chief Molly Delappe and Cecile West-Settle

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The newsletter may also be viewed at www.ramga.org

Subscription rates: \$10.00 per year.

