

# IN AND OUT OF THE GARDEN

## The September 2010 Monthly Newsletter Rockbridge Area Master Gardeners' Association

[www.ramga.org](http://www.ramga.org)



"A garden is never so good as it will be next year." Thomas Cooper

### PRESIDENTIAL THOUGHTS

By Nancy Smith

September! Do you think that means cool weather? Probably not so cool that the days won't feel like summer for a while, I bet.

In the expectation of fall, there are a few things we can do for our gardens this time of year: start a garden renewal program. Many such chores mimic those of spring. The value of doing them now is that it will be a huge head start on May plantings.

Clean up the garden beds. Rake and destroy all the dead leaves so there is no possibility of disease to hide, dormant but waiting, in the soil only to wreak havoc with the freshly planted flowers and vegetables.

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This is also a great time to turn the soil completely inside out, aerating it and breaking up underground weed remnants.

Gather some of the soil and have a ph test done to determine which amendments may be necessary for the health of the garden.

This is a good time to work some manure as well as compost into the garden. By doing so now, the amendments will have a long time to break down and really feed the soil. Don't forget the value fallen leaves add to the soil.

Divide perennials, divide and transplant overcrowded bulbs. Don't forget to offer some bulbs to the dig and divide committee for the Plant Sale. This is also the best time to plant new spring bulbs.

Cut away any dead or damaged branches on the roses, and cut away any dead flowers. Mulch around the base of the bushes and prune the canes back to 6-12 inches.

Check houseplants that have been summering outside before you bring them into the house. Make sure there are no little beasties coming along for the ride -they'd thrive in the warmth of the house.

Finally, clean up those garden tools. Scrub them clean with soap and water and disinfectant, such as bleach, sharpen the cutting edges and oil the blades thoroughly.

Now, don't you feel good that you have accomplished so much? As soon as we get through another Rockbridge winter, you will be ready to plant as soon as the frost date passes.



**A NOTE FROM THE RAMGA RECORDS  
COORDINATOR  
Carol Schoner**

I can't believe we are more than half way through 2010. It seems just weeks ago that we had snow on the ground and a new MG class in session. Well, maybe that is a stretch, since it seems forever that we have had this hot, hot, hot weather.

As the records keeper, I look at our volunteer and CE hours monthly. As of the end of July we have recorded over 1,600 hours. That sounds pretty good until you realize that we had recorded 5,500+ hours last year and we had 12 less active volunteers. Maybe this hot weather has kept us inside rather than out in the project gardens this summer, or we are not keeping up with completing and submitting time sheets reflecting the many hours we are putting in. My guess is that the truth lies in a little of both.

You now have four months left until the end of the year. Three of those should still be good for some gardening - especially the clean-up tasks. Please review how many hours you have already put in and calculate how many you need to stay active (20 volunteer and 8 continuing education hours annually). Then sign up for the fall dig & divides or help with the late summer/fall clean-up tasks in the various projects we have around town. Check the newsletter for classes in and around this area to make sure you are keeping up with gardening techniques and know how. And start getting those time sheets to me. I know that many of you wait

until the end of the year, but that means I am recording those hours during the holidays (which is not much fun). So submit early.

Keep digging!



### PICNIC TIME!! - SEPTEMBER 23

**Jordan's Point Park** will be the setting for the RAMGA Annual Picnic, **Thursday, September 23 at 5:00pm**. We will again have a plant exchange. This is a great opportunity to share your bounty and to add new plants to your garden space. The social hour and plant exchange will take place between 5:00-6:00 with dinner beginning at 6:00. After a wonderful meal, we will have the elections for Officers of the next year's Board

As in the past, you are invited to bring a covered dish to share and a beverage of your choice -alcohol is **NOT** allowed at this city park. RAMGA will provide paper plates, napkins and plastic ware.

Categories for food to share - a little different from last year so pay attention:

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

Jordan's Point Park is located on Rt. 11. Coming from the South (Lexington), it is just before you reach the East Lexington Bridge; coming from the North (Lowe's), it is just after you cross the bridge. We'll be

gathering at the Pavilion. It'll be a great event so come and enjoy friends and food.



### ELECTION OF OFFICERS FOR THE BOARD - NOMINATIONS DUE BY SEPTEMBER 12

A traditional part of the Annual Picnic is the election of Officers for the Board. In order to do that, we have to have nominees from which to choose.

This is where you come in. If you have an idea who would serve the organization well (including yourself), please contact the Nomination Committee with your thoughts. Elections will take place at the picnic on September 23 so the Nominating Committee asks that you have your nominations into them by **September 12**.

Committee contact information:

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They are ready to hear from you.



## RAMGA HOSTING THE VIRGINIA MASTER GARDENER ASSOCIATION EDUCATION SEMINAR

All MGs please remember the VMGA Education Seminar that RAMGA is hosting Saturday, October 16<sup>th</sup>. The session will be at Natural Bridge; stay tuned for the specific location. We'll learn about successful school gardens and teaching in the outdoors. VMGA is the Virginia Master Gardener Association, Inc., our state-level organization. Every year, they hold programs across the state for continuing education. Of course it's appropriate that one on successful school gardens be held here, and even more appropriate that Rockbridge area MGs attend.



### GIMMICK, GADGET OR USEFUL DEVICE?

#### Part II

By Jim Davis

In our previous issue, I asked for reports on garden gimmicks or gadgets MGs have bought. I wanted to know whether they were as good as the catalogs claimed so that others could buy the useful and usable and avoid the junk. I was not overwhelmed with responses, but here's some information I received and some from my own experience.

Jeanne Eichelberger sent a detailed report on the Tractor Scoot from Gardener's Supply (\$100.00). You've probably seen this vehicle in the catalog or a similar one in *A.M.* Leonard's Gardeners Edge. With its "comfy rear-end-shaped seat" about two feet off the ground, the Scoot allows one to weed and plant without kneeling or awkward bending.

It's equipped with a tray for tools and a basket for weeds or whatever. The wide wheels are inflated for a smooth ride on, not deeply into, the ground. The front steering handle, like that on a toy wagon, is used to steer or pull and can be adjusted to different heights. Well, is it a buy? Jeanne says maybe. Some of the parts for assembly were faulty. As a result, even with replacement parts the adjustable handle won't stay in its adjusted position, and steering is awkward and difficult.

Jeanne's verdict at this stage of use was "well designed but poorly executed." But wait—there's more. The size of the Scoot is three feet by two. It's really too big to use inside a flower bed—unless the plants are more than two feet apart. "This gizmo is good for rolling *alongside* the bed," says Jeanne, "preferably on the nice obliging surface of a well-mowed lawn."

Could the Leonard's model be better? It's lighter, somewhat smaller and \$20.00 cheaper. I have a third version of the same kind of gizmo, the Step 2 Garden Hopper, which I got as a gift. It's much smaller and simpler than the two under discussion, just a rolling seat with space for tools. It isn't very comfortable, nor is it suitable for much of the work inside a bed. But it's handy for impromptu sitting and for other jobs, like painting or washing something close to the ground. At only \$30.00, it's perhaps a compromise. For various models or to order, go to [www.step2.com](http://www.step2.com).

Keeping furry critters out of the garden is an inexhaustible subject. Here's my contribution. The claim of the Havahart trap company is that the gardener can easily trap

groundhogs, possums, squirrels and more, without harming the critters. The problem is, of course, what to do with the animal once it's caught. The Havahart website is rather vague on the subject. Just be sure, they say, not to catch endangered species and to call the local wildlife rehabilitation center if it's injured. Yes, of course. I'm sure it's in the yellow pages. If you're OK on these counts, can you then release the animal elsewhere? From a call to the Department of Game and Inland Fisheries you'll learn the law forbids releasing trapped animals on another person's property. (Who'd do such a dastardly thing anyway?) But you can legally kill it on your own property. At our MG mini-class a couple of years ago, drowning the animal in a fifty-gallon drum or shooting it were suggested, resolutions perhaps not agreeable to all.

The Havahart folks don't get into all this. They do, however, offer a new trap, especially for skunks. This one can be set with a single move. They say it's easy to release the animal, too, but they don't mention a *single move*, something that might be handy if you're in a hurry to get rid of a skunk. Anyway, what will the skunk be doing while you're carrying the cage and during the easy release?

I was faced with this unpromising outlook very recently when I had hoped to catch a groundhog in an old Havahart. Fortunately, I remembered what an animal control officer told me years ago. I threw an old shower curtain liner over the cage, calming the skunk and shielding myself from any spray. I was thus able to transport the animal and release it. Working the release mechanism, a two-handed operation, through the thickness of

the shower curtain was a little scary; I could certainly have used a quick-release device.

The Havahart folks don't get into any of this, either.

There's a lesson somewhere in these experiences—if only we could dig it out. At any rate, I was glad I heard from no one who had bought one of the sillier gimmicks common in the catalogs. Or is someone just keeping quiet?



### DID YOU KNOW.....

Maybe we can breathe a sigh of relief about this winter. The 2010 Farmers Almanac says our part of the country will have "average temperatures with average precipitation." I certainly hope so!

We might think we have a lot of choices when it comes to potatoes, i.e., Idaho Russet, Yukon gold, fingerling, and red potatoes, but in Peru where potatoes were first domesticated, they still cultivate more than 5,000 varieties!

During the Dutch "tulip mania" in the 1600s, tulips were such valuable commodities that signified wealth - bulbs of one variety cost \$10 to 15 million *each* in *today's* dollars.

## RAMGA MAINTAINS BOOTH AT COIMMUNITY FESTIVAL

Through the efforts of Pat and Bob Kovach and their assistants, RAMGA had an attractive booth at the Rockbridge Community Festival on Saturday, August 28. The Festival is an opportunity for organizations to show who they are, artists and artisans to display and sell their work and many others to sell products or otherwise raise funds. It also gets folks out to see what's going on around here and to make new friends and contacts.

Our booth, really a small tent, had the RAMGA banner prominently displayed inside. There, attendants were armed with the Master Gardener Handbook, information about our program and a sign-up sheet for any considering the next MG Class. Selected gardening brochures were laid out on a table. The front was adorned with Bonnie Appleton's posters ("How to Kill a Tree" and "How to Plant"), very nicely printed in vivid color.

Lea Braford, Molly Delappe and Cecile West-Settle managed the booth on the first shift, starting at 9:00. Later, John Dinkle, Ann Gruner, Jeanette Matchette and Sally Nunnely would form crews till the Festival was over at 3:00. Bob and Pat Kovach set up the booth and dismantled it at the end. Thanks to Pat and Bob for leading the team and to all who worked to keep the booth open all day.



**REMINDER: RAMGA  
BOARD MEETING –  
SEPTEMBER 14 – 2:00PM**



## Calendar of Educational Events – September 2010

Date	Event/Credits	Content	Location/Contact
<b>Sept. 1</b> 1:30-3:30pm Cost: Free	<b>Discourage Pests</b> Credit: 2 hr.	Andre, gardener and nurseryman, tells how to discourage deer, rabbits, squirrels, groundhogs, skunks, voles and moles. Mentions repellents and resistant plants.	Andre Viette's Fishersville, VA <a href="http://www.inthegardenradio.com">www.inthegardenradio.com</a> 800/575-5538
<b>Sept. 4</b> 1:30-3:30pm Cost: Free	<b>Transform Summer Containers into Fall</b> Credit: 2 hrs.	Learn about plants that enjoy cool nights and can bring color to your fall containers. Learn secrets to planting a spectacular container, including planting mums "laying down," etc.	Andre Viette's Fishersville, VA <a href="http://www.inthegardenradio.com">www.inthegardenradio.com</a> 800/575-5538
<b>Sept. 8 &amp; 11</b> 1:30-3:30pm Cost: Free	<b>Viette's Fall Garden</b> Credit: 2 hrs.	You won't believe how many plants are still looking great and how much color there still is in the garden. Plan for fall color through foliage, flowers, and berries.	Andre Viette's Fishersville, VA <a href="http://www.inthegardenradio.com">www.inthegardenradio.com</a> 800/575-5538
<b>Sept. 9</b> 10:00am-2:30 pm Cost: \$30 FOSA members, \$40 nonmembers. Includes box lunch. <b>Res. req.</b>	<b>Boxwood Workshop</b> Credit: 3 hrs.	Lynn Batdorf, U.S. National Arboretum, covers the selection and propagation of boxwood, controlling pests and diseases, and appropriate care. Learn to propagate boxwood varieties from cuttings. Add to the arboretum collection and take cuttings home.	UVA's Blandy Experimental Farm in Boyce <a href="http://www.virginia.edu/blandy/">www.virginia.edu/blandy/</a> 540-837-1758

<p><b>Sept. 9</b> Cost: \$40-85 Includes lunch</p>	<p><b>Urban Tree Health Care Workshop</b> Credit: 1 each hour of learning</p>	<p>Sustainable Roadways: Beautification for Virginia, ArborMaster® Training; Root Zone Biology &amp; Amendments; Take a Walk on the Buggy Side of Town; Tree Stabilization Systems; Practices for Staking Transplanted Trees</p>	<p>Waynesboro, Ridgeview Park 434-220-9041 <a href="mailto:Barbara.White@dof.virginia.gov">Barbara.White@dof.virginia.gov</a> <a href="http://www.treesvirginia.org">www.treesvirginia.org</a></p>
<p><b>Sept 10</b> 9:00am-Noon Free Hopkins Green</p>	<p><b>Focus on Flare - A Workshop</b></p>	<p>Gain hands on experience with inspecting root flares of trees for potential problems</p>	<p>Registration required. E-mail Betty Besal <a href="mailto:bbesal@ci.lexington.va.us">bbesal@ci.lexington.va.us</a> by 9/3</p>
<p><b>Sept 10</b> Time: TBA Cost: Free Agenda &amp; registration. Details TBA</p>	<p><b>Urban Forestry Roundtable</b> Credit: 1 each hr of learning</p>	<p>Connecting and Effecting Urban Forestry Efforts with Underserved Audiences.</p>	<p>Metropolitan Washington Council of Governments Bld., 777 North Capitol Street, NE. <a href="http://www.treesvirginia.org/urban_forestry_roundtables.htm">www.treesvirginia.org/urban_forestry_roundtables.htm</a></p>
<p><b>Sept. 11</b> 10:00am-3:00 pm Cost: Free</p>	<p><b>Community Gardening Festival: Centsible Gardening</b> Credit: 1 each hr of learning</p>	<p>Save Money with edible landscapes and gifts from the garden. Grow plants with multi-season interest, and learn propagation. Speakers, demonstrations, tours, plant sales, educational displays, silent auction, bake sale.</p>	<p>Hampton Roads Agri. Center 1444 Diamond Springs Rd. 757/385-4769 <a href="http://www.vbmg.org">www.vbmg.org</a> <a href="mailto:bettyv@cox.net">bettyv@cox.net</a></p>
<p><b>Sept. 11</b> Times: online Cost: Some Free See more info online</p>	<p><b>Monticello's Heritage Harvest Festival</b> Credit: 1 each hr of learning</p>	<p>Organic gardening; preservation of traditional agriculture and regional food. Tastings, workshops and a speaker from Seed Savers Exchange in Iowa.</p>	<p>Thomas Jefferson Visitor Center, <a href="http://www.monticello.org">www.monticello.org</a> 434/984-9822 <a href="http://www.heritageharvestfestival.com">www.heritageharvestfestival.com</a></p>

<p><b>Sept. 15</b> 1:30 -3:30 pm Cost: Free</p>	<p><b>Viette's Well-Planned Garden</b> Credit: 2hrs.</p>	<p>From determining your site conditions to preparing the perfect soil, you will learn how to plan a perennial garden that will flourish.</p>	<p>Andre Viette's Fishersville, VA <a href="http://www.inthegardenradio.com">www.inthegardenradio.com</a> 800/575-5538</p>
<p><b>Sept. 15</b> 10:00am-Noon \$8 FOSA members; \$10 nonmembers <b>Res. Required.</b></p>	<p><b>More than Bulbs &amp; Pansies</b> Credit: 2 hrs.</p>	<p>Learn about hardy annuals you can plant in fall then forget until spring. Seeds available for purchase following the program</p>	<p>Blandy Exp Farm 540-837-1758 <a href="mailto:fosaevents@virginia.edu">fosaevents@virginia.edu</a></p>
<p><b>Sept. 16-17</b> Cost: Conference, \$65</p>	<p><b>Good Green, Bad Green: Invasive Plant Control for Habitat Restoration.</b> Credits: 1 each hr of learning</p>	<p>The two day conference/field-tour explores habitat restoration techniques in controlling invasive plants.</p>	<p>Northern VA 4-H Center, Front Royal <a href="http://www.forestryforthebay.org/ggbg/">www.forestryforthebay.org/ggbg/</a> 540/564-3080 or <a href="mailto:goodgreenbadgreen@vt.edu">goodgreenbadgreen@vt.edu</a></p>
<p><b>Sept. 18</b> 1:30-3:30pm Cost: Free</p>	<p><b>Viette's Fall Bulb Spectacular</b> Credits: 2 hrs</p>	<p>Explore spring bulbs: How to choose the best bulbs, plant for success and divide bulbs correctly. Receive 3-4 free daffodil bulbs.</p>	<p>Andre Viette's Fishersville, VA <a href="http://www.inthegardenradio.com">www.inthegardenradio.com</a> 800/575-5538</p>
<p><b>Sept. 21</b> 10:00-11:30am Cost: \$8 FOSA \$10 nonmembers Res. Required</p>	<p><b>What Trees &amp; Landscapes Say about Indigenous Lifestyles</b> Credit 1.5 hrs</p>	<p>What trees, place names, and accounts of early European explorers tell us about indigenous North Americans' lives &amp; diets.</p>	<p>Blandy Exp Farm 540-837-1758, <a href="mailto:fosaevents@virginia.edu">fosaevents@virginia.edu</a></p>
<p><b>Sept. 22</b> 8:00am-3:30pm Reg deadline 9/8 \$20 includes breakfast &amp; lunch</p>	<p><b>Healing Through Gardening</b> Credit: 1 each hr. learning</p>	<p>Program designed for volunteers and professionals who work with persons of special needs. Workshops, vendors, panels.</p>	<p>James City MGs in Williamsburg <a href="mailto:eskkak@cox.net">eskkak@cox.net</a> 757/565-0335 <a href="http://www.jccwmq.org">www.jccwmq.org</a></p>

<b>Sept. 23 &amp; 24</b> Meeting: Free Conference: \$30	<b>Valuing Urban Forests: Science, Application &amp; Action</b> Credit: 5 for conference	Arlington Department of Parks, 2700 S. Taylor St. Public meeting(evening) & 24 (Day Conference)	<a href="http://www.frec.vt.edu/urbanforestvalue/">www.frec.vt.edu/urbanforestvalue/</a> (540) 231-1611 <a href="mailto:jfmunsel@vt.edu">jfmunsel@vt.edu</a>
<b>Sept. 25</b> 9:30am-1:30 pm Cost: \$10	<b>Monticello's Seed Saving Workshop</b> Credit: 2.5 hrs.	Learn the dynamics of seed production—pollination, timing, seed identification, cleaning, and storing—then visit the gardens for a hands-on collecting demonstration.	<a href="http://www.monticello.org">Garden Center, Thomas Jefferson Visitor Center</a> <a href="http://www.monticello.org">www.monticello.org</a> 434/984-9822
<b>Sept. 25</b> 9:00am—1:30 pm All Free except Rain Barrel workshop, \$40, 1 <sup>st</sup> come, 1 <sup>st</sup> served	<b>Master Gardeners Go Green-\$ave Green Symposium</b> Credit: 4.5 hrs	Sustainability in the Home Landscape, Using Organic Pesticides, MG Q&A Session, Environmental Lawn Care, Sustainable Plants for Home Landscape, Rain Barrel Workshops	Brittingham Community Center Newport News 757-591-4838 <a href="http://nngardening.org/events/events.html">http://nngardening.org/events/events.html</a>
<b>Sept. 25</b> 1:30-3:30pm \$20 or 2 for \$30 Pre-register	<b>Viette's Techniques in Plant Propagation</b> Credit: 2 hrs.	Landscape your property using your own plants by dividing, taking cuttings, layering, and seeding. Take home free plant divisions. A propagating demonstration tour is included	Andre Viette's Fishersville, VA <a href="http://www.inthegardenradio.com">www.inthegardenradio.com</a> 800/575-5538
On-line courses available for credit	<b>Department of Plant Pathology, Ohio State University</b>	Various online courses available	<a href="http://plantpath.osu.edu/extension/outreach/online/index_html">http://plantpath.osu.edu/extension/outreach/online/index_html</a>
Credit *** Contact Liz Gordon for credit questions: <a href="mailto:saddleup4travel@comcast.net">saddleup4travel@comcast.net</a> , 464-4901			

**2009-2010  
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**IN AND OUT OF THE GARDEN**

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 Managing Editor Jeanne Eichelberger

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

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