

February 2022

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Submissions due the 20th of the
preceding month.

Into the Garden

Leadership Team Letter

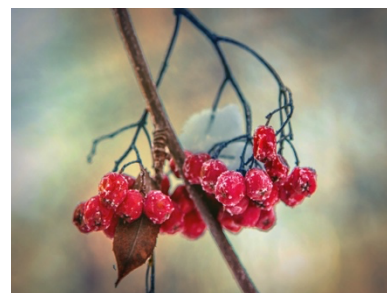
Jen Coluzzi, Anita Tuttle, David Caldwell

Happy New Year! Another year has passed and as the seasons change so does RAMGA's approach to organizational leadership. Faith has transitioned the Presidency to us - it took 3 to replace her! - speaking volumes about her commitment to leadership and community service. Now, winter is upon us and with it brings deciduous transformation, eager to sprout new life.

Our mission is clear: *Sharing Knowledge. Empowering Communities.* Our Vision: To be the Virginia Cooperative Extension (VCE) volunteer organization extending horticulture and environmental outreach across the Commonwealth. We care about you, your thoughts, your safety & well-being, and we are excited to work together to make our community one of Virginia's best!

It's all about life, so let's live it! Healthy living organisms - whether humans or plants - need the right mix of nutrition and

care at the right time. What works for one plant may not work well for another. For



people it's even tougher, and with new strains of COVID, we encourage you to put your health at the forefront so you can better care for the people (and plants!) you love. We will continue to keep everyone's safety in mind and look to VCE for continued guidance on holding in-person events, being respectful of each of your comfort levels.

Let's continue to be safe as we continue through the winter. Remember to wear your masks at any indoor RAMGA gatherings (like our upcoming Seed Swap on January 27th), label your gardening potions & poisons, read your MSDS labels, and stay hydrated!

We hope to see some of you at the Seed Swap, others of you at the Virtual Plant Clinics on Zoom,

and hopefully even more of you as the temperatures warm up and we can start comfortably gathering outdoors again!

Jen, Anita and David

Don't forget February's RAMGA Zoom Plant Clinic, "Feeding the Birds Naturally" on Saturday, Feb. 19th at 11am. Register on the RAMGA home page, www.ramga.org

RAMGA FYI...

MGs, have you paid your 2022 RAMGA dues yet? Dues are \$25 per year, and you can pay online at www.ramga.org under the Members Section (interns, you have already paid). Or you can mail a check made out to RAMGA to PO Box 1383, Lexington, VA 24450.

If you haven't already done so, it is time for volunteers to re-enroll in the EMG program for 2022. This can be done through Better Impact:

1. Log into Better Impact at myimpactpage.com
2. Go to the "MY PROFILE" tab at the top right corner of the screen
3. Click the Qualifications subtab
4. Read and agree to the four statements provided (contact information update, voluntary disclosure, EMG Standards of Conduct, EMG Volunteer Agreement)
5. Set the expiry date for the end of the calendar year (12/31/2022)

WELCOME, RAMGA CLASS OF 2022!

Meeting and Greeting the Class of 2022

By Tamara Teaff

During one weekday morning, four afternoons and one Saturday session, the sixteen members of the training class of 2022 met with representatives of the Class Steering Team to receive their official orientation in the process of learning how to become an Extension Master Gardener volunteer.

Held in the Extension Office Conference Room, the sessions met in small groups (of no more than three trainees) in an effort to be COVID safe. Peggy Agnor greeted each trainee and shared the training schedule. Bob Kovach demonstrated how to access the Master Gardener Handbook and the online modules. Each trainee received instruction on taking an online quiz, in order to test their understanding of each horticultural concept presented in the modules. The trainees are now ready to learn independently. On February 24, they will experience their first hands-on lab through





Zoom with Scott Baker who has Integrated Pest Management experiences ready for their participation. Both Peggy and Bob reported that the trainees are eager to learn and to become involved in teaching about gardening in the Rockbridge Area Community.

Delivery of Important Trainee Documents

Meeting the RAMGA Class of 2022 PART 1

By Tamara Teaff

Editor's Note: Each trainee was asked to complete a "Getting to Know You" questionnaire prior to their first orientation session. Following are eight of the trainees' responses. More short bios will follow in future newsletters. With COVID limiting our meeting in large groups, the Class Steering Committee felt that this type of introduction would be a valuable tool for the RAMGA membership. Enjoy getting to know the trainees.

Jacqueline Rose Boston

She prefers to be called JackeRose and is a newcomer to Rockbridge, having only resided here one year. She loves her new home and hopes this is the last move ever, since she has moved about 50 times. JackeRose is a retired teacher/librarian. In her career she did instruction on software apps, digital photo, and was responsible for staff and parent newsletters. She also taught math. Her personal interests involve reading, camping, sewing, and crochet/knitting. She also enjoys hiking, and biking. She admits that her husband added an electric motor to her bike so she can make it up those hills of Rockbridge County. She enjoys riding her bike into town and cites a goal to locate all the bike racks in the city of Lexington.

JackeRose relates a memorable event from her teacher background. It is the "best thing ever when a person's eyes light up and they get it, especially if they hated math before having me as a teacher". She also taught crochet to teen girls, something to appreciate with their moms and grand moms. One summer, JackeRose lived in a tent on National Forest Land where she left no trace when she packed out. Currently, JackeRose is volunteering at the historical Jackson House Museum Garden.

Pascale Couturier

Pascale arrived in Rockbridge County in April of 2021. She works at Maple Hall Academy, a therapeutic boarding school in Lexington. Pascale has been working in the youth mental health field for a few years.

Stating that she has a passion for cooking, Pascale enjoys trying out new recipes with friends and family. She also enjoys spending time outdoors doing such activities as camping, hiking, snowboarding, and canoeing. Pascale shares a personal memory of gardening. "My first memory of gardening was with my grandfather at my grandparents' summer cabin in Shediac, New Brunswick (I am Canadian). We picked fresh cucumbers and ate them with a sprinkle of salt as an afternoon snack. I've loved growing and sharing food ever since."

Currently volunteering at Project Horizon, Pascale has volunteered in several homeless and/or women's shelters over the past ten years. She is excited to be joining the gardening volunteering community as well.

Deborah Funkhouser

Debbie admits to having deep "roots" in the area as she grew up in the Oak Bank/Fancy Hill area on a multi-generational family farm, a portion of which she still owns. School, work, and marriage took her to some beautiful and interesting places such as Charlottesville, DC, Ithaca, Cairo, and Boston. Five years ago, after retiring as a librarian, she returned to the area with her husband, John. Their grown-up son is still in Boston. Debbie is quoted as "having her fingers in too many pies". She admits to volunteering here and there at Lexington's many stellar local institutions and supporting causes dear to her heart. Her gardening interests lie with creating, restoring, and protecting native habitat. Likewise, Debbie has located a happy, creative community at Make it Sew where she works to improve her sewing skills using one or more of her rescued vintage sewing machines. Debbie also admits that her "enthusiasms exceed her time capacity".

She fears that she will never read all the books on her shelves or execute the many projects on her Pinterest Boards.

Becky England Attains Emeritus Status

By Ann Riffey-Buckner

Becky England, a member of the founding class of 1994, has been awarded Emeritus status by the Virginia Cooperative Extension for her twenty-seven years of faithful service to Rockbridge Area Master Gardeners.

Becky is a native of Tidewater, and in one of those twists of fate, grew up ten miles away from our founder, Katherine Smith, the person who organized that first class. Becky knew Katherine's grandfather, the doctor. Still, the two women did not actually meet until they both turned up in Lexington, interested in the Master Gardener program.

That first class was the genesis of the newly hatched Rockbridge Area Master Gardeners. They needed a treasurer, so Becky stepped up. Then it emerged that, in addition to keeping track of the money, she actually had to raise the money. They started selling dig and divide plants on Hopkins Green, and some years later that sale has evolved into the blockbuster event we now fondly call The Plant Sale.

Becky was in charge of a project we had then, the Firebaugh Garden at the community library. I had the pleasure of serving with her on that and learned a lot in the process. We were called "Fireballs".

Memorably, Becky and the late Doris Stark planned uproarious annual bus trips to a variety of destinations, including Washington DC, the state arboretum at Blandy, an especially memorable one to Lynchburg-on and on. The trips featured meticulous planning and they pressed their husbands into service reconnoitering the route ahead of time. Wine and goldfish were always served on the trip home.

As if all that isn't enough, Becky is active on the Help Desk, along with Katherine Smith. She has been involved in curating our library of reference books. When Pat Tichenor stepped back as chair, Becky assumed that role.

If you get a chance, ask her about her father's knee replacement surgery, one of the first to be performed.

Congratulations to Becky on her well-deserved Emeritus status. We are building on the foundations that she and those early collaborators built. Thank you!

WELCOME!



JackeRose Boston



Pascale Couturier



Debbie Funkhouser



Melanie Griffis



Becky Herndon



Ben Huger



Patti Jansen



Keith Koehler



Mary Katherine Lawrence



Beverly Lorig



Terri Palmer



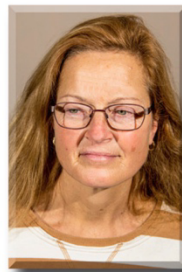
Amy Schwartz



Shana Shutler



Bert Utsey



Pamela Wercinski



Ed Whitmore

RAMGA Class - 2022

Abbreviated Board Minutes, December 16, 2021

Treasurer's Report (Karen Lyons and Jan Smith): The Vanguard investment account is being set up. The bill for background checks will be about \$360.

Records and Website (Bob Kovach): Bob has been working on the Bedford modules for the 2022 class.

Class Steering (Peggy Agnor and Tamara Teaff): The meet and greet training sessions will soon begin for the new trainees. Graduation will be June 11, 2022. Labs are scheduled for the RARA building. CSC members are reviewing the online modules.

Communications (Faith Vosburgh): Newsletter deadline is the 20th of the month.

Plant Sale (Margaret Howard): The plant sale committee will order plants from Fancy Hill and North Creek. It is always difficult to get ordered plugs large enough to get ready for the sale. Dave Bryer suggested the heated greenhouse at Boxerwood.

Plant Clinic (Vera Winkler): Zoom clinics have been planned for the next seven months.

School and Demonstration Gardens (David Bryer): Dave is looking for ideas for new projects and events and will be sending out a request for ideas from the membership.

Seed Swap (Karen Lyons): The Seed Swap will take place on January 27 at 7pm in the Piovano (RARA) building. Bob will have the seed library on the website by the end of the year.

Continuing Education Opportunities:

(Local opportunities in **Bold and a larger font**)

February 9, Wednesday, February 10, Thursday, 9:00 am – 4:15pm, “Building Plant Diversity Builds Resilient Landscapes”, Winter Symposium and CVNLA Short Course, Lewis Ginter Botanical Garden, Richmond. Lots of speakers of interest with a special emphasis on native plants. For more information, <https://www.lewisginter.org/event/winter-symposium-cvnla/>

February 14, Monday, 1:30pm. Enjoy your lunch and join members of the Upper James River Chapter of the VA Native Plant Society to talk about planting combinations of native plants via Zoom. Contact Jan Smith for the Zoom registration, janhuntersmith@gmail.com

February 19, Saturday, 11am – noon. RAMGA Online Plant Clinic. “Feeding Birds Naturally”. What do birds need and when? How do I know what plants are good for birds? How do I garden with these bird friendly plants? Register for the Zoom presentation on the home page of www.ramga.org

February 21, Monday, 3pm – 4:30pm. Piedmont Master Gardeners Spring Lecture Series: “Learn How to Start Flowers and Vegetable Seeds Indoors”. Zoom presentation. For more information: <https://piedmontmastergardeners.org/events/>

March 5, Saturday, 9:15 – 11:35 and Saturday, March 12, 9:15 – 11:35. Bedford Master Gardeners annual symposium, “Grow the Good Life” via Zoom. \$18 for each weekend, \$36 for the entire presentation. March 5 presentations: “Gardening in a Chaotic Climate”, “Plants You Can Eat and Drink” and March 12 presentations: “Gardening Simplified: Plants and Design Solutions for Time-Pressed and Maturing Gardeners” and “Good Weeds: Bad Weeds: What You Should Know About the Plant You Didn’t Plant”. Register here: <https://www.bedfordareamastergardeners.org/event/grow-the-good-life/>

March 12, Saturday, Gardening in the Valley Symposium, 8:00 am – 4:00 pm, Hester Auditorium, Hester Hall, Shenandoah University, Winchester, VA. “Attracting Beneficial Pollinators”, Carrie Whitacre of Blandy Farm, State Arboretum of VA; Berenice Thieblot, “Reclamation of a Quarry”, “Growing Minds – School Gardens”, teachers Jennifer Horn and Christina Pezzimenti; “Role of Natural Remedies in Pet Health Care”, Dr. Wendell Combest; “Educational Public Gardens”, Perry Matthewes, Deputy Director, Museum of the Shenandoah Valley. \$65. Includes lunch and breaks. To register or for more information, contact www.nsvmg.org/events/symposium/

March 16, Wednesday, 8:00 – 4:00 pm, Roanoke Tree Health Care Workshop, sponsored by Trees Virginia. Virginia Western Community College, Roanoke. www.treesvirginia.org

March 18, Friday, Shenandoah Valley Plant Symposium 2022, 8:00 am – 4:15 pm, Best Western Inn and Conference Center, Waynesboro, VA. Speakers include Carol Reese on native plants, Paul Westervelt on new perennial introductions, Scott Beuerlein on survivor trees, and Marie Butler on designing for wildlife. \$95 registration includes lunch. Contact <https://www.waynesboro.va.us/971/Shenandoah-Valley-Plant-Symposium> for registration and/or more information.

Faith’s Garden Notes...

Wildflower of the Year: Buttonbush (*Cephalanthus occidentalis*)

This is one of my favorite native shrubs. It is a fairly large deciduous shrub or small tree, usually 6’ – 12’, but sometimes larger, with a coarse open habit, often found in wet areas. To see one locally, Boxerwood has a large one on the lodge side of the wetland. What makes this shrub stand out are the flowers. Blooming in early to mid-summer, they are a pollinator’s delight – and flower arrangers are pretty fond of them, too. They look like little cannonballs with tiny fragrant white flowers arranged in a 1 – 1.5” sphere.

Long styles (the structure that connects the stigma and the ovary in a flower) protrude from the individual flowers giving a pincushion effect. The flower heads mature into dry nutlets to form a compact brown woody ball that persists through the winter and provides a food source for twenty-four species of birds.



Fall color is usually yellow, but sometimes burgundy.

Buttonbushes are carefree plants that will grow in sun or shade (but not deep shade). They will grow best in moist to wet soils. Blooms form on new wood, so prune while the plant is dormant. Old shrubs can be rejuvenated by cutting the stems to the ground to force new growth.

There are several cultivars available. “Sputnik” will mature to 8-10’ and ‘Sugar Shack’ is more compact from 3-4’ with red fruit instead of brown. I have two of the latter, but they are still too young to fruit and I have had no problems with them, except for a few deer nibbles. But with the cold weather we have been having, can you blame them?

<https://www.missouribotanicalgarden.org/PlantFinder/PlantFinderDetails.aspx?kempercode=q830>

<https://vnps.org/wildflower-of-the-year-2022-buttonbush-cephalanthus-occidentalis/>

<https://hgic.clemson.edu/buttonbush/#:~:text=Several%20cultivars%20are%20available%2C%20including,has%20a%20rounded%20growth%20habit.>

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