

November 2022

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Into the Garden

Leadership Team Letter

Jen Coluzzi, Anita Tuttle

Can you believe how fast this year has flown by?! We're approaching the holiday season and the growing season has ended. It's time for most of us to take a break and reflect on our shared accomplishments for 2022. The LT wants each of you to know how much we appreciate everyone bouncing back from pandemic restrictions and taking those first brave steps back into communal participation in all RAMGA's activities.

DID YOU KNOW:

Rockbridge County contributes the largest share to our Agent's salary of any county that he serves?

1. The Master Gardener area of the Extension Office and all the supplies, telephone, and computer are provided to us by VCE at no charge to RAMGA?

2. The Unit Administrative Assistant provides a report to the County Supervisors every month detailing the contributions that RAMGA makes in our service area? Virginia Cooperative Extension allocates State funding based on

the performance of not only the agent, but the associated volunteer groups?



That's how important it is for all of us to record our hours of service. Without documentation, RAMGA stands to lose these resources. Thanks for your help in telling how much you contribute to the Master Gardener mission!

The Board has taken time to do a preliminary review of everyone's entries into Better Impact. Guess what? We've seen your faces at multiple locations on many days and - we can't find you in BI! Maybe you're just planning an hours-entering blitz over the long Thanksgiving weekend; that's OK. If you break out in hives at the thought of facing BI, please ask for help! Kaila Holmes has offered to enter hours for those who... just...can't. But please respect Kaila's time constraints and don't wait until New Year's Eve to contact her.

Thanks for serving your community and your planet through your dedication to RAMGA. We wish you a wonderful holiday season!!!

Look for our next LT letter in 2023.

Anita and Jen

MASTER GARDENERS AT WORK IN THE COMMUNITY

Buena Vista Mountain Day

By Tamara Teaff

RAMGA had a presence at the annual Mountain Day. Organized by Jill Alvarado, Master Gardener volunteers manned two booths. One booth displayed our recently updated Brag Board (designed by Jen Coluzzi) and offered materials and advice on gardening in Rockbridge County. The Plant Clinic was on hand in the second booth (coordinated by Anne Riffey-Buckner) to answer questions about all things horticultural. Members of the Class of 2022 were on hand to field questions about taking the Master Gardener training. There was a raffle for fall plants that was eagerly embraced by the visitors to the booth.

Thanks to the multiple volunteers, RAMGA boasted a proud presence at Mountain Day 2022.



Anne Riffey-Buckner oversees the Plant Clinic booth



RAMGA booth at Buena Vista's Mt. Days

RAMGA Class Training Opportunity

Class Training is implementing a new idea for the training of the Class of 2023. It is that of Lab Assistant. The committee is offering this opportunity to all RAMGA members.



The role of Lab Assistant is contributing to the preparation, implementation, and timely execution of a lab so that the class runs smoothly for the students, the instructor(s), and the host location. All planning such as locations and instructors will already be in place by the Class Training team. The Lab Assistant is more of a moderator to make sure that the lab is the best possible learning experience for the trainees.

Being a Lab Assistant provides the opportunity to participate in one of the 10 hands-on labs offered to the new class. Your presence will provide an occasion to upgrade your personal knowledge in one of the specific areas of learning as well as provide a chance to meet the new class members. Labs are offered in the evening or on Saturdays. Being a Lab Assistant will also count as volunteer hours.

If interested in learning more about becoming a lab Assistant, contact Peggy Agnor, pcagnor@gmail.com, Beverly Lorig, bev7@mac.com, or Mackenzie Brooks, mackenziebrooks@gmail.com

Want to be Master Gardener Volunteer?

On October 5, 2022, the Class Training Committee offered a Zoom session to 15 people interested in becoming a Master Gardener volunteers. Led by Peggy Agnor, the participants viewed a slide show of the various aspects of the training along with slides of RAMGA's community involvement. Bugs Utsey (class of 2022) and Mackenzie Brooks (Class of 2019) gave testimonials on their training experiences. The recorded Zoom is available on our RAMGA web page.

NEW MASTER GARDENERS

By Tamara Teaff

Congratulations to our New Masters Gardeners!



Amy Schwartz models her newly earned RAMGA t-shirt alongside Smokey the Bear at Mountain Day with Beverly Lorig (right), also a newly certified Master Gardener.

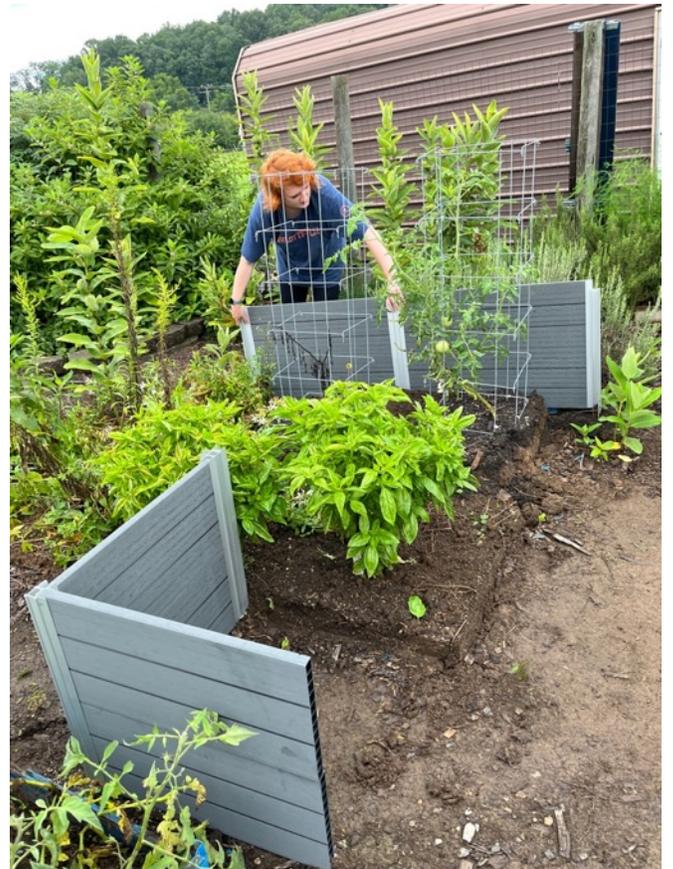
Ben Huger proudly displays his t-shirt while volunteering at the Jackson House Museum Garden





JackeRose Boston received her 50 hours t-shirt while volunteering at Boxerwood Gardens and Nature Center

Mary Katherine Lawrence works to construct the new raised beds at Natural Bridge Elementary School.



Paxton House Garden: A Master Gardener Demonstration Garden inside Glen Maury Park, Buena Vista, VA

By Lori Wood

Gardening and Local History



RAMGA began a cooperative project with the Paxton House Historical Society in the summer of 2015 on the site of the circa 1831 Elisha Paxton House in Glen Maury Park. The goals of the project included:

- Design and install a landscape to enhance the historic site and provide examples of historic garden elements.
- Install plantings that demonstrate gardening techniques useful to gardeners now.
- Create a venue for garden oriented public education programs and events that share the connections between modern garden practices and local history.

Master gardener volunteers began as consultants and administrators of the landscape plan. They continue to coordinate and oversee ongoing maintenance and development of the garden. Master gardeners also plan, coordinate, and execute educational garden programs and community outreach at the site, with an emphasis on gardening best practices. Future outreach programs will work on including stories of the diverse people who lived on the site.

What to See at the Paxton House Garden

You may stop by the garden for a self-guided tour (see the brochures in a box on the garden fence). Glen Maury Park and the grounds of the Paxton House are open to the public from dawn to dusk. The demonstration garden offers something to see throughout the year:

- Winter: Dormant perennial herbs, such as rosemary, thyme, lavender, and sage, anchor the raised herb bed along the fence on the east side of the house. Stone markers identify the plants, and an adjacent brochure box offers additional information about historic uses of herbs. Large evergreen specimen plantings on the house's front lawn offer wildlife shelter and create a more romantic setting for the home. Formal boxwood plantings along the front façade of the house echo the formal symmetry of the historic brick home.
- Spring: Romantic old-fashioned flowers – daffodils and peonies -- brighten the house landscape in early spring.
- Summer: A variety of herbs, annuals, and a native vine – coral honeysuckle (*Lonicera sempervirens*) on an arched trellis over the entry gate, take center stage and flourish in the summer. Tucked in around the useful herbs in the raised beds, you may also see colorful zinnias and assorted vegetables, a nod to the kitchen gardens of the 19th century. Observe pollinators at work enjoying the bounty of food sources.

- Fall: While the garden blooms are in decline, the color of a sugar maple tree in front of the house, bids a cheerful farewell to the growing season. Fading blossoms, seed heads, and stems of herbs and annuals in decline are left in place to provide benefits to flora and fauna.

Events at Paxton House Garden and Volunteer Opportunities

Starting in October 2015, Master Gardeners offered regular public events at the Paxton House, such as a fall plant and shrub sale, and Labor Day Garden tours, garden-oriented demonstrations, and family friendly activities. Labor Day events were offered in tandem with Paxton House Historical Society tours of the historic home, as well as local history-oriented exhibits and activities. Public events were on hold throughout 2020-2021-2022 due to Covid-19 concerns. We look forward to resuming in person public programs in 2023.

Find Out More! Get Involved!

We welcome new volunteers from RAMGA and the community to join in our work at Paxton House Garden. Extra hands help us maintain and improve the gardens, as well as fill out our staffing needs for planning and holding public programs. For more information, contact the garden coordinator, Lori Wood, phone/text: 571-213-9458 or email: lorihobbywood@gmail.com.

****However, this project will end in 2023.**

CONTINUING EDUCATION

There is never much going on in-person from November – February, but there is a plethora of webinars and zoom presentations online. Use this down period in the garden to catch up on your Continuing Education hours. Here are a few sites to check out:

Mt. Cuba Center is the foremost native plant garden in the Piedmont area. They have a number of great classes online, usually at a cost of \$15. www.mtcubacenter.org

The Smithsonian “Let’s Talk Gardens” series is consistently excellent and free. Most of them are archived. <https://gardens.si.edu/learn/lets-talk-gardens/> .

And the VCE Master Gardener website has a number of great webinars and videos available. <https://mastergardener.ext.vt.edu/ce/>

Saturday, November 12, 10:30am – noon, Piovano Room, Rockbridge Regional Library. “Wines and Vines” with Gonzalo Ortiz, a 3rd generation viticulturist and enologist who will share his passion and knowledge of wines. Sponsored by the Rockbridge Area Master Gardeners.

A RAMGA Program: Every Mushroom Is Eatable-ONCE!

By Tamara Teaff



These words of wisdom were delivered at the RAMGA sponsored community program, *Mushrooms in the Library*, on October 22 at 10:30 a.m. in the Piovano Room of the Rockbridge Regional Library. The presenters were Vicky and Chris Vacher who delighted a standing room only crowd with the basics of the kingdom of fungi. They also fascinated the group with ways to identify wild edible and poisonous mushrooms common to our area. Chris and Vicky are two of 12 people certified to sell wild mushrooms in the state of Virginia. Experts, indeed.

The first part of their presentation dealt with the fundamentals of the fungi kingdom. Attendees received a handout displaying the parts of the mushroom, listing both scientific and common names. Information was shared about ways to target specific mushrooms by recognition of details such as gill attachments, cap shapes, color, and reproductive structure. Who knew there were so many unique aspects to the structure of a mushroom?

Part 2 put into application the importance of the careful and thorough observation of a mushroom in order to determine if it is edible or not. Participants learned about poisonous mushrooms with such frightful names as destroying angels (*Amanita bisporigera*) or vomiter (*Chlorophyllum molybdites*). Chris graphically explained the physical results of eating these mushrooms. Not a pretty picture. Moving onto a more pleasant subject of eatable mushrooms, the morel (*Morchella esculenta*) was high on the list of desirable mushrooms to harvest. Other edible mushrooms were described: bear's head tooth (*Hericium americanum*), lion's mane (*Hericium erinaceus*), comb tooth (*Hericium coralloides*), and hen-of-the-woods (*Grifola frondose*). Fun names. However, Vicky expressed a bit of favoritism for chanterelle mushrooms (*Cantharellus cibarius*) as these mushrooms have a slight fruity flavor with a hit of apricot.

If the 62 attendees (of which 17 were Master Gardeners) left the presentation wanting more information, the presenters can be revisited at their website: WWW.ENCHANTEDNATURETOURS.COM



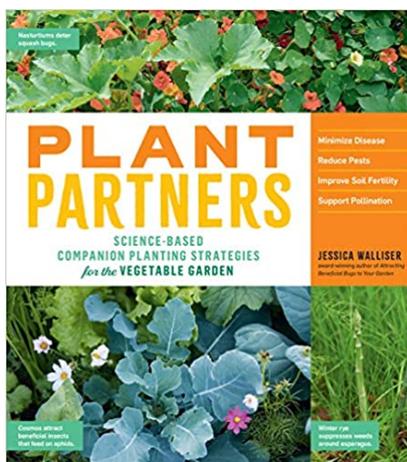
Hen-in-the-Woods mushroom

NOTE: Also, in attendance were 7 kids who impressed the presenters with their knowledge of mushroom hunting.

BOOK REVIEW

By Tamara Teaff

Plant Partners, Science-Based Companion Planting Strategies for the Vegetable Garden by Jessica Walliser. 2020. Storey Publishing.



I remember my grandmother planting nasturtiums among her zucchini plants. She called the nasturtiums “the guardians”. Why did her zucchini need to be guarded? I never questioned her. Because of this book, I now have an explanation. She was protecting her plants from squash bugs! In this book, I learned that Iowa State University did a study and found a significant decrease in the squash bugs and the amount of squash bug damage when nasturtiums (*Tropaeolum majus*) were planted side by side with zucchini. This was in comparison to zucchini growing by themselves in bare soil. I was impressed. Not only with the Iowa State folk but also with my grandmother. I am sure this plant partnership was passed down to her from her mother or aunts. Maybe even family folklore.

This book presents researched-based rational, scientifically tested plant partnerships. The author describes how plants interact with and influence each other. She identifies specific plants that she names as “plant protectors” or “sacrificial plants”. These plants attract the bad bugs so that they chomp on those sacrificial plants instead of your valued vegetables. Also, the author encourages the use of plants that attract pollinators that will increase your crop production. There is also information about when to plant and where to plant.

The book provides full-page colorful photos to illustrate each plant partnership. Although, you learn the science behind each plant partner, this book is not boring. As we are approaching the time of the year when planning next spring’s vegetable garden may be a cold winter night activity, this book may prove to be an entertaining resource. Plant combinations improve the ecosystem by creating a well-balanced environment in your garden. There are benefits of improved soil health, weed control, and decreased pest damage. No matter if you are an advanced or beginning gardener, you will be fascinated by this book.

The author is a horticulturist and author of numerous gardening books. Find out more about her at <https://www.jessicawalliser.com>

Faith’s Garden Notes...

Every year, around the third week of October or so, depending on the weather, I anxiously await our ginkgo tree's leaf fall. Ginkgo leaves are gorgeous all year round, but they are especially pretty in the fall when the fan-like leaves turn a saturated shade of yellow. And then at one magic moment, all the leaves fall at once and create a perfect yellow circle around the base of the plant. I think part of the beauty of this habit is that it is so ephemeral. A windy day will do away with that leaf corona in an instant.

The Virginia State Arboretum at the Blandy Experimental Farm outside of Winchester, VA, has the largest public ginkgo grove in America. It is well worth a visit, especially in the fall.

<https://blandy.virginia.edu/>

Gingkoes (*Ginkgo biloba*) have been around for about 150,000 million years and were native to North America at one time. Now its native habitat is eastern China. It is a deciduous tree that is a true gymnosperm (it doesn't flower; the seeds are naked) along with the Dawn Redwood and Bald Cypress. There are many cultivars out there – a columnar one, dwarf ones, compact ones. Just be sure you buy a named male cultivar. Female ginkgoes have a very smelly prolific seed. The straight species can get to be 100' tall. Ginkgoes are very easy to grow, tolerate all kinds of conditions and have no disease or insect problems. As a result, they make a good street tree. You can see ginkgoes lining the streets of Roanoke.



Ginkgo has been part of traditional Chinese medicine for ages. Nowadays it is sold as a supplement for memory loss or brain health.

Sources:

<https://www.missouribotanicalgarden.org/PlantFinder/PlantFinderDetails.aspx?kempercode=z990>

<https://blandy.virginia.edu/fall-2022-ginkgo-info>

Dirr, Michael A. ***A Manual of Woody Plants***. Revised Edition. Stipes Publishing, 1998.

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