

October 2022

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Into the Garden

Leadership Team Letter

Jen Coluzzi, Anita Tuttle

RAMGA has had a great season of working in our communities - and we're not done yet! The Leadership Team sends out huge thanks to all those who have worked hard to get our message out and let the Rockbridge area know that we're back in full force. The return of the in-person Plant Sale was a tremendous success even though we had to face some unexpected challenges during set-up. Thanks to all who contributed time, effort, and expertise!

June's picnic welcoming our newest class was fun and gave all of us a chance to catch up with folks we hadn't seen during pandemic conditions. Not to be taken for granted, there was enough yummy food for all no matter our dietary orientations. Thanks to all who attended, contributed, and embraced the Class of 2022! RAMGA also sent a large contingent to Master Gardener College in Blacksburg. We were nearly overwhelmed by all of the cutting-edge presentations and energized to bring the ideas back to the Rockbridge area. Of note:

RAMGA was the only unit to be awarded two VMGA scholarships.

School gardens are back! Thanks to all who answered the call for Fairfield Elementary and triple thanks to the MG who stepped up to revive the program. Natural Bridge Elementary has picked up with force. The board approved a one-time expenditure for composite raised beds to replace the wooden beds that came to the end of life. One civil engineer, one project leader, and several volunteers later, the beds are installed and look mah-velous. Hope you have a chance to drop by and be impressed!

August at Lexington's Community Day was wonderful. Thanks to our event organizer and everyone who signed up to advance RAMGA's public outreach. The Plant Clinic booth featured a raffle that placed nine lovely butterfly weed plants in loving homes. Bonus: some of the plants had Monarch eggs and several winners let us know they were taking good care of this iconic butterfly that's now on the endangered species list.

The September picnic was a second opportunity for us to

connect with friends and - you guessed it - more culinary wonders offered up by RAMGA members. We really do good food; no brag, just fact. In the meantime, all our local projects continue to reach out with science-based horticultural information to help our neighbors grow better plants in better ways - including a planting

blitz in our Habitat for Humanity community on September 24. October and November will see a return of programs at the Rockbridge Regional Library. We'll have fun learning about Mushrooms on October 22 and Wines & Vines on November 12. Both programs start at 10:30 AM at the Lexington Library. Stay tuned for details! Be sure to check the calendar on the

RAMGA website to keep up with all we're doing. Again, huge thanks to all of you for making our communities better every day!!!

Anita and Jen

MASTER GARDENERS AT WORK IN THE COMMUNITY

Natural Bridge Elementary School Garden Update

By Barbara Thomas, project co-leader

As many RAMGA members know, after our Plant Sale last spring, various projects were able to take and use some of the leftover plants. A number of plants went to the Natural Bridge Elementary School Project and were given to students in second through fifth grades (about 120 kids). Others were used around the school to fill in areas that needed plants.

This fall, while in the school cafeteria to set up our annual Potato Feast, I ran into a grandmother of one of our students. The grandmother is a cafeteria employee. When she figured out that I was the "Garden Lady", she proceeded to tell me about her granddaughter's cherry tomato plant that she was given last May. Her eyes lit up while describing the fun they had together in planting, tending, picking, and eating those tomatoes. She also related that her granddaughter recently counted all the green tomatoes left on the plant, with the hope that all 20 remaining would ripen "before it gets too cold". It was delightful to hear about the impact of our plants through the eyes of "Nana". Both were grateful for the plant and the numerous tomatoes! A hearty Thank You to RAMGA!





Becky Herndon helps dig potatoes



Barbara Thomas at work at Natural Bridge Elementary

New Raised Beds at Natural Bridge Elementary School Garden

Thanks to a generous monetary donation from RAMGA, new raised beds are in place at Natural Bridge Elementary School Garden. Members of the Garden Team, met on Saturday, September 10th to construct the beds. The construction was led by Class of 2022 Intern, Mary Katherine Lawrence. With her engineering background and patient guidance, the new beds were completed with only one morning work session.

Mary Katherine Lawrence with the newly installed sign celebrating the new garden beds





Left: Garden bed before



Right: Garden bed after

BOXERWOOD NATURE CENTER & WOODLAND GARDEN

RAMGA Boxerwood Project Description 2022

By Phyllis Fevrier

WHEN

Master Gardeners meet on Wednesday morning for 2-3 hours with the time flexible for the season (8:30-11 in summer and 11-1:30 in winter) Also, on Saturday mornings from 9:00-11:30.

WHERE

Master Gardeners, along with Boxerwood garden staff and some community volunteers, are responsible for 5 distinct areas. We welcome new volunteers!

1) Pollinator Garden

Throughout the year we tend this well-developed perennial garden which is designed and planted for pollinator support and public education. There is a wide variety of seasonal bloomers for nectar, host plants for larva, and plants for winter shelter. We watch for invasive weeds, tend plant signage,

collect seed, divide plants, and transplant seedlings as well as maintaining pathways for public safety and Boxerwood education programs.

2) Series of Rain Gardens

Like most of Rockbridge County, the landscape slope at Boxerwood creates erosion issues. We help maintain rain gardens, catchment ponds, and run-off areas. These are designed to look aesthetically pleasing to the public. However, they serve a vital purpose. The rain gardens slow the flow of water by utilizing the right plants in the right drainage places along a berm and swale network.



3) Adrienne’s Garden

Historically this area was the Munger Family kitchen herb garden. We now target the area to present to the public shade loving, deer-proof ground covers. These perennials offer soil cover and pollinator support as well as examples of landscape plant material.

4) Native Plant Sanctuary

This area was started 10 years ago by the local Upper James River Native Plant Chapter to create a native plant area for wildlife and to inspire people with the beauty and performance of shade-loving native plants. Master Gardeners work in partnership with Native Plant members and Boxerwood staff in this area by helping to maintain pathways for public access and interpretive signs for increased understanding of native plant ecology. The Master Gardener Native/ Invasives new class training lab is held here.

5) Boxerwood Front Entrance



This site demonstrates the basics of landscape design that include proper plant materials for the site; budgeting and procurement, installation and maintenance. Also, deer fencing, plant ID tags, weeding, and pruning throughout the year keep this garden’s educational access to the public strong. The design, created by Faith Vosburgh, is modeled after Piet Oudulf, a Dutch landscape designer, who uses native plants and grasses for seasonal interest while incorporating permaculture ideas. Contact project leader, Phyllis Fevrier, if interested in becoming part of the Boxerwood team. 540-460-9298, phyInfred@gmail.com

NEW MASTER GARDENERS

By Tamara Teaff

Congratulations to our New Masters Gardeners!

Newly trained Master Gardener volunteers, Bugs Utsey and Beverly Lorig, proudly display their official VMGA t-shirts that they received as an award for achieving their 50 volunteer hours to become certified RAMGA members. Attached to each shirt, on the sleeve, is a recently designed RAMGA patch, which was created by Jen Colluzi. These patches will be available for purchase soon on our RAMGA website. Others who have achieved 50 volunteer hours from the Class of 2022 are Melanie Griffis, Becky Herndon, Ben Huger, Patti Jansen, Pam Wercinski, Pascale Couturier, and Mary Katherine Lawrence.



Welcome to a future Master Gardener!



Pascale Couturier, Master Gardener from the Class of 2022, and her husband, Chass, welcomed Fabienne Jocia Armstrong on September 8 to their family.

RAMGA FYI...

Thursday, October 13, Pesticide recycling at the Rockbridge Farmers' Cooperative, 33 Yellow Rail Lane, Lexington.

RAMGA Hours: Please remember to keep your volunteer and CEU hours up to date. It is much easier to do them on a regular basis rather than waiting until the end of the year!

CONTINUING EDUCATION

Thursday, October 6, 7:00pm – 8:00pm. Free webinar: “The Right Tree for the Right Place: Selecting Ecologically Valuable Native Trees” with Matt Bright, Conservation Manager of Earth Sangha, hosted by the Loudoun County Master Gardeners. www.loudouncountymastergardeners.org

Saturday, October 15, 9:00am – 2:00pm. 2022 Fall Plant Sale at the Thomas Jefferson Center for Historic Plants, 1354 Tufton Farm, Charlottesville. Credit card only. All plants will be 20% off.

Saturday, October 15, 2:00am – 4:00am. Garden Basics: Love Food, Hate Waste” sponsored by the Piedmont Master Gardeners. Trinity Episcopal Church, 1118 Preston Ave., Charlottesville. RSVP here: <https://piedmontmastergardeners.org/events/garden-basics-love-food-hate-waste/#rsvp-now> .

Tuesday, October 18, 11:30am – 1:00pm. Blue Ridge Prism presents webinar “Homegrown National Park” with Doug Tallamy. www.blueridgeprism.org Register here: <https://www.eventbrite.com/e/blue-ridge-prism-presents-doug-tallamy-zoom-registration-399576472987>

Wednesday, October 19, 7:00pm. Zoom presentation: “Alternatives to Mowed Grass Lawns” with Wren Fure of the Valley Conservation Council. Sponsored by the Rockbridge Area Conservation Council. Register here: https://us02web.zoom.us/meeting/register/tZlqd-ihqz4rH922kiRUI3Vv-LVUjw2L4_6

Saturday, October 22, 10:00am – Noon. Fall Woods Walk with the Virginia Master Naturalists at Montpelier, 11350 Constitution Highway, Montpelier Station. Register here: <https://18927altru.blackbaudhosting.com/18927altru/tickets?tab=2&txobjid=722a053f-b5d6-435b-ad1c-50e4fd613d86>

****Saturday, October 22, 10:30am, Piovano Room, Rockbridge Regional Library. Mushroom program including basics of the kingdom fungi and the identification of wild edible and poisonous mushrooms in our area by Chris and Victoria Vacher of Enchanted Nature Tours. Sponsored by RAMGA.**

Thursday, October 27, Noon – 1:00pm. Zoom Presentation: “Native Alternatives to Replace Invasives in Your Garden”. Smithsonian “Let’s Talk Gardens” series. Free. Register here:

https://smithsonian.zoom.us/webinar/register/5416624900851/WN_Ik3VyFtiRCesWShyeCldOQ

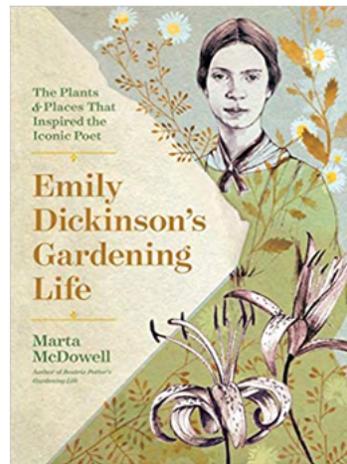
BOOK REVIEW

By Tamara Teaff

***Emily Dickinson’s Gardening Life, the Plants and Places that Inspired the Iconic Poet* by Marta McDowell. 2019. Timber Press.**

*The Bee is not afraid of me,
I know the Butterfly,
The pretty people of the Woods,
Receive me cordially-
The Brooks laugh louder when I come—
The Breezes madder play;
Wherefore mine eye thy silver mists,
Wherefore, Oh Summer’s Day?*

Emily Dickinson



I memorized this poem for a class assignment in high school. Recently, I was weeding around the beebalm in my garden. Bees were everywhere but my presence was not a concern to them. This poem popped into my memory, and I began to wonder about Emily Dickinson. Did she have a similar experience to write that first line of the poem? Was she a gardener? As a result, I did a quick Google search and discovered this book. It reflects Dickinson’s life as it relates to her passion for gardening. Yes, passion! Emily Dickinson was a passionate gardener. The author takes the reader back in time to Amherst, Massachusetts and to the Dickinson’s family home, The Homestead. Her interest in botany is reflected in her poetry. Dickinson studied botany in school and wrote a poem about the scientific method of classifying flowers and a poem about soil fertility. The author refers to her plant poetry as “scientific art”. This book is a biography of Dickinson as a person, a writer, and a gardener.

Removing the dust jacket from the hard cover version of the book, I was surprised by a gold embossed cover. Another treasure is found in the plant illustrations, photos, and archival images of people, places, and plants, as well as excerpts from her poetry and letters. The book is cataloged into two parts: Part 1- life as a gardener throughout the seasons. Part 2- a guide to her garden, including a list of plants which she actually grew. Dickinson forced hyacinth bulbs in the winter, saved seeds in the summer, and pressed flowers, which she included in her correspondence. As a gardener, she got muddy.

Emily Dickinson wrote in the language of flowers, bees, birds, trees, and the seasons. In her poetry, there are 424 flower references. This book interweaves biographical facts with gardening information. It is well researched with 15 pages of references and citations. Of interest is the story of the current restoration of

her gardens.

The author teaches landscape history and gardening at the New York Botanical Gardens. Her mantra is “I am, therefore, I dig”.

With the winter garden landscape in the near future and the dormancy that comes with that season, I find comfort in this Emily Dickinson quote, which I discovered through this book.

“There is nostalgia in the winter garden but also hope.”

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