

THE GARDEN GATE

A Community Newsletter by the Rockbridge Area Master Gardeners

September 2023



INSIDE THIS ISSUE:

- Gardening Events, p. 2
- Fall Garden Tips, p. 2-3
- Weed of the Month, p. 4
- Garlic Planting, p. 4-5
- Recipe: Tomato Chutney, p. 5-6
- Animal Invaders, p. 6-7

Welcome, everyone, to the Rockbridge Area Master Gardeners' community newsletter. Each month we will be bringing you relevant seasonal horticultural information for Rockbridge County. If you enjoy this newsletter, please pass it on. Subscription information is on the last page of this newsletter.

LOCAL FARMERS MARKETS

- **Lexington Farmers Market**, behind the Southern Inn, Weds., 8am – 12:30pm
 - **Rockbridge Baths Farmers Market**, Rockbridge Baths Fire Station, Sat., 9am – 11am
 - **Glasgow Farmers Market**, corner of 10th St. and Kanawha, Fri, 10am – 2pm and Sat., 9am – noon
 - **Kerrs Creek Community Market**, 27766 West Midland Trail, Sat., 9am – noon
 - **Fairfield Farmers Market**, 5613 North Lee Highway, Sat., 9am – noon
 - **Seasons' Yield Farm Market**, 165 Oakland Circle, Raphine, 2nd and 4th Saturdays, 10am – 2pm
-

GARDENING EVENTS AND EDUCATION

The American Horticultural Society has just published their catalog for their new Lifelong Learning program featuring many celebrated horticulturists and plant professionals. The classes look like they are on Wednesday evenings for the most part. \$15 for non-members and \$10 for members. I am definitely signing up for several of these. Check it out. And they all count towards RAMGA Continuing Ed. hours. <https://ahsgardening.org/lifelong-learning/>

As a note – joining AHS is well worth it. Their bi-monthly magazine is excellent and as a bonus, you will be a member of their AHS Reciprocal Admissions Programs (RAP) which gets you in free to more than 345 public garden and arboreta across the county. Boxerwood is a RAP member, so your Boxerwood membership card also gets you free admission to all those gardens.

Saturday, September 16, 9:00am – 2:00pm. Open House and Plant Sale at the Thomas Jefferson Center for Historic Plants, 1293 Tufton Farm, Charlottesville.

Saturday, September 16, 9:00am – 1:00pm. Fall Plant Sale, Central Shenandoah Valley Master Gardener Association, Verona United Methodist Church Parking Lot, 406 Lee Highway, Verona. www.csvmga.org . Cash or check only.

Saturday, September 16, 10:30am. “Fall Lawn Tasks”, Dr. Mike Goatley, Virginia Tech Extension. Sponsored by the Rockbridge Area Master Gardeners. RARA Community Building, 350 Spotswood Dr., Lexington.

Friday, September 15, Waynesboro Tree Workshop, “The What and Why of Mature Tree Care”, Best Western Inn and Conference Center, 109 Apple Tree Lane, Waynesboro. Master Gardener fee: \$75. www.treesvirginia.org

Saturday, October 6-8. Annual Meeting of the Virginia Native Plant Society, Virginia Institute of Marine Science, Gloucester, VA. Registration opens after September 7th and includes one day options.

<https://vnps.org/events/2023-annual-meeting-and-program/>

FALL GARDEN TASKS

- Purchase garlic bulbs to plant in October. Don't use grocery store garlic bulbs as they have often been treated with preservatives.
- Harvest vegetables as soon as they are ripe to encourage further production.
- Plant cover crops on the bare soil in your vegetable garden.

- Plant cool weather vegetables such as greens for a late fall, early winter harvest.
- If not planting a cover crop, mulch beds so no bare soil is exposed.
- Remove spent annuals and compost them.
- Save seeds from desirable plants. Remember, if the plant is a hybrid, it may not come true.
- Divide peonies and iris.
- Is your bulb order in? When ordering bulbs, remember that daffodils and alliums are pest-free, unlike tulips which deer adore.
- Certain annuals can be sown now for early bloom in May or June next year. These include larkspur, nigella, calendula, annual poppies. Sow in the open so they will become established by the time the weather gets colder.
- Tip prune shrub roses to promote new growth.
- Fall is usually a good time to plant trees and shrubs.
- Reseed lawn.
- Apply pre-emergence weed killers to the lawn in the second half of the month to discourage winter weeds. Don't seed during the pre-emergent's active period, usually about four weeks.
- Compost your dead leaves instead of bagging them. Run over them first with your lawn mower so when added to your compost pile, they will break down faster.
- Prune late summer and fall flowering shrubs after they go dormant or in the spring.
- Watch for plant sales. Nurseries usually want to sell down their inventory before winter.
- Start bringing houseplants inside.

WEED OF THE MONTH - PIGWEED

Redroot Pigweed (*Amaranthus retroflexus*)

This weed is in the Amaranth family, a food staple in many countries. But why is this particular amaranth a weed? Probably because each plant can produce up to 100,000 seeds that can stay viable for up to 10 years! I made the mistake of growing an ornamental amaranth one year and find years later, I am still pulling baby amaranth plants.

Redroot pigweed is a summer annual that can be found flowering from June to October. It's an upright plant that can reach 6' in height. The lower stems are often reddish or red striped. It's identifying characteristic is a terminal spike of densely clustered tiny green flowers that have a pinkish tint. The leaves are dark green with wavy margins, oppositely arranged along the tall stiff stem. They are very nutritious, high in vitamin A and C and folate. In Jamaica, pigweed is known as callaloo and is a culinary staple.



Pull it if you can (it gets enormous quickly) – or at the very least remove the seed head.

Sources:

https://ipm.ucanr.edu/PMG/WEEDS/redroot_pigweed.html

https://www.bbg.org/article/weed_of_the_month_pigweed

Time to Plant Garlic

Fall is the proper time to plant garlic, at least three weeks before the ground freezes so the roots have a chance to develop. Garlic, as with most plants in the allium family (onions, shallots, leeks and chives), requires at least two years between successive plantings to allow the soil to recover. Loamy soil and full sun are best.

It is not a good idea to grow garlic from bulbs you have bought at the grocery store. Most of those have been treated with chemicals to make them more shelf stable. Look for garlic at one of our local farmers markets or find a reputable dealer online (I usually use Southern Exposure

Seeds, www.southernexposure.com located outside of Charlottesville). Also, I grow garlic every year and usually save some of the plumpest bulbs from my July harvest for planting.

Break the bulb apart into cloves and weed out the tiniest ones. Large cloves will equal large bulbs. Plant them root side down with 4-8" between plants, planting at least two inches below the surface. I find it easiest to dig a trench. Mulch with shredded leaves or straw.



Round about June, garlic will send up a curly firm scape (flower stalk) that looks a bit like a swan's neck. Cut these off. They are edible and taste a bit like a very spicy scallion. Cutting off the scapes allows more energy to go into the bulb rather than into a flower. In midsummer, usually around the 4th of July, my garlic is ready to pull when the bottom leaves are yellow and 3-5 lower leaves turn brown. I use a spade fork to unearth the bulbs. Brush off the soil. Garlic bulbs need to cure for about two weeks in a warm shady place with good air circulation. Hang in bundles or spread in a single layer on screens or drying racks. Don't store garlic in the refrigerator as it will likely sprout.

There are two types of garlic: hardneck and softneck. Softneck tends to last a little longer (9-12 months) and can be braided for storage. It likes a warmer climate. Hardneck is the one that develops a scape and is often a bit more flavorful than softnecks. They peel easier and have larger cloves. Their shelf life is about 4 – 6 months.

Do you have a surfeit of tomatoes this year? Here is one way to use up a few: a sweet spicy tomato chutney best served with pita chips.

Tomato Chutney (adapted from a 2011 "Eating Well" magazine recipe)

2 teaspoons canola oil or some other light oil
1 teaspoon cumin seeds
1 teaspoon mustard seeds
1 medium onion, chopped
2 garlic cloves, minced
1 Tablespoon minced peeled fresh ginger root
1 jalapeno pepper, seeded and finely chopped
1 teaspoon curry powder
1 teaspoon turmeric
4 cups chopped tomatoes (no need to peel – your preference)



½ cup chopped cilantro
1/3 cup raisins or currants
2 Tablespoons sugar

Heat oil in a large saucepan over medium high heat. Add the cumin and mustard seeds and sauté until the mustard seeds begin to pop. Add onion, ginger, garlic and jalapeno. Sauté for about 3 minutes or until onion is translucent. Stir in curry and turmeric. Cook 30 seconds. Stir in tomatoes. Cover, reduce heat and simmer for 15 minutes. Uncover and cook until slightly thickened. Stir in cilantro, raisins, and sugar. Cool to room temperature.

Deer! Rabbits! Woodchucks! Oh No -

By Faith Vosburgh

I don't know about all of you, but this year I have had the worst animal damage **ever** in my garden. Plants are being eaten that have never been touched in all my years of gardening in Rockbridge County: Joe Pye weed, cup flower, amsonia, ironweed, asters. There was even chewing on my monkshood and all parts of that plant are poisonous. The list goes on and on. My garden is a veritable smorgasbord.

What to do? We are putting up more and more fencing to protect heavily browsed areas, but I can't fence the entire yard. I suppose I could, but I don't think my neighbors would appreciate it, plus it would cost a fortune. My plan is to completely revamp parts of the garden. This is going to be at least a yearlong process and I will keep you updated. My first step is to assess the damage and create an inventory of plants that rarely get browsed. And yes, realizing that if deer are hungry enough, they will eat anything.

Part 1: Assessing the damage on perennials

These plants were the most heavily browsed this year: asters, phlox, hosta (these are buried deep in the back of the garden, but the deer found them anyway), the few daylilies I still have unfenced (most of them I had already replanted in the heavily fenced vegetable garden), cup flower, Joe pye weed, all the black-eyed susans, especially 'Henry Eiler', great burnet, gooseneck loosestrife, the few roses, coneflowers, Japanese anemone, sedum.

And here, for your reference, are the perennials that were not touched (spp. Indicates many species of the plant):

Anise hyssop (*Agastache foeniculum*)
Astilbe spp. (*Astilbe x arendsii*)
Baptisia (*Baptisia australis*)

Butterfly weed (except for *Asclepias tuberosa*)
 Catmint (*Nepeta x faassenii*)
 Coral bells (*Heuchera* spp.)
 Crocosmia (*Crocosmia* spp.)
 Dyer's chamomile (*Anthemis tinctoria*)
 Goldenrod (*Solidago* spp.)
 Grasses (I have prairie dropseed, Little bluestem, moor grass, several cultivars of switchgrass, blue fescue)
 Hellebore (*Helleborus orientalis*)
 Iris (*Iris* spp.)
 Japanese spikenard (*Aralia cordata* 'Sun King')
 Jerusalem sage (*Phlomis fruticosa*)
 Lamb's ear (*Stachys* spp.)
 Lungwort (*Pulmonaria* 'Roy Davidson')
 Mountain mint (*Pycnanthemum tenuifolium*)
 Ornamental onions (*Allium* spp.)
 Plumbago (*Cerastostigma plumbaginoides*)
 Rattlesnake master (*Eryngium yuccifolium*)
 Rue (*Ruta graveolens*)
 Russian sage (*Perovskia atriplicifolia*)
 Salvia spp. (*Salvia* spp.)
 Siberian bugloss (*Brunnera macrophylla* 'Jack Frost')
 Threadleaf coreopsis (*Coreopsis verticillata*)
 Thyme (*Thymus* spp.)
 Yarrow (*Achillea* spp.)
 Yucca (*Yucca filamentosa* 'Color Guard')



Deer proof Lenten Rose (*Helleborus orientalis*)

Glance through the list and you can see lots of gray plants, plants with tiny or fuzzy leaves, spiky plants. And grasses, lots of grasses.

Next step will be Part 2: The Plan. Look for this in the October issue of *The Garden Gate*.

To subscribe to this newsletter, click
<https://www.ramga.org/what-s-happening>

EDITOR: FAITH VOSBURGH, fvosburgh@gmail.com

Virginia Cooperative Extension is a partnership of Virginia Tech, Virginia State University, the U.S. Department of Agriculture, and local governments. Its programs and employment are open to all, regardless of age, color, disability, gender, gender identity, gender expression, national origin, political affiliation, race, religion, sexual orientation, genetic information, military status, or any other basis protected by law.

