

# THE GARDEN GATE

A Community Newsletter by the Rockbridge Area Master Gardeners

April 2023



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**Welcome, everyone, to the Rockbridge Area Master Gardener community newsletter.**

Each month we bring you relevant seasonal scientific-based horticultural information for Rockbridge County. If you enjoy this newsletter, please pass it on. Subscription information is on the last page of this newsletter or on the RAMGA website, [www.ramga.org](http://www.ramga.org).

Virginia Master Gardeners are Virginia Cooperative Extension volunteers, extending horticultural and environmental outreach across the commonwealth. Volunteers receive fifty hours of training and are required to do, at the minimum, 20 hours of volunteering per year and 8 hours of Continuing Education to maintain their MG status.

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**Upcoming: Saturday, April 15, 10:30am, RARA Community Room, 350 Spotswood Dr., 'Planting for Birds' with Dr. Robyn Puffenbarger, Bridgewater College, CSVMA. Free.**

**There will be all kinds of plants on sale at the program.**

**Saturday, May 6, 8:30 – noon. Valley of Virginia Herb Sale. Hopkins Green, Lexington. Cash or check only.**

## HAPPENINGS...

Local events are in a larger font

**\*\*\*Saturday, April 15, 10:30am, RARA Community Room, 350 Spotswood Dr. RAMGA Program: “Planting for Birds” with Dr. Robyn Puffenbarger, Bridgewater College, CSVMGA**

**Saturday, April 22, 9:00am – 2:00pm. Monticello’s Center for Historic Plants Plant Sale, 1293 Tufton Farm, Charlottesville.**

**Saturday, April 29, 9:00am – 1:00pm. Bedford Master Gardener Plant Sale, Bedford County Extension Office, 1257 County Farm Rd., Suite B, Bedford, VA**

**Saturday, April 29, 9:00am – 2:00pm. Native Plant Sale. The Nature Foundation at Wintergreen. 3421 Wintergreen Drive, Roseland, VA. <https://www.Tnfw.org>**

**Sunday, April 30, 1:00pm – 3:00pm. Jefferson Chapter of the Virginia Native Plant Society Annual Native Plant Sale, Barn at the Ivy Creek Natural Area, Charlottesville.**

**\*\*\*Saturday, May 6, 8:30 – noon, Valley of Virginia Herb Sale. New location at Hopkins Green, Lexington.**

**Saturday, May 6, 10:00 – 2:00pm. Piedmont Master Gardener Plant Sale, 600 Albemarle Square, Charlottesville.**

**May 11 – 14, all day. 61<sup>th</sup> Annual West Virginia Wildflower Pilgrimage, Blackwater Falls State Park, Davis, West Virginia. A wide variety of tours and workshops each day. For more information: <https://wvdnr.gov/programs-publications/wildflower-pilgrimage/>**

**Saturday, May 13, 9:00am – 2:00pm. Central Shenandoah Master Gardeners In-Person Plant Sale, Rockingham County Administration Offices located at 20 East Gay Street Harrisonburg. Cash and checks only. <https://csvgma.org/event/spring-plant-sale-garden-fest/>**

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## APRIL GARDEN TIPS

### General:

- Before working in your garden, make sure the soil is dry enough. It should crumble in your hand; if it is not, wait until it dries out before working the soil.
- Clean up garden debris from last year.
- Pull weeds from beds.

- Work organic material such as chopped leaves or compost into garden beds.
- Mulch garden beds 2 to 3 inches deep with an organic material.
- If you did not complete your garden fertilization in March, continue that in April.
- Newly planted perennials, trees and shrubs will generally need 1 inch of water each week – either from rain or irrigation
- Keep an eye out for Asian jumping worms. Here is how to deal with them: <https://piedmontmastergardeners.org/article/invasive-jumping-worms/>

### Insects:

“Insects to be on the Lookout for in April”, a great publication by Eric Day, Insect ID Lab, Dept. of Entomology, Virginia Tech

[https://albemarle.ext.vt.edu/content/dam/albemarle\\_ext\\_vt\\_edu/files/hort-tip-sheets/4-14-insects.pdf](https://albemarle.ext.vt.edu/content/dam/albemarle_ext_vt_edu/files/hort-tip-sheets/4-14-insects.pdf)

### Fruits and Vegetables:

An excellent and useful VCE publication organized by climate zone (Rockbridge, for the most part is zone 6B heading towards 7) is “Virginia’s Home Garden Vegetable Planting Guide: Recommended Planting Dates and Amounts to Plant”, <https://www.pubs.ext.vt.edu/426/426-331/426-331.html>



This is the big month for planting vegetables. However, if planted too early, frost will kill your plants unless you are prepared to protect them on those cold nights.

- Plant out starts for cool season vegetables: broccoli, cauliflower, lettuce, spinach, swiss chard, kale.
- Sow seeds for cool season crops: peas, radishes, lettuce, onions, beets, parsley, Swiss chard, spinach, kale, leeks.
- Plant cane berry plants.
- Plant blueberries and strawberries.
- Spray fruit trees with dormant oil spray if temperatures are over 40 degrees.
- Time nutrients to fruit trees at the fruit setting time. A good rule of thumb is to fertilize after the petals fall.

## Perennials:

- Fertilize perennials and spring bulbs as soon as possible if not already done. I am a big fan of Osmacote, a time release fertilizer.
- Spring is the ideal time to divide most perennials, both summer and fall bloomers. Replant the divisions or share with friends.
- Remember that some perennials are late getting started in the spring; mark the spot in some way so you do not inadvertently plant over them.
- Delay organic mulching to allow soil to warm up but act before weeds become established.



## Trees and Shrubs:

If you are planting new trees and shrubs, remember to consider hardiness, light requirements, soil drainage, wind tolerance, mature size, insect or disease problems, maintenance levels, etc. when choosing your plant. Remember the “plant right place” rule. Here is another good Tech publication, “How to Plant a Tree”, <https://www.pubs.ext.vt.edu/SPES/SPES-226/SPES-226.html>

## Lawns:

- Sharpen mower blades.
- Finish seeding early in the month.

## Pruning:

- Prune spring flowering shrubs after flowering is completed.
- Prune roses to an outward facing bud

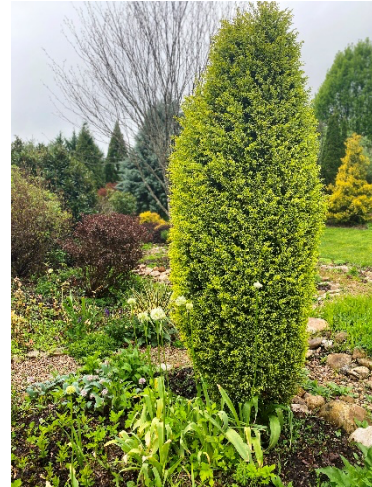
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## THE ORNAMENTAL GARDEN

### **A Vertical Accent** by Faith Vosburgh

Sitting here at my desk working on this newsletter, the plant that most strikes my eye when I look out the window in front of me is our ‘Gold Cone’ Juniper (*Juniperus communis*). Many of you have heard my spiel about the need for vertical accents in the garden. Those verticals

punctuate the landscape and are a welcome contrast to the rounded shapes of many plants. Verticals can be tall perennials such as Maximilian sunflower (*Helianthus maximiliani*), or tall upright grasses such as 'Karl Foerster' feather reed grass (*Calamagrostis x acutiflora*) but will most likely be a columnar shrub such as "Sky Pencil' Japanese Holly (*Ilex crenata*), 'Dee Runk' boxwood (*Buxus sempervirens*), or a 'Gold Cone' Juniper.



I scorned junipers for many years. I felt them to be too overused and still do. But, as I discovered, there are lots of nice newer ones available, 'Gold Cone' being one. This juniper grows to about 6-9' and will be 2-3' wide. The spring foliage is particularly nice, a glowing chartreuse, which fades just a bit to gold later in summer. Place the plant in full sun for the best color. This would even be a good shrub for a large container. I like this shrub so much, we have three!

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The Garden Gate, a monthly newsletter by the  
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