

THE GARDEN GATE

A Community Newsletter by the Rockbridge Area Master Gardeners

May 2023



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UPCOMING RAMGA PROGRAM

Wondering what to do about Japanese honeysuckle, multiflora rose, stilt grass and a host of other invasives? Come hear Natali Walker of Blue Ridge PRISM (Partnership for Regional Invasive Species Management) speak on controlling these thugs on Saturday, May 13, 10:30am at Dunlap Auditorium, Lexington Presbyterian Church.

The new Rockbridge Area Master Gardener class of fourteen is wrapping up for 2023. A new class will begin in January 2024. If you are interested in joining next year's class, contact Tamara Teaff at tteaffbcps@gmail.com.

AREA HAPPENINGS...

Saturday, May 13, 9am – noon. County Council of Garden Clubs Annual Plant Sale, Hopkins Green, Lexington.

May 11 – 14, all day. 61th 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/>

Friday, May 12, 1:00pm. Zoom presentation on Invasive Plant Management with Dr. Laurie Fox. Sponsored by EMG (Extension Master Gardener). [Register here.](#)

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/>

Saturday, May 13-14, 33rd Annual Garden Fair, Blandy Experimental Farm, State Arboretum of Virginia. For more information: <https://blandy.virginia.edu/2023-garden-fair>

Saturday, May 13, 10:30am – 12:30pm. RAMGA program featuring Natali Walker of Blue Ridge Prism on invasive plant management. Dunlop Auditorium, Lexington Presbyterian Church.

MAY GARDEN CHORES

General:

- Weeding, weeding, and more weeding

Insects:

- Keep an eye out for Japanese beetles. They usually start appearing the end of June.
- Check the undersides of the leaves of squash daily for squash bug eggs and scrape them off

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>

- Harden off pepper and tomato transplants before planting out. It is best to wait until after Memorial Day to plant tomatoes.
- Sow seeds of corn, cucumbers, melons and squash directly into the garden.
- Clip suckers of indeterminate tomatoes.
- Thin fruit on fruit trees.
- Net fruit bushes to keep the birds out.
- Continue to direct sow annuals to extend their season.

Perennials:

- Fertilize perennials and spring bulbs as soon as possible if not already done.
- Now is the time to add an organic mulch to your beds.
- Deadhead bulbs but allow the foliage to remain as that feeds the bulb for next year.
- Continue with deer repellent.
- Pinch back late summer and fall blooming perennials such as asters, goldenrod and mums.

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>

- Prune early flowering spring shrubs after they bloom

Lawns:

- Keep up with mowing
- Apply feed to lawn

Pruning:

- Prune spring flowering shrubs after flowering is completed.

THE VEGETABLE GARDEN - KALE

Super Kale! A Vegetable with Impressive Nutrition Powers

By Karen Carlton

I was recently told I should try to grow kale in my garden this year. So, like the good master gardener that I am, I have planted some in my raised bed. I know in the past I have written about Collard greens and the wonders growing and eating them.

Kale is in the brassica family, like Collards, Brussel sprouts, Broccoli, etc. It likes cool weather so when in the early part of May, with its roller coaster temperatures, this plant can handle it. Kale actually likes the cool temperatures and a little frost once in a while during its growing season makes it happy. Growers usually grow kale during the fall or winter season because when it is too hot, the leaves become bitter.

Why did I put in the title Super Kale? The reason is that it has a whole host of nutrients in it that provide antioxidants, vitamins, and minerals. It has carotenoids that help protect the cells in your body from oxidative stress. If not taken care of, oxidative stress can lead to chronic diseases and some cancers. Kale protects against vision loss because it has lutein, zeaxanthin and beta-carotene. It acts to keep the eyes from UV damage and may help lessen your risk for cataracts. It helps lower blood pressure with the minerals of potassium, calcium, and magnesium. It can strengthen your bones because it has calcium in the leaves.



There are a few concerns with those who have health conditions in terms of eating too much of this wonder plant, kale. People who use blood thinners or who have chronic kidney disease, because of certain minerals in the kale leaves, could have an adverse effect when eating it.

If you are an adventurous eater or just want to try a new vegetable, you can't go wrong with trying kale. Who knows, you may even make kale chips for your next cookout or movie night!

Resources: [www.healthline.com / nutrition/10 proven-benefits-of-Kale](http://www.healthline.com/nutrition/10-proven-benefits-of-Kale)
Vegetable Gardening in the Southeast by Ira Wallace pg.184

KALE CHIPS WITH CHILI AND LIME (Adapted from Melissa Clark's recipe in the *NY Times*)

1 bunch kale, stems striped and fully dried leaves torn into bite-sized pieces
2-3 Tablespoons extra virgin olive oil
½ teaspoon kosher salt
Finely grated zest of 1 lime
Flaky sea salt to taste
Mild chili powder

1. Heat oven to 350 degrees.
2. Toss kale pieces with olive oil and salt. Massage the oil into the kale until the leaves glisten. Spread the kale out on a jellyroll pan. Bake until the leaves look crispy and brown along the edges, about 12-16 minutes.
3. Remove from the oven and cool to room temperature. Sprinkle with lime zest, sea salt and chili powder

Blandy Experimental Farm, State Arboretum of Virginia

By Faith Vosburgh

For the past few years, I have attended the annual Garden Fair at Blandy Experimental Farm at the State Arboretum in Blandy, Virginia, about ten miles or so south of Winchester. The Fair is traditionally held on Mother's Day weekend, this year May 13-14. I highly recommend a visit, especially if you have never been to the State Arboretum. There are always many native plant vendors; I see at least five on the list. Check it out here: <https://blandy.virginia.edu/garden-fair-vendors-2023>. The drive is about two hours. This is a popular event, so come early. Hours are 9am – 5pm and tickets are \$10 in advance or \$15 at the gate.

And if a Mother's Day field trip is not on your agenda, be sure and put a visit to Blandy on your calendar. The Virginia State Arboretum is a part of the 172 acres of the University of Virginia's Blandy Experimental Farm. Last fall I drove through a 300-tree golden yellow grove of ginkgoes at the Farm; it was amazing! Blandy has the largest conifer collection in the southeast. You can also find a beautiful herb garden, a pollinator garden and several other flower gardens. Be sure and visit the Nancy Larrick Crosby Native Plant Trail, a half mile gravel path that meanders through three different gardens and habitats. Then, climb the observation tower in the middle of the garden and enjoy the vistas.



*Ginkgoes at the VA State Arboretum
Photo source: American Conifer Society*

THE ORNAMENTAL GARDEN – KOUSA DOGWOOD

Kousa Dogwoods

By Faith Vosburgh

This time of year, the Kousa dogwoods flourish. The city of Lexington is studded with Kousas, all coming into bloom about now. There are several along S. Main St. heading out of town.

The Kousa dogwoods are the Asian cousins of our (*Cornus kousa*) native dogwoods (*Cornus florida*) and bloom a few weeks later. These are small trees that can grow to about 30', but most I've seen are around 15' or so. In their youth, the trees are upright and as they mature the form becomes more vasselike. Flowers on Kousas are more star shaped than the native dogwood and a brighter white. Our common dogwood flowers before the leaves emerge and the branching is horizontal. The Kousa's leaves come before the flowers.

Kousas have several seasons of interest. In the fall, besides having a lovely reddish leaf color, they have a fat strawberry-like fruit up to 1" in diameter (a drupe) that the birds love. For winter interest, mature trees have a mottled bark of exfoliating patterns of tan and brown.



These dogwoods are less susceptible to the blight (anthracnose) that has killed many of our native dogwoods.

Kousas like sun but can take some shade. It is best to transplant them in the spring. These lovely trees are great as a specimen plant or in small groupings.

Two of the popular cultivars are 'Milky Way', a Kousa that is loaded with flowers that are a brighter white than most and 'Wolf Eyes', a variegated form with leaves that show a white margin. These leaves turn pink to red in the fall.

Everyone should have a Kousa in their yard.

Sources: <https://plants.ces.ncsu.edu/plants/cornus-kousa/>

Missouri Botanical Garden Plant Finder: *Cornus Kousa*,

<https://www.missouribotanicalgarden.org/PlantFinder/PlantFinderDetails.aspx?kempercode=j910>

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