

April 2022

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Submissions due the 20th of the preceding month.

Into the Garden

Leadership Team Letter

Jen Coluzzi, Anita Tuttle, David Caldwell

No doubt you've been seeing information about Master Gardener College in Kathleen Reed's biweekly update list. Maybe this is a good time to revisit the history of the Extension Master Gardener Program and put in an enthusiastic suggestion to attend MG College.

The first Master Gardener program was founded in 1973 by Dr. David Gibby of Washington State University Cooperative Extension. In the greater Tacoma area, there existed a high demand for urban horticulture and gardening advice, and Dr. Libby couldn't keep up by himself (straight from the horse's mouth). The first trial clinic was held at the Tacoma Mall in 1972. When that was successful, the Master Gardener Program was officially established, a curriculum created, and training began in King County and Pierce County in 1973. The concept then spread to other U.S. states and Canadian provinces.

In the US, groups are affiliated with a land-grant university and one of its cooperative extension



offices. Master Gardeners receive extensive training and then provide information to the public via phone or email helplines, speaking at public events, writing articles for publications and the internet, and partnering with other community programs, gardens, and educational facilities.

One of the most exciting ways to amp up your knowledge of the latest horticultural science and stay abreast of changes in the Extension Master Gardener Program is to attend Master Gardener College! There is always an incredible line-up of nationally respected presenters from many areas of horticulture as well as related disciplines such as entomology and forestry. One year, in fact, Dr. David Libby himself was a keynote speaker. He was outrageously funny and shared details about the

beginnings of our group that aren't recorded anywhere else.

Knowledge is only the beginning of the fun at MG College. You'll get to see and hear what other Virginia units are doing, you can meet the officers of VMGA, and you can meet tons of new gardening friends! Not officially on the program, but there's always a time for wine and fellowship in the dorm when official activities have concluded for the day :).

We can all anticipate the return of MG College in Blacksburg June 23-26. Hope to see you there!!!

Jen, Anita, and David

RAMGA FYI and VOLUNTEER OPPORTUNITIES...

There's a volunteer opportunity at the **Heritage Hall nursing home and rehabilitation center** to work on their existing Pollinator Garden which needs to be rehabbed. This would require a Master Gardener to provide guidance and direction on rehabbing and planting the bed. Heritage Hall would provide most of the labor.

What: volunteer at retirement home and work with senior citizens

Where: Heritage Hall retirement home, Lexington

When: Wednesday and Thursdays, 4:30 to 5:30.

Contact: Caroline Coons at caroline@boxerwood.org

RAMGA Fruit and Berry visit to Jim Kvach's farm, Saturday, April 9th, 10:00am. If interested in attending (and any RAMGA member is welcome), contact Dave Bryer, (804)516-2848, dmbryer@gmail.com

Three new RAMGA projects have been approved and are looking for volunteers. Volunteer hours on these projects will count towards the required 28 hours per year needed to maintain Master Gardener certification. All three programs provide educational outreach to RAMGA members and the community at large. Further information can be found on your shared google drive under "Projects".

1. **SEED SAVERS:** RAMGA volunteers will provide relevant, scientific-based instruction to the community regarding the methods and processes needed to preserve new seed varieties, including native seeds from our region. An inventory of suitable seeds for Rockbridge County is in the process of being developed. Future goals include expanding the seed swap to include other gardening groups and the community at large and to develop a "lending" seed library. **If you are interested in volunteering, contact Karen Lyons, klyons0221@gmail.com or Ginger Reed, farcountrygrl@gmail.com**

2. **INVASIVE SPECIES EDUCATION – IDENTIFICATION & MANAGEMENT:** This project focuses on invasive plant identification and management. Invasive plant species are smothering native flora. Volunteers in this project would help develop and present educational programs that work to increase awareness and knowledge of responsible landscape management and natural resource conservation. Working with volunteers at Brushy Hill removing invasives, for example, would count as volunteer hours for this project. **If you are interested in volunteering with this project, contact Jan Smith, janhuntersmith@gmail.com.**

3. **FRUIT TREES – BERRIES & VINES:** Volunteers in this project, in collaboration with community members, will provide educational outreach through field trips and programs on the best management practices in growing fruit trees, berries, and productive vines. **Contact Project Leader, Dave Bryer, dmbryer@gmail.com, if you would like to volunteer.**

WELCOME, RAMGA CLASS OF 2022!

Meeting and Greeting the Class of 2022

By Tamara Teaff

Patricia Jansen

Patti has lived in Rockbridge County for four years. She worked as the Inventory Control Manager for John Hopkins Medicine for 15 years. After moving to Rockbridge County, she served as Dining Services Menu Management Systems Administrator at Washington and Lee University. Retiring from that position in September of 2021, she is now ready to become an Extension Master Gardener volunteer.

Patti has volunteered as a Girl Scout leader. She enjoys camping, traveling, and spending time with her children. A memorable event in her life, shared by Patti, is how she spent her honeymoon, 42 years ago. She and her husband camped across Canada from New York to California. Describing it as a wonderful experience with beautiful scenery, they are planning a return trip next year.

Patti admits that she is very excited to begin the class and get to know everyone.

Keith Koehler

Keith moved here in August 2020 from Summerville, South Carolina. He retired from the Navy in 1996 and worked as a civil servant until 2018. Keith has volunteered in homeowners' associations, church council, PTA officer, and as an Upwards basketball coach. Now, he is ready to add Extension Master Gardener to his volunteer activities.

In his spare time, Keith refinishes and repurposes furniture. When you meet Keith, be sure to ask him about his submarine duty at the North Pole. Also, while in the Navy, he lived for two years in Newfoundland. At his new house here in Lexington, Keith maintains a Koi Pond. He is seeking advice from any Master

Gardener who may have experience with water lilies. He shares, “I’d like to hear what not to do!”.

Mary Katherine Lawrence

Known as Mary Katherine, she grew-up in Rockbridge County but now lives in Waynesboro. Since her family is here in the County, Mary Katherine feels that Rockbridge is really her home.

She currently is employed as Construction Superintendent at the University of Virginia’s Construction and Renovation Services. Having volunteered with Habitat for Humanity, Mary Katherine works as a foster mother for cats. Presently, she has two foster kittens. She admits to being a *DIYer* and has lots of projects, in various stages of completion, in her basement.

Mary Katherine shares that her first-time gardening experience was growing beans in a huge pot in her college dorm. They were hilariously puny. Later, she moved to an off-grounds apartment where she fully took over the apartment balcony with plants. She admits to growing the largest sunflower ever – a mammoth sunflower that was taller than 6 feet. Now that she lives in a house with a yard, she has not been successful in getting sunflowers to grow as tall as the one that thrived on her college balcony.

Mentoring the Class of 2022

By Barbara Ekin and Maureen Becker

The Class Training Team’s Mentor Program has been totally revamped this year. Mentors no longer are expected to attend all the Labs with their trainees. Rather, we ask them to “Meet & Greet” at the beginning of the Master Gardener training. Making contact in person is preferred but a phone call or email may work as well for the initial introduction. After meeting their mentees and learning about their interests and experiences, the Training Team encourages the mentor to visit, with the trainee, projects that would best match his/her talents and enthusiasm. The goal is to ensure the mentees find one or two projects or activities that are a “good fit”. It is important that the Mentor be objective and allow the trainees to select projects, based on the trainees’ personal interests.

Although this year’s mentor program is established, the Class Training Team encourages all RAMGA members to consider being a mentor for 2023. Our wish is to create a pool of mentors from which to draw annually. Cooperative Extension research has proven that interaction with a mentor has a positive impact on the retention of a newly trained Master Gardener. Thank you to our Mentors for taking good care of the Class of 2022. Thank you for considering becoming mentors for a future class. Be a mentor, earn volunteer hours, and make a difference for a strong RAMGA future.

CLASS OF 2022

LAB 2, Pruning and Woody Landscape Module

By Tamara Teaff

Saturday, March 5, found our trainees headed to Boxerwood to participate in the Pruning and Woody Landscape Lab. To prepare for this lab, the trainees read both the pruning and the woody plants chapters in the Master Gardener handbook, viewed the online module, and took the woody landscape quiz. At Boxerwood, the students met their two instructors. KB (Karen Bailey), who volunteers as Boxerwood's landscape consultant, and Ben Eland, Boxerwood's Garden and Facilities Manager. The trainees learned that through educated pruning, plants will flourish. The first step, even before you begin to prune, is to clean pruners and loppers with a disinfectant wipe. The purpose of this is to prevent the spread of a disease from one plant to the next while pruning. The point stressed was pruning wounds plants, and plants' wounds seal. Therefore, you don't want to seal a disease in the plant that you are pruning. Always clean your tools.



KB explains the fine points of pruning



Trainee, Ed Whitmore, making a cut.

The following reasons to do regular pruning were discussed.

- (1) **CONTROL SIZE:** Pruning reduces the size of a plant, so it remains in better proportion in your landscape.
- (2) **IMPROVE APPEARANCE AND HEALTH:** Prune away the dead and diseased so sealing can begin. This provides better air circulation and sunlight penetration.
- (3) **PREVENT INJURY OR PROPERTY DAMAGE:** Prune low limbs to make the underlying areas of trees safer. Prune shrubs back from well-traveled areas.
- (4) **INFLUENCE FRUITING AND FLOWERING:** Pruning

encourages vegetative growth, stimulates flowering, and helps produce larger fruits.

(5) **REJUVENATE OLDER TREES AND SHRUBS:** Pruning can restore vigor and enhance the appearance of these plants.

(6) **TRAIN YOUNG PLANTS:** Pruning produces stronger and hardier plants.

With pruning tools in hand, the trainees ventured in the Boxerwood Gardens and practiced their skills. At the end of the lab, KB demonstrated how to sharpen hand pruners and other equipment. The trainees left this lab with both sharpened pruning skills and tools.



Armed with tools, trainees are eager to tackle pruning techniques

OUR MASTER GARDENERS AT WORK...

The new Invasive Species Identification and Management Project Team is off to a great start. Members include Jen Coluzzi, Peggy Agnor, Karen Lyons, Jenny Childress, Sandy Schaufler, and Jan Smith with interns Bev Loring, Patti Jansen, and Deb Funkhouser jumping right in.

National Invasive Species Awareness Week began February 28th. Our team headed off to Brushy Hills Preserve to learn from David Roshier about his management techniques at this now beautiful forest preserve owned by the City of Lexington.

Then the Team enjoyed a Sunday afternoon on the Chessie Trail learning from Peggy Dyson-Cobb of the Virginia Native Plant

Society how to identify the good and bad plants on the Trail. Chessie Friends group member Nick joined us, and Chris Wise carried off the debris in his truck. We enjoyed perfect weather and had fun learning and socializing.



Continuing Education Opportunities:

(Local opportunities in **Bold and a larger font**)

*****Saturday, April 23, 11:00am – noon. Rockbridge Area Master Gardener Plant Clinic on Zoom, “To Lawn or Not to Lawn”. Register at www.ramga.org**

Saturday, April 30, 10:am – 2:00pm. Bedford Master Gardener Plant Sale, Bedford County Extension Office, 1257 County Farm Rd., Suite B, Bedford, VA

Central Shenandoah Virtual Plant Sale: Plant List & Pricing will be available starting April 22 on CSVMGA.org, with the list being updated weekly through May 17 as new plants become available. A link to submit your plant order will be made available on the website. You can choose from three (3) separate pick-up locations in downtown Harrisonburg, Rockingham – Pleasant Valley area, and Verona. Upon submitting your order, you will receive an e-mail confirmation. When picking-up your order, simply drive through and pay (checks and cash only) – there will be volunteers who can assist loading your plants into your vehicle. Please see the ordering deadlines and associated pick-up dates and times below:

- Order by May 3 for plant pick-up on May 7 (10AM – Noon)
- Order by May 17 for plant pick-up on May 21 (10AM – Noon)

Sunday, April 24, 1:00pm. Jefferson Chapter of the Virginia Native Plant Society Annual Native Plant Sale, Ivy Creek Natural Area, Charlottesville.

Saturday, April 30, 9:00am – 2:00pm. Native Plant Sale. The Nature Foundation at Wintergreen. 3421 Wintergreen Drive, Roseland, VA, info@twnf.org

May 5 – 8, all day. 60th 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 7, 8:30 – noon, Valley of Virginia Herb Sale, 8:30 – noon. Robertson Park (across from the Visitors Center off Varner Lane), Lexington.**

Saturday, May 7, 10:00 – 2:00pm. Piedmont Master Gardener Plant Sale, 600 Albemarle Square, Charlottesville.

*****Saturday, May 7, 9:00am – noon. County Council of Garden Clubs Plant Sale, Hopkins Green, Lexington.**

Saturday, May 14, 9:00am – 1:00pm. Central Shenandoah Master Gardeners In-Person Plant Sale, Rockingham County Administration Offices located at 20 East Gay Street, Harrisonburg. <https://csvmga.org/event/spring-plant-sale-in-person/>

*****Saturday, May 21, 9:00am, RAMGA Plant Sale, Kerrs Creek Fire Station, 2880 W. Midland Trail. Lexington.**

Saturday, May 28, 9:00am – noon. Blue Ridge Wildflower Society Native Plant Sale, Roanoke Council of Garden Clubs, 3640 Colonial Ave., Cave Spring, VA.

Faith's Garden Notes...

Right now the 'Ogon' spirea (*Spirea thunbergii*) is in full bloom in my garden, its wispy branches overloaded with tiny white flowers. Many spireas can be invasive. In fact, the *Spirea japonica* is on Virginia's Invasive Species list. However, the Thunberg spirea is very well-behaved.

I must admit, I am not fond of most spireas. To me they look like messy bundles of sticks in the winter, but not this one. The 'Ogon's branches are arching, not stiff and upright like many spireas. It is one of the earliest shrubs in my garden to flower, beginning in the middle of March and continuing for about three weeks. Then the foliage begins to appear – a beautiful chartreuse green that stays that way all summer. The leaves are narrow and willow-like, not spirea-like at all. In the fall, the foliage often takes on an orange tint. The shrub gets to be about 4' tall and as wide.



And, as I mentioned to the new 2022 MG students the other day, this spirea is a great candidate for tip rooting (sometimes known as tip layering) exactly because of its arching branches. I've gotten several new plants this way. For those of you unfamiliar with tip rooting, here's how: pick a shrub that has arching branches. Pull down a low growing branch to the ground. Bend the tip into a vertical position and stake it in place on the ground with a landscape staple or something similar. It helps to pull away a bit of soil before anchoring the stem. Spring has always worked best for me and usually by the following spring the plant has rooted. Just cut it off from the original stem and "voila", a new shrub.

All in all, 'Ogon' is a great, carefree accent for your landscape.

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