

THE GARDEN GATE

A Community Newsletter by the Rockbridge Area Master Gardeners

May 2022



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**RAMGA PLANT SALE –
8:30 – NOON,
MAY 21ST**

**Kerr's Creek Fire Station
2880 W. Midland Trail**

WHY SHOP AT THE RAMGA PLANT SALE?

- A variety of perennials, annuals, vegetables, shrubs and trees on offer
 - Vast majority of plants are locally grown
 - Plant descriptions and plant photographs online @www.ramga.org
 - Pay by check, credit card or PayPal
 - Large number of native plants
 - Great prices
 - Supports the local RAMGA projects such as the Natural Elementary Schoolyard garden, the native plant trail at Boxerwood, the vegetable garden at Stonewall Jackson, at the Buena Vista Visitors Center among others
 - Some hard-to-find varieties of plants
 - Master Gardeners have over 25 years of experience
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Here are just a few of the over 2000 plants you'll find at the upcoming RAMGA sale:

Japanese Painted Fern 'Metallicum' (*Athyrium nipponicum*) – a small fern with gorgeous blue-green fronds accented with silver. A 2004 Perennial Plant of the Year!

Blue Mist Spirea 'Longwood Blue' (*Caryopteris x clandonensis*) – a great deciduous small shrub to 4' for late season color with pure blue flower spikes

Salvia 'May Night' (*Salvia x sylvestris*) - These salvias are blooming right now. This is an old standby, but one I adore. They bloom early and their blue spikes of flowers have a red undertone that makes them glow in the spring light.

Maximillian Sunflower 'Santa Fe' (*Helianthus maximiliana*) – a must for the fall garden. Large bright yellow daisies pack the 6' tall flowering spike. Goldfinches adore this plant. Leave the stalks up into the winter as the birds love the seedheads.

Blue Balloon Flower (*Platycodon grandifloras*) – an old-fashioned summer-blooming favorite for its pure violet blue flowers. In bud stage, the flowers resemble little balloons, then open to star-like bells.

Creeping Raspberry (*Rubus calycinoides*) – an underused low spreading groundcover with a quilted texture. Semi-evergreen and pest resistant. There are tiny white flowers in the spring. As an added bonus - the leaves turn a deep red in the fall. New to RAMGA this year!

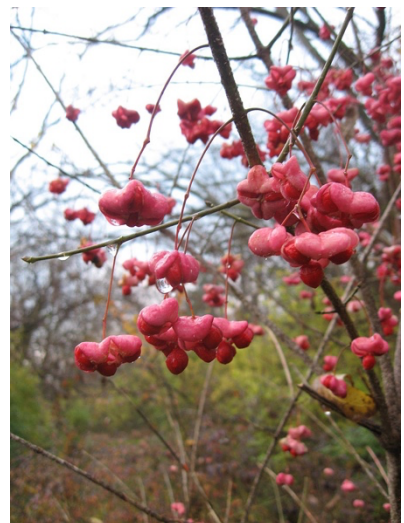
Foxglove 'Arctic Fox Rose' (*Digitalis x*) – a perennial foxglove that blooms every year with rose pink flowers with peachy pink speckled throats, 18-24" tall.

Eastern Wahoo (*Euonymus altropurpureus*) – a native understory woodland species of Euonymus, growing to a large shrub or small tree with interesting red seed capsules. It can be grown in sun or part shade. The fall foliage is an eye-catching red.

Eastern Wahoo

<https://plants.ces.ncsu.edu/plants/euonymus-atropurpureus/>

Coneflower 'Kim's Knee High' (*Echinacea pupurea*) – a beautiful small (15-20") coneflower with bright pink flowers that is a blooming machine.



Switchgrass 'Northwind' (*Panicum virgatum*) – one of our native grasses, 4-6' tall, with a beautiful fine texture due to its pink-tinged branched flower panicles. The morning dew on these grasses makes them sparkle.



Carolina lupine (*Thermopsis caroliniana*) – a native lupine, 3-4' with spires of yellow flowers and clover-like foliage blooming in early summer

Carolina lupine
<https://www.northcreeknurseries.com>

AREA HAPPENINGS...

Central Shenandoah Virtual Plant Sale: Plant List & Pricing will be available starting April 22 on CSVGA.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)

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

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
- 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.

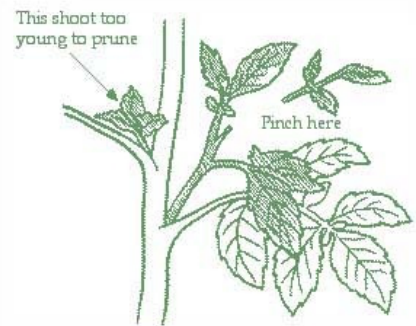
VEGETABLE OF THE MONTH - TOMATOES

Tomatoes - Determinate vs. indeterminate

I was vegetable shopping with a friend the other day looking at tomatoes and we noticed each tomato tag was labelled determinate or indeterminate. She asked me to explain. Tomato plants are either one or the other. Determinate tomatoes are bushier tomatoes and are bred to stop growing at around 3-4' tall. The remainder of the growth will be side shoots. When flowers blossom at the tips of branches, the plant is fully grown and the tomatoes, which start out as those flowers, are fully grown. Crop bearing is usually over the course of four or five weeks. These make great container tomatoes and are perfect for those who have small space gardens. 'Celebrity' is a common determinate tomato.

Indeterminate tomatoes grow all season and can grow from 6-12' tall. A hard frost is the only thing that stops them from producing. Most indeterminates are Heirloom tomatoes, open pollinated tomatoes, whose seeds have been handed down through generations. These tomatoes might not be as pretty as hybrid tomatoes, but they are often, though not always, better tasting. They are usually thin-skinned though, which makes them more likely to crack.

Don't prune determinate tomatoes. That will only decrease the yield. As to pruning indeterminate tomatoes, the verdict is still out. I usually prune my tomatoes to one or two main leaders and clip any shoots that are close to the ground. I selectively prune throughout the season. Prune too much and your tomatoes will scald. Prune too little and the yield may decrease. There are plenty of "how-to" videos online when it comes to pruning. To me, it is more of a trial and error, depending on which tomato you are growing.



<https://www.johnnyseeds.com/growers-library/vegetables/asparagus/asparagus-key-growing-information.html>

Lasagna Gardening

By Karen Carlton

(Lasagna Gardening) is an effective way to have a garden plot.

When I began to seriously garden, I stumbled upon an article about what is called Lasagna gardening. I found it to be an easy way to start a garden.

To start you need a place in your yard that has at least 6 to 8 hours of sunlight. You need to figure out how big you want your garden. I used four landscaping ties to make a square then I put down cardboard, then newspaper, then compost, then garden soil. There is no tilling and it does keep the grass and weeds from coming up from underneath the soil you laid down. On a smaller scale, this could even be done in a large pot.

Now you can plant whatever you want, keeping in mind the space and how big your plants will grow. You do need to water and still do some weeding, but you also will enjoy a productive garden.

Maybe even grow the ingredients of an edible lasagna!

The Garden Gate, a monthly newsletter by the
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<https://www.ramga.org/what-s-happening>



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