

# THE GARDEN GATE

A Community Newsletter by the Rockbridge Area Master Gardeners

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November 2022



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**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.

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## In-Person RAMGA Programs Start up Again...

**Join us Saturday, November 12 at 10:30am in the Piovano Room, Rockbridge Regional Library in Lexington for a free presentation about viticulture. Mr. Gonzalo Ortiz is a 3rd generation viticulturist and enologist. He will share his passion and knowledge of wines that will have you looking at your glass with a different eye!**

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## GARDENING EVENTS

Saturday, November 12, 1:00pm – 3:00pm. Invasive vines workshop with Blue Ridge PRISM at the Botanical Garden of the Piedmont, 950 Melbourne Rd., Charlottesville. Long pants and closed-toe shoes are required to participate. Bring work gloves, safety glass and (optional) hand pruners, hatchet, loppers. Register here: <https://www.eventbrite.com/e/invasive-vines-in-person-workshop-tickets-407020297667>

Saturday, November 19, 2:00pm – 4:00pm, Trinity Episcopal Church, 1118 Preston Ave., Charlottesville. “Garden Basics: Why and How to Reduce Chemical Use in Your Yard and Garden” offered by the Piedmont Master Gardeners. Free. Register here: <https://piedmontmastergardeners.org/events/garden-basics-why-and-how-to-reduce-chemical-use-in-your-yard-and-garden/>

There is never much going on in-person from November – February, but there is a plethora of webinars and zoom presentations online. Here are a few sites to check out:

Mt. Cuba Center is the foremost native plant garden in the Piedmont area. They have a number of great classes online, usually at a cost of \$15. [www.mtcubacenter.org](http://www.mtcubacenter.org)

The Smithsonian “Let’s Talk Gardens” series is consistently excellent and free. Episodes are archived. <https://gardens.si.edu/learn/lets-talk-gardens/> .

And the VCE Master Gardener website has a number of great webinars and videos available. <https://mastergardener.ext.vt.edu/ce/>

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## Want to Be a Master Gardener?

Each year, Rockbridge Area Master Gardeners recruit and train a new group of Master Gardener Volunteers. The course work includes online modules in key areas of gardening ranging from soil nutrition to landscape design. Central to the instruction is the importance of native plants and pollinators. Part of the training involves hands-on labs where a trainee can work in a problem-solving team atmosphere. This prepares the trainee for volunteering to educate the community in all-things horticultural. RAMGA maintains multiple demonstration gardens and sponsors several school teaching gardens throughout the area. The next training class will run from January through June of 2023.



**TO LEARN MORE:** Go to [www.ramga.org](http://www.ramga.org) . Click on the JOIN US tab. Under the registration tab, complete the “class information request” form.

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## LATE FALL GARDEN TASKS

- Plant your spring bulbs and your garlic bulbs if you haven’t gotten them in it. Don’t use grocery store garlic bulbs as they have often been treated with preservatives.
  - Remove spent annuals and compost them.
  - Save seeds from desirable plants. Remember, if the plant is a hybrid, it may not come true.
  - Lift tender bulbs such as cannas or dahlias after the first frost.
  - 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. See VCE publication 426-703, “Making Compost from Yard Waste”, [https://www.pubs.ext.vt.edu/content/dam/pubs\\_ext\\_vt\\_edu/426/426-703/SPES-393.pdf](https://www.pubs.ext.vt.edu/content/dam/pubs_ext_vt_edu/426/426-703/SPES-393.pdf)
  - Prune late summer and fall flowering shrubs after they go dormant or in the spring.
  - Male deer scrape their horns in the fall along the bark of young trees to rub the summer velvet off their horns and to mark their territory. Wrap the trunks with plastic tree guards, chicken wire or plastic mesh to prevent deer damage and remove in the spring.
  - Continue planting deciduous trees and shrubs until the ground freezes. Remember to water your new plantings slowly and deeply.
  - Drain and store water hoses.
  - Clean garden tools
  - Cut the stems and foliage of chrysanthemums to 3”.
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## Introducing COREworks, a homegrown carbon offset marketplace by Boxerwood

*By Ginny Johnson, Boxerwood COREworks Coordinator*

### What is a carbon offset marketplace?

COREworks is a new rural development tool created by Boxerwood that helps us rise to the challenge of earth care with creativity, initiative, and personal responsibility. Our homegrown innovation is a community-based carbon offset marketplace whose proceeds accelerate earth care in Rockbridge County, Virginia.

Many of us aspire to live more lightly on and for the Earth. That effort includes reducing the ecological impact of fossil-fuel intensive activities like travel. Eliminating greenhouse gas



emissions is the goal but achieving zero carbon is often not possible in a world where we have to drive to work and fly for travel. That's where carbon offset marketplaces come in. These enterprises help people balance their own impact with equivalent emission-reducing activity elsewhere. A plane trip to Los Angeles, for example, might be offset with a tree planting project in Brazil.

*COREworks solar project at Boxerwood*

Many businesses already purchase emission offsets through international carbon exchanges. These marketplaces provide important services, but their large-scale activities are often unconnected to the places we call home. How can rural communities like ours participate in and benefit from the emission-offset economy? Enter COREworks.

### What makes COREworks work as a right-sized solution to big-sized problems?

1. Our community-based offset marketplace is by and for local people. All COREworks-funded projects take place in the Rockbridge community.
2. Our donation (vs. purchase) model provides a simpler, motivating way for more of us to get involved.
3. Our pay-it-forward commitment reinvests 100% of proceeds into funding new projects, thus ensuring program sustainability and growth.



## Does COREworks have active projects?

The first COREworks project was a solar array right-sized to cover the energy needs of Boxerwood, replacing non-renewable, fossil-fueled energy. The array not only powers the Nature Center, but also serves as a teaching demonstration for the hundreds of school children and adults who visit Boxerwood each year.



Some Master Gardeners may remember the COREworks volunteer tree planting last December that revitalized a two-acre riparian buffer along Moore's Creek, a tributary of Woods Creek. Not only will these 325 trees sequester atmospheric carbon, by strengthening the riparian buffer they will also protect water quality, filter excess nutrients from waterways, prevent bank erosion, and provide habitat and food for local wildlife. This project would not have been possible without expertise of Master Gardener volunteers.

## Who uses COREworks offsets?

Individual community members and organizations alike have already secured COREworks offsets from active projects. Visit the COREworks website to claim one of the 82 offsets currently available to neutralize your own carbon footprint.

For more information about COREworks, to sign up to volunteer for future tree plantings, or to secure your own carbon offset, visit the website [coreworks.boxerwood.org](http://coreworks.boxerwood.org) or email COREworks Coordinator, Ginny Johnson, at [ginny@boxerwood.org](mailto:ginny@boxerwood.org).

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## Folk Myths about Acorns

*By Karen Carlton*

Acorns come from Oak trees. We who own or have walked under oak trees have seen them scattered on the ground, maybe even one dropped on your head. The mighty acorn is a wonderful food source for many different animals. The squirrel comes to mind in the busy fall days burying his little stash for winter. I read somewhere on the internet that blue jays store acorns for winter as a food source. Pigs also like to eat acorns and if there is a forest nearby many farmers will let their pigs roam free to get fat on the fallen acorns. Humans used acorns as food for thousands of years.

I want to tell you about a few of the myths that surround acorns. Oak trees were believed to be the home of fairies and the acorns are used for hats and bowels as well as food. It is believed that acorns placed on a windowsill in the home would protect it from lightning striking the home. Ancient people saw that the Oak trees would withstand stormy weather, believing the storm came from the gods. The other myth that tickled my fancy was that wearing acorns or the symbol of an acorn on your person would preserve one's youth and keep old age at bay.



Oaks were sacred to ancient people of their long-ago gods. The tree is very long lived and can survive in many different climates. Ancient people worshiped the Oak tree because they believed it protected the trees and would confer on people the same protection. Maybe that is why we see furniture, jewelry, wallpaper, and other possessions with the symbol of the acorn. This ancient idea of protection and a source of food is associated with the Oak tree in people's minds.

When you sit down to eat Thanksgiving dinner, give thanks to the mighty Oak tree and the acorn.

*References: [manticore.press/the-glory-of-the-oak-the-magic-of-the-acorn](http://manticore.press/the-glory-of-the-oak-the-magic-of-the-acorn)  
**Lives of Trees**, by Diana Wells, copyright 2010*

**\*\*Note from Faith:** According to the native plant guru, Doug Tallamy, oaks support more life than any other North American tree. Oaks support 897 caterpillars; birds and other animals forage in oaks; hundreds of creatures live in the leaf litter. Be sure and read Tallamy's latest book, **The Nature of Oaks** or any of his three other books, required reading for anyone interested in native plants.

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## THE ORNAMENTAL GARDEN

### Some Native Tree with Great Fall Foliage

*By Faith Vosburgh*

The fall foliage this year has been some of the most beautiful I've seen in my seventeen years of living in Rockbridge County. Maples are probably the first tree we think of when it comes to fall color. Here are some native trees that are just as, if not more colorful than the maples.



**(*Liquidambar styraciflua*):** This tree can get to be about 60-75' tall, so give it lots of room. Sweetgums are easily recognizable by their fruit – round sputnik-like seeds and by their star-shaped leaves. The cultivar 'Rotundiloba' is sterile, so no gum balls. There are a number of cultivars available including some dwarf varieties. I have a special fondness for columnar trees and have a beautiful columnar sweetgum, 'Slender Silhouette'. Sweetgum fall color is a deep saturated yellow. They look

especially beautiful with a backdrop of evergreens.

**Blackgum (*Nyssa sylvatica*):** Michael Dirr, author of **The Manual of Woody Landscape Plants**, the go-to reference book for nurserymen and landscapers, calls Blackgum "one of our most beautiful native trees". The tree will be 30-50' in height with a pyramidal crown that spreads with age. It prefers moist soil, and you often see it along wetlands. Its dark green leaves turn to yellow to orange to purple in autumn.

**Sassafras (*Sassafras albidum*):** Sassafras is recognizable by its mitten-shaped leaves although some of the leaves may be three-lobed. Scrape a sassafras twig and it will smell spicy. The spiciness in root beer is due to sassafras. These trees will grow to 30-60' in height but can form extensive thickets when young. The fall color can be a deep yellow to deep orange. Sassafras is the host plant to the spicebush butterfly. Little blue berries late in the season are a bird favorite.

**Eastern Witch hazel (*Hamamelis virginiana*):** This witch hazel blooms in the fall from October to December. Mine are in full flower right now. This is a small tree, good for residential plantings, from 15-20'. It can take quite a bit of shade although the flowering will be best in full sun. Clusters of crinkly yellow ribbon-like petals grow along the stems. Often there is a light spicy scent. Fall foliage is yellow, sometimes a pure yellow, sometimes a butterscotch yellow.





**Sourwood (*Oxydendrum arboreum*):** This is an absolutely gorgeous small tree, 25' – 30' in height, and one that should be used more often. We have had trouble growing it, however, because it prefers acid soil, and we live on limestone cliffs. Drive along east Rte. 60 and you will see lots of little sourwoods growing out of rock crevices, noticeable with their bright scarlet fall foliage. The tree has a pyramidal shape with drooping branches. In June or July there are long (8-10") panicles of white fragrant flowers. Another apt common name for this plant is the Lily-of-the-Valley Tree. This makes a beautiful specimen plant.

Sources: Dirr, Michael. *Encyclopedia of Woody Landscape Plants*. Champaign, Illinois. 5<sup>th</sup> edition, 1977.

[www.missouribotanicalgarden.org/Plant/Finder](http://www.missouribotanicalgarden.org/Plant/Finder)

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