

The Colonial Master Gardener

PUBLICATION OF JCC/W MASTER GARDENER ASSOCIATION & VIRGINIA COOPERATIVE EXTENSION



November 2009



NEW PROJECT HIGHLIGHT:

BACKYARD BARRELS AND BINS

BY DENNIS WOOL

Once again the MG Program has become the catalyst for creative collaboration, education, and the development of unique friendships that have resulted in the newest JCC/W MG Project: Backyard Barrels and Bins. Initiated during the 2008 Class, the project began as an effort to expand gardening to persons with limited space or poor environmental conditions.

Classmates Jack Gross and Dennis Wool soon found that the focus could include recycled materials, water conservation, and therapeutic gardening. Thanks to Barbara and Art Gustafson, the two interns were hooked into Incredible Edibles at CDR and were demonstrating their *self-watering containers* (SWC) at workshops and the Farmer's Market.

Materials for the SWCs are inexpensive and easily obtained from local stores. Some folks preferred to buy a pre-assembled kit with proceeds being used to give SWCs to targeted individuals within Incredible Edibles.

The enthusiastic reception of SWC was enhanced when interns from 2009 class Roger Evans and



Nancy Carnegie joined the team. Rain barrels were added to the demonstration with complete instructions for each type of container posted on the JCC/W MG website.

The team has made presentations in collaboration with Turf Love and Farmer's Market as well as being in demand by Homeowner Associations (HOAs) and Garden Clubs.

On the drawing board are compost tumblers and worm farms. MGs are encouraged to contact the Barrel and Bin Team to obtain SWCs or schedule a demonstration.



IMPORTANT NOTICE !!

Due to the installation of a new heating and AC system, access to the VCE and MG offices in Toano will be restricted beginning October 26 and lasting at least one month. The building may even need to close for several days. Call the Extension before visiting there to be sure you will have access.

Next Monthly Meeting:

November 5, 9 a.m.,
Williamsburg Regional
Library.

Libbey Oliver, Farmers'
Market Coordinator,
"Holiday Decorating."

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2009
MG Board

President:
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565-0335

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Jeanne Millin
258-4724

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220-0759

VP Administration:
John Giffin
345-5209

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221-0289

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566-0286

VMGA Reps:
Jim & Nelda Pressly
220-1858

Past President:
Dave Banks
258-8632

Co-op Ext Rep:
Doris Heath
564-2170

The MG Board meets on the third Friday of each month, at 9:00 am, at the James City County Health and Human Services Building, on Olde Towne Road.

The Board meetings are open to all Master Gardeners, and all are encouraged to attend.

INTERNAL EDUCATION

BY CAROL FRYER



Our speaker for the November 5th monthly meeting is Libbey Oliver, Coordinator of the Williamsburg Farmer's Market. Many of you may know that Libbey is a horticulturist, and worked for Colonial Williamsburg for several years. She is a talented gardener, and floral designer as well as a great community organizer. We are very fortunate to have Libbey able to spare time in her busy day to show us some of her ideas and techniques for Holiday Decorating. Libbey is able to put fruit, baskets and sundry items together in incredibly creative ways.

In December, our speaker will be Kathy Duncan who is a landscape designer with Custom Gardens, Inc. She became a Master Gardener in 1992 and then continued her training in landscape design. Her topic is *Basic Landscape Design and Phases of Installation*.



HELP DESK REPORT

BY PEG CREWS

The Master Gardeners' Class of 2009 did a great job at the Help Desk this past summer. They answered over 400 questions that came from homeowner calls (325), e-mails (3) and walk-in clients (93). Over 90% of the calls were resolved without the need to send samples to Virginia Tech. THANK YOU for a job well done!

The 2009-2010 Winter Help Desk schedule has been filled by both returning interns and veteran Master Gardeners. I want to thank Mary Ellen Ackerman, Denny Mehigan, John Giffin, Evi Oakley, Margene Hartsough, Ann Hobson, Jerry Babski, Carol Fryer, and Deb Secrist for volunteering their time for this project.

PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

BY LINDA LUCAS

Recently, I learned that "Meet the Gardener" tours conducted by Reid/Shields MG project volunteers met with 1100 guests (a.k.a. "MG contacts") between April and the end of September...a huge opportunity to share all that goes on in the garden, answer gardening questions and often hear what MGs around the country are doing. You would be surprised how many MG visitors Colonial Williamsburg hosts. (And this year, a return visitor to one of the other CW garden tours that some MGs give, shared that his wife was so enthused after hearing about Master Gardeners that she went back home, signed up for training and became one!)

This year MG volunteers learned about and grew Levant cotton at the Reid...a new experience for all. The flowers at both the Reid and Shields gardens are still gorgeous thanks to Pat Rathke and her group. Take a stroll and see for yourself.

You all know that, as master gardeners, we are part of Virginia Cooperative Extension. VCE is in the

process of defining economic, environmental and quality-of-life issues around the state and trying to identify how VCE can best respond to these issues. On December 8, a public meeting will be held at Brittingham-Midtown Community Center in Newport News at 10 am to hear from Peninsula residents. All are welcome and encouraged to attend. Pre-registration is necessary (at 757-890-4940). This is an opportunity to reinforce the value of master gardeners to community residents and the importance of our having an Agriculture and Natural Resources Agent in JCC as a resource for us. Let me know if you'd like more details.

Finally, we have had Interns and MGs asking when logo items will be ordered. Long and short-sleeved t-shirts with our logo are ordered locally and come in a vast array of colors. We are just looking for a volunteer or two to take the order and distribute the shirts when the order is filled. Let John Giffin know if you would be willing to do this (giffinj@cox.net). For other MG logo items, we are looking into a new system. We will tell you all about that when details are settled. See you on Thursday, November 5, at 9 am.



COMPOSTING AT MATTEY'S GARDEN

BY ART GUSTAFSON

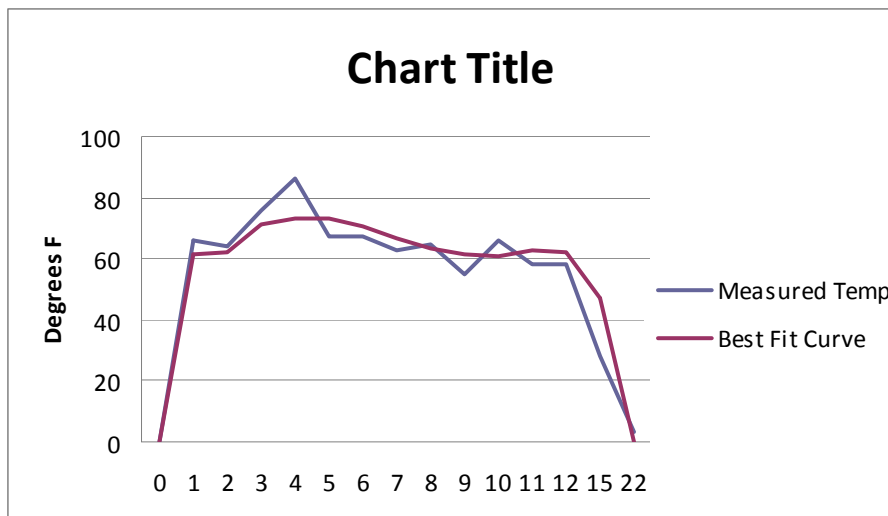
This summer two interns, Mary Ann Wittle and Ray Mindrup, volunteered to start and maintain a composting capability at Matthey's Garden. They asked me to mentor them in this effort. Ray and Mary (mostly Ray!) thoroughly cleaned and refurbished the compost bins to get ready for action. I contributed chopped leaves as did Mary. Jim Word generously donated grass from his magnificent lawn. On 23 June the three of us met at the garden and built the pile using the established technique developed by Dale Firestone, Cathy Ripley, Duane McSmith, and myself. This method, **Rapid Composting**, seeks to build a complete pile in one work session, usually three hours, with the expectation that finished compost can be harvested in two weeks. Although measurable temperature increase disappears in two weeks, current research recommends that the compost not be used for 30 to 60 days. We have had considerable success using this technique as we did once again at Matthey's Garden.

I considered this a teaching assignment, so as we built the pile we not only reviewed and applied the procedures for building a Rapid Compost but when the work was done we measured the internal temperature of the compost every morning. Pile temperature is a good measure of how well your pile is doing. Checking for offensive odors is another indicator of pile health. My theory with respect to pile temperature is that pile temperature is determined by three factors: 1) ambient air temperature, 2) heating from sunlight, and 3) bacterial activity within the pile. I have not seen this explanation in any of my research on composting but it makes

sense to me. It is the bacterial activity that is a measure of pile success. I recommend that the pile temperature be measured early in the morning; this eliminates the radiation component so that the temperature caused by bacterial action is equal to the pile temperature measured minus the ambient air temperature.

The three of us took turns doing this chore and the results are plotted below. The curve is a standard polynomial curve fit to the daily temperature measurements. I believe that the curve fit is a truer representation of bacterial activity than the individual temperature readings. I believe this because the "hot" spot moves as material is consumed by the bacteria and because it is difficult to insert the thermometer in the pile at exactly the same location each morning.

During the two week period we did not disturb the pile in any way, no aeration and nothing was added! The results were rewarding and Matthey's Garden has a new composting team to enhance activities in the garden. Note: Ray has taken on a part time job at a golf course (lucky guy) and will be limited in his garden activities. If you are interested in working with Mary Ann please give her a call (259-1759) or send an e-mail (Kwittle@aol.com). I am available to provide additional training.



JCC/W Master Gardener Mission Statement

The purpose of the James City County/ Williamsburg Master Gardener is to learn, educate, and communicate environmentally sound horticultural practices to the community. Trained by the Virginia Cooperative Extension, Master Gardener volunteers are committed to offering information to the public through sustainable landscape management educational programs.

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FALL "TO DO" LIST

COURTESY OF THE COLONIAL WILLIAMSBURG IPM DEPARTMENT

- Remember that all insects in the garden are not necessarily pests. Be sure to properly identify insects as pests and to check with the IPM tech before treating.
- Autumn is a good time to improve soil. Add organic matter and lime or fertilizer according to soil test results.
- Take care that newly planted trees and shrubs receive a thorough soaking each week. Soak the ground; do not sprinkle it lightly. Mulch to conserve moisture; it is also helpful to make a shallow depression around plants to collect water.
- Put down pre-emergent herbicide before putting down mulch and after cleaning out beds for the winter. The pre-emergent will be most effective if it contacts the soil. Fall is a good time to put down pre-emergent for winter annuals such as deadnettle, henbit and chickweed.
- Leach container soils occasionally to remove any mineral salts accumulated from fertilizer and hard water. Brown leaf edges and crusting on the sides of clay pots are two indicators of a salt problem. To leach large containers, water until the soil is soaked, and then allow water to run slowly from your hose into the pot for about 20 minutes. For small pots, water each container until it drains freely from the bottom holes. Wait a few minutes, and then repeat. If you are unsure about soluble salts concentration, there is a meter available to test it. Consult the IPM Tech if you are unsure of how to use it.
- Fall is the best time for overseeding grass. Spread a thin mulch over the seeds if seeding a bare spot.
- Disinfection of pruners between cuts is recommended when removing diseased tissue from plants. A household disinfectant spray that doesn't damage tools can be used or rubbing alcohol in a spray bottle.
- Late-fall tilling can help control insects, such as cucumber beetle, squash bug and vine borer, because it exposes overwintering insects to winter conditions.
- When planting container-grown stock, be sure to loosen the roots and fix any circling roots before planting to give the plant its best chance of survival.
- Keep picking off bagworms. The females lay eggs in their bags that hatch in the spring. Picking off now keeps them from hatching next year!
- Practice good sanitation when cleaning out beds in the fall. Leaves, fruit and other debris from plants can harbor insects and diseases that will carry over into the spring. Gathering the debris and disposing of it as trash, not compost, will reduce disease and insect severity.
- A piece of corrugated cardboard is useful as a barrier when spraying herbicide in tight spots. Other techniques include wearing a chemical-resistant glove under a cotton glove, putting herbicide on the cotton glove and wiping the plants. Wick applicators are also available.
- Watch for fungi like powdery mildew and leaf spot. Check with IPM technician for recommendations.
- Beetles and caterpillars are still out in the vegetable gardens. Keep an eye out and contact the IPM technician if any dust or spray is needed.
- Don't forget to keep watering newly planted trees and shrubs and also evergreens. They continue to use water through the winter as long as the ground is not frozen.
- Do not become alarmed if your yews, pines, arborvitae and junipers begin to shed their interior needles. It is natural for them to do this at this time of year.
- Now is a good time to scout for scale. Leaves are falling from trees revealing branches. If any infestations are seen, contact the IPM Tech for treatment.



PENINSULA TREE STEWARDS

BY SUE LIDDELL

The quarterly meeting of the Peninsula Tree Stewards featured presentations by new class members of projects required to fulfill the 20 hour requirement for graduation. JCC/W members Anne Nielsen, Carol Fryer, Jeanne Millen, Tod Allen, Cathy Lohwater and Donna Xander described the work they have done on tree and shrub ID at the Ambler property near the Jamestown Settlement. Dan Tevlin, not pictured, also worked on the project. This work will be valuable to James City County planners as they develop the property.



Cathy Lohwater, Carol Fryer, Tod Allen

Jeanne Millen, Anne Nielsen, Donna Xander

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FARMERS' MARKET WRAP-UP

BY ART GUSTAFSON & SALLY SISSEL,

CO-CHAIRS

Thanks to All! Another successful Master Gardener season at the Williamsburg Farmers' Market has come to an end. It's always fun to end the year at W&M's homecoming: the parade passes right in front of our booth on Duke of Gloucester Street.

Thanks to all who participated this year. Nearly every project was represented at one market or another and the majority of the interns were at the helpdesk table--all with nary a glitch!! No one forgot to come, we didn't get rained on (at least not much), the computer (with its printer this year) worked much better than last and, most importantly, many, many questions and concerns of the public were answered.

A special thanks to Bev Baker, Donna Xander, and Nancy Cornwell for acting as supervisors for several markets--they became very proficient with the "clicker". Also, thanks to John Giffin who came to our aid in transporting tents, etc. when Dan Tevlin was out with an injury and, of course, we enjoyed sharing our space with Bob Winters and his Turf Love crew.

Master Gardeners have definitely become a fixture at the market. Many of those coming to our booth have become regulars, some just stopping to thank us for solving a problem they had asked about at a previous market.

After a much deserved rest, you can all look forward to next year's season which begins May 1, 2010!

CALLING ALL SINGING MG'S !



We are putting together a group to sing at the Graduation Dinner in January. If you are interested in joining, please e-mail Genrose at glashingier@cox.net. Professional singing experience is not needed!

SEEING STARS

BY SALLY SISSEL



We have a "star" in our midst!!

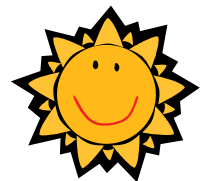
Most of us received our VMGA newsletter recently. If you look closely at the colored pictures on the "In Season" Masthead you see a handsome gentleman with a giant radish. That is none other than our own Dale Firestone, MG Emeritus, compost king and former State Representative for our group.

MELISSA'S
MEADOW



BY GRACE RAYMOND

We will be back in the meadow
in the spring!



SUNSHINE NOTES

If you know a Master Gardener who is ill, facing surgery, has suffered a family loss, or any event in which that person might benefit from a **sunshine note**, please contact the MG Secretary, Pat Janot. She will send a note or take appropriate action on behalf of the organization. Pat may be reached at 221-0289 or janotap@verizon.net.

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UPCOMING EDUCATIONAL TRAINING EVENTS

Keeping Landscapes Sustainable

Sponsored by Virginia Cooperative Extension. An educational series providing the professional landscaper with research-based information that solves problems in landscape situations. You can attend one class or all scheduled classes, listed below. These classes are designed to meet your educational needs.

- **November 18: Pruning Trees and Shrubs**

Jim Orband, Ext. Agent, York.

Branch collar, pruning to a lateral, no pruning paint, prune the 3 D's. All are pruning terms and are explained in depth during this event.

- **December 9: Weed Control in the Landscape**

Dr. Jeff Derr, Ext. Specialist, Weeds.

Get up-to-date information on weed control. Listen to the effective use of herbicides in the landscape. Learn how to control with pre-emergent or post-emergent strategies.

- **January 20: Selecting Sustainable Bedding Plants**

Diseases and other problems cause havoc in your clients' flower beds, forcing you to seek more sustainable bedding plants. Come learn alternative bedding plants to keep customers happy and increase your bottom line.

- **February 17: Tree Planting**

Dr. Bonnie Appleton, Ext. Specialist, Nursery Crops.

Learn the newest research and how you can incorporate it into your business. The research lets us know of increased success when planting a tree.

Location: Newport News Extension Office, 739 Thimble Shoals Blvd, Suite 1009, Oyster Point Plaza. 9 am – 11 am. 1 CEU per hour of program

All classes are free; pre-registration is required and can be done by calling 890-4940 or emailing ex199@vt.edu.

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Get Down Under: Gardening Starts Below Ground

A Home Gardener Education Day sponsored by the Virginia Horticulture Foundation, Thursday, Jan. 28th, 2010 at the Founders Inn & Spa, 5641 Indian River Road, Virginia Beach, VA (Exit 286B off I-64). For more information and to register, go to www.MAHSC.org and click on the link "Home Gardener Program", or call (757) 523-4734.



Upcoming Dates to Remember

- **Nov. 5** Monthly MG Meeting at WRL; Libbey Oliver, "Seasonal Decorations"
- **Dec. 3** Monthly MG Meeting at WRL; Kathy Duncan, "Basic Landscape Design and Phases of Installation"

NEXT NEWSLETTER DEADLINE:

The deadline for submission of material for the December Newsletter is **Nov. 23**. Please send to Cathy Lohwater, newsletter editor, at cathy.lohwater@cox.net or call 757-259-1133.

ABOUT THE VIRGINIA MASTER GARDENERS AND VIRGINIA COOPERATIVE EXTENSION

Virginia Master Gardeners are volunteer educators who work within their communities to encourage and promote environmentally sound horticulture practices through sustainable landscape management education and training. As an educational program of Virginia Cooperative Extension, Virginia Master Gardeners bring the resources of Virginia's land-grant universities, Virginia Tech and Virginia State University, to the people of the commonwealth.

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