

# The Colonial Master Gardener

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

September 2008

## PRESIDENT'S CORNER DAVE BANKS

As those of you who have been reading your e-mail or came to the August meeting know, we lost our superenergetic Extension Agent Leanne DuBois to the state Department of Agriculture! She is staying in town so you may see her around, as an active Master Gardener. Meanwhile your Board has been learning just what is involved in finding (and funding) a replacement. Leanne had a full time position, split between New Kent and James City Counties. A decision was made within the Extension service not to do this



Photos from the farewell reception for Leanne held August 1 at Williamsburg Unitarian Universalists Church.



again--but to work towards full time Agriculture and Natural Resources Agent (ANR) positions in each county. Each county had put up one-sixth of Leanne's salary: now JCC must be asked to pay half of a replacement's salary since Extension budgets have been cut once again.

So, we are working to show just what is made possible by having an ANR agent, and having an active MG Association to leverage his/her talent and energy. Did you know that in 2007, Master Gardener volunteers contributed 16,865 volunteer hours to community outreach including 40,040 citizen contacts? At \$20.08 per hour--an accepted value for volunteer labor in Virginia for 2006--this represents a contributed value of \$338,650. Kind of impressive, I believe!

Anyhow, as we start our late Summer and Fall lineup with Super Turf Saturday and the opening Landscape Love season, we are trying to avoid another year-without-an-agent that vintage MGs will remember (when Ed Overton retired)... Will keep you posted.

The MG Training Class for 2009 is well underway in the planning stages, and the flyers to recruit students will appear soon. If you have friends or neighbors who might benefit from MG training (and would like to be part of our volunteer outreach program) please watch for the flyers and pass them out.



## Next Monthly Meeting

September 4, 9:00am,  
Williamsburg  
Regional Library,  
Bill Apperson,  
Department of Forestry,  
*History of  
James City  
County/Williamsburg  
Forests*

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## INTERNAL EDUCATION NEWS CAROL FRYER

2008-2009  
MG Board

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Dave Banks  
258-8632

**VP Projects:**  
Judy Hansen  
345-0958

**VP Internal Ed:**  
Carol Fryer  
220-0759

**VP Administration:**  
John Giffin  
345-5209

**Secretary:**  
Pat Crowe  
645-4538

**Treasurer:**  
Sarah Dougherty  
565-7954

**VMGA Reps:**  
Jim & Nelda Pressly  
220-1858

**Past President:**  
Charlie Clapper  
564-6191

**Extension Agent:**  
Vacant

The MG Board meets on the third Friday of each month, at 9:00am, 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.

*"I think I shall never see a poem as lovely as a tree"*

Joyce Kilmer

I recently finished reading a narrative non-fiction book by Richard Preston, 2007, titled *The Wild Trees*. It is an incredible book that tells about the coast redwood trees in Northern California, many of which were not discovered and named until the 1990s.

It is difficult to conceive of a tree that is 379.1 ft. tall, the Hyperion, the world's tallest tree discovered in 2006 by Michael Taylor. Several of these titan trees were in existence when the Parthenon was built. What is also amazing are the methods used to climb these tall giants – the climbers are aerialists in the trees using expert climbing techniques and highly specialized climbing equipment. The trees climbers are scientists who have discovered and study the self-sustaining eco-systems in the tree canopies, hundreds of feet above the forest floor. Imagine ferns mats growing in the redwood canopy in 3 feet of soil, along with bonsai trees growing on redwood limbs, and wandering salamanders and copepods – tiny aquatic crustaceans in the plant material, and unnamed species of lichen and mites. (The book is available at the Wil-



liamsburg or JCC library)

On a note closer to home for tree lovers, there is an on-line listing of trees on the William and Mary campus with a tour guide that you can print out, titled *The Henley Tour of Campus Plants*. It is a wonderful way to explore the campus and see many beautiful specimens that you might not have noticed.

<http://web.wm.edu/leec/planttour/PlantTour.html?&=svr=www> (thanks to Susan Giandomenico for this reference).

**September 4 education program:** All of this information might help prepare a mind set for our monthly meeting. **Bill Apperson** from the Department of Forestry will be speaking about the **History of our James City County/Williamsburg forests**, and possibly identifying some old, large, and/or rare trees in our region. Many of you know that several years ago, the chestnut tree blight destroyed those beautiful trees that ranged throughout Virginia. Bill has been involved in a propagation program in the New Kent Forestry Office and has been growing new cultivars of chestnut trees that one day may allow the chestnut tree to again be a part of our natural landscape.

**Field Trip:** At our monthly meeting, John Giffin will provide more detailed information about our field trip to VIMS (Virginia Institute of Marine Science) on Sept. 12th (see page 3 of this newsletter), and a sign-up sheet will be available.

We look forward to seeing you at the September monthly meeting at the Williamsburg library!

## MG LIBRARY JEANNE MILLIN

A project to reorganize and update the MG Library is nearing completion. Repairs to damaged books still need to be done but the new labeling, according to the Library of Congress numbering system, is in place and the shelves have been relabeled.

In future columns I will highlight some of our new books and some which you might find useful for your projects or to buy for your home library. Library books are for Master Gardener project reference, so please let me know if you see a

void in information and we will put it on the wish list. According to Leanne, most of our books were purchased with James City County funds and need to be kept for MG reference purposes.

If you need to borrow a book for a project, please contact me for short term lending. I can be reached at 258-4724 or [scotfarquhar@cox.net](mailto:scotfarquhar@cox.net). There is a new sign-out sheet in the MG office.

A copy of the Library List will be placed on the MG member's website in the future.

# The Colonial Master Gardener September 2008

## Virginia Institute of Marine Science Field Trip September 12, 2008, 9:00 AM – 3:00 PM

On Friday, September 12<sup>th</sup>, we are sponsoring a field trip at the Virginia Institute of Marine Science (VIMS), 1208 Greate Road in Gloucester Point, Virginia, just across the Coleman Bridge. The field trip starts at 10:00 am at the Watermans Hall Auditorium with a VIMS orientation and slide show about their horticulture projects and landscape demonstration areas. Then there is a walking tour of their demonstration areas, including the Teaching Marsh, beach and dune restoration area and a coastal riparian forest. It is an easy walk on gravel paths, sand beaches and boardwalks. Our VIMS guides are Karen Duhring and Denise Greene, who talked to us about native plants at the August general meeting.

At noon attendees have a choice of bringing and eating their own brown bag lunch at VIMS

or going to a Gloucester Point restaurant. Starting at 1:00 pm, there is a visit at Denise Greene's nearby Sassafras Farm, 7029 Bray Road, Hayes, VA, where we will have a tour and discussion of native plants she grows. She will have plants available for purchase as well.

For those who want to carpool, we will meet at the parking lot of the Marquis Shopping Mall (just east of I 64 near the southern Route 199 intersection) at 9:00 am. We'll take a leisurely drive along the Colonial National Historic Parkway to the Coleman Bridge and arrive at VIMS about 9:45 am. We can return after the visit to Sassafras Farm or sooner if some need to return to Williamsburg after the noon meal.

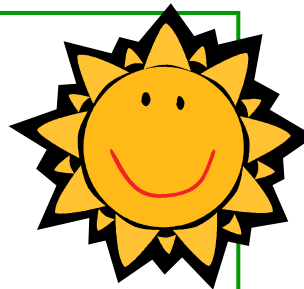
Currently, the limit of 40 people have signed up and there are several on the waiting list. However, if there are late cancellations and you didn't sign up, you can e-mail John Giffin at [giffinj@cox.net](mailto:giffinj@cox.net) or call him at 757-345-5209 to determine if there is room for you to go. If you signed up and can not go, please notify John as soon as possible.

EDITORS NOTE: The deadline for submission of material for the October MG Newsletter is [September 23](#). Please send to Lise Kline, newsletter editor, at [legskline@cox.net](mailto:legskline@cox.net) or call 757-259-9477. Comments and questions about the newsletter are also welcome. Thank you.

### 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 Crowe. She will send a note or take appropriate action on behalf on the organization.

Pat may be reached at 645-4538 or [pk.Crowe@cox.net](mailto:pk.Crowe@cox.net).



### VMGA NEWS JIM AND NELDA PRESSLY

The August meeting of the VMGA board met in Manassas. VMGA is sponsoring an advanced training event at Mount Vernon September 19<sup>th</sup>. If you plan to attend, get your application in soon! Information is available at the VMG website. Three hours credit will be given for this event.

The auction at MG College was a great success. The endowment received \$4,300 from the auction. Thank you to all who contributed items. 250 people attended MG College this summer.

The Virginia Green Industry Council is sponsoring The Virginia Garden Festival at the Virginia Science Museum in Richmond on September 20, from 9am-4pm. For more information call 540-382-0943 or visit [www.viriniagreen.org](http://www.viriniagreen.org).

Don't forget that the State Fair is September 25 to October 5. A plant auction will be held on October 5.

### JCC/W MG 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.

# The Colonial Master Gardener September 2008

## News from E<sup>2</sup> Kari Abbott

As September arrives the yellow school buses and the school activities in E2 begin again. There is a new addition to the arsenal of tools for Master Gardener's this year at D.J. Montague. The Conservation Classroom boardwalk will be completed by Labor Day. There is a new wooden boardwalk that leads to the area, with handicap access. It is very nice, similar to the boardwalks in other James City County Parks, like Greensprings. Teacher training went on through the summer, with Kindergarten teachers learning new activities to work with at school. A comprehensive list of books that relate to environmental education was developed this summer. The book list will help get new books in the school library that are tied to environmental education. A Dedication Sign was placed in the classroom, thanks to the school. It really is a nice place to learn about outside. All this work was tied into the *Greenworks!* Grant that the E2 Project received last February.

The monthly visits to D. J. will start in September. The schedule of classes will be emailed to people who have

helped, or who have expressed an interest in helping, once the teachers get back to school.

Thanks to some brave interns, there will also be a branching out of the E2 program, and there will be classes conducted at Matoaka Elementary School. There will be a training workshop on September 9<sup>th</sup> for anyone interested in participating in the E2 program. It will start at 9:00am and go no later than 3:00pm. The workshop will be held in at the Williamsburg/James City County Recreation Center on Longhill Road, n classroom A. It is a Project Learning Tree workshop, you will get advanced training hours, and it is tailored to meet the E2 curriculum. If you would like to attend, please contact Kari Abbott, at bearsbas-kets@cox.net, to sign up. You will receive the Project Learning Tree K-8 Activity Guide, and other educational materials. Bring your lunch, it will be a fun day with loads of information!

Exciting things are waiting as school starts, everyone is always welcome to join in. Contact Kari Abbott, Project Chairperson, email above.

## Melissa's Meadow Grace Raymond

We will be in the meadow on the morning of Sept. 18. I look to forward seeing you there. We will be beginning the collection of seed heads for community distribution.

## Upcoming Dates to Remember

- Sept 6 The Williamsburg Botanical Garden's monthly Learn and Grow educational series from 10-11 AM. Helen Hamilton, a James City County Master Gardener and Virginia Native Plant Society Board Member will present "Drought Resistant Plants for Homeowners."
- Sept 9 E2 Training Workshop (see above)
- Set 12 VIMS Field Trip (see page 3 of this newsletter)
- Sept 16 The Williamsburg Botanical Garden presents a Learn and Grow evening lecture from 7:30-8:30 PM. Brent Heath, owner of the world famous Brent & Becky's Bulbs will present "Pest Resistant Bulbs." The lecture will be held at the Williamsburg Community Building at 401 North Boundary Street. Admission is free.
- Sept 19 VMGA trip to Mt. Vernon
- Oct 2 monthly MG meeting
- Nov 6 monthly MG meeting

## Stormwater Advisory Committee Forming

The James City County Board of Supervisors is currently accepting applications for citizens to serve on a Stormwater Advisory Committee. The Board of Supervisors is considering establishing a Stormwater Advisory Committee to assist the Board and county staff by identifying drainage problems and stormwater needs, developing goals and priorities; and participating in public education and outreach initiatives related to the County's stormwater program. The committee may consist of representatives from each voting district and will be open to any business or resident of James City County. Prospective members will support the goals and purpose of the Stormwater Program and be advocates for projects and events within the County.

Interested parties should go to <http://www.jccgov.com/commissions/index.html> and fill out the Application to Serve. Decisions regarding Committee membership are expected during Fall 2008.

Contact: Frances Geissler - Stormwater Director  
Phone: 757-259-1460  
Email: [stormwater@james-city.va.us](mailto:stormwater@james-city.va.us)

# The Colonial Master Gardener September 2008

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## DROUGHT-TOLERANT PLANTS HELEN HAMILTON

What a dry summer we have had! Bringing a lot of gardeners to think about next year's plantings to include plants that will survive on very little water. My garden looks lush, mostly because in 400 square feet, I am growing six different cultivars of the native switchgrass *Panicum virgatum*. So, one answer to drought-resistant plants are native ornamental grasses. Popular cultivars are the 8-foot tall 'Heavy Metal' and 'Northwind', both with metallic blue foliage and stiff stems and leaves. Six-foot cultivars like 'Dallis Blue' and 'Prairie Sky' are a little more floppy, but the enormous powder-blue seedheads waving in breezes are a delightful background for goldenrods, black-eyed susans, and tick-



seeds, all drought-tolerant natives as well. Several cultivars of switchgrass have red leaves or stems, one of which is 'Shenandoah', which grows only five feet tall.

All these grasses are clump-forming, which means they stay in one place, and only occasionally self-seed. But beware – in my small garden, these clumps have outgrown their space. These are prairie grasses, the roots go wide and deep, and in a garden will need periodic division. It will take a strong man with a heavy metal implement to carve the roots into manageable grapefruit-size pieces for replanting elsewhere.

My garden also supports the gorgeous purple muhly *Muhlenbergia capillaris*, which initially enthralled me with its unbelievable beauty, growing in sand dunes on Portsmouth Island. The photo above shows three plants in front of the Elizabethan Gardens in Manteo, providing winter interest in February. In late summer through late fall the tiny purple seeds on 12-inch seedheads wave gently on rounded stems, creating a purple cloud, especially striking when backlit by autumn sun.

If you don't mind aggressive self-seeding, river oats *Chasmanthium latifolium* will reward your garden with the interesting drooping seedheads, resembling very closely sea oats *Uniola paniculata*, a salt-water species growing on the Outer Banks. River oats prefers a little shade and moisture,

and grows well along stream banks. I have it in pots on my deck where it requires very little care.

All these native ornamental grasses do not want fertilization, otherwise they will droop and grow less vigorously. The dead stems and seedheads provide winter cover for birds and small animals, as well as structural dimensions and striking contrasts to evergreens in the winter garden. Although in nature, the new growth emerges among the dead stems, which eventually disappear, most home gardeners prefer to remove the dead plant material in March, when the new leaves begin to appear. If cut into 12-inch segments, they form a natural mulch for early spring plants.

Other native plants that do well with little water are joe-pye-weed (*Eupatorium dubium*), blanket flower (*Gaillardia*

*pulchella*), coneflower (*Echinacea purpurea*), cup plant (*Silphium perfoliatum*), soldier mallow (*Hibiscus militaris*), sneezeweed (*Helenium autumnale*), bonesets (*Eupatorium perfoliatum*), swamp sunflower (*Helianthus angustifolius*), downy sunflower (*Helianthus mollis*), milkweeds (*Asclepis* spp.), ironweed (*Vernonia* spp.).

Native ornamental grasses are not widely sold in local nurseries, who often stock non-natives such as silvergrass (*Miscanthus sinensis*) and the popular pampas grass (*Cortaderia selloana*).

Below are two local sources for native ornamental grasses, or try mail order via the internet:

[www.sandysplants.com](http://www.sandysplants.com): The retail outlet is in Mechanicsville

[www.pinelandsnursery.com](http://www.pinelandsnursery.com): The wholesale/retail outlet is located in Lanexa.

We're on the web at [www.jccwmg.org](http://www.jccwmg.org)