

January 2021-Vol7 No.1



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Making January Productive for the Edible Gardener

By Ralph Morini | January 2021-Vol7 No.1



For edible gardeners, November and December represent a gradual transition from the current year to the next one. Now, in January we are focused on the coming spring growing season, getting plans, supplies, and tools in order as spring approaches.

Plans

- Many of us neglect maintaining a garden journal, but it is really a good idea to start one and keep it up. Things worth planning and recording include:
 - A garden sketch, reproducible if possible, where you can lay out where to plant each crop you want to grow. Also, develop a plan to rotate crops through different areas to add diversity to soil demands and reduce disease outbreaks.
 - Putting together a timetable beginning with indoor seed starting and developing a planting plan that runs through spring, summer, fall and winter cover cropping. Base it on “time to harvest” data from seed packs, catalogs or websites. Even if you deviate from it for weather related or other reasons, it provides a great guide to garden activity through the year. The VA Cooperative Extension’s [Home Garden Vegetable Planting Guide](#) provides helpful data on planting dates and amounts to plant for a range of vegetables.
 - Analyzing and recording pest and disease problems and attack dates. Paying regular attention to problems helps head them off early and the data is useful in avoiding issues the following year. This can mean purchasing seeds or transplants that are resistant, adding row covers to keep cabbage worms off the brassicas or simply being vigilant for arrival of the first squash bugs. Sometimes defeating a persistent pest is almost as satisfying as harvesting the vegetable that was attacked.
 - If you are thinking of adding small fruits to the garden, review the VA Cooperative Extension publication [Small Fruit in the Home Garden](#) for helpful advice.
- Winter is also a good learning time. Studying best growing practices, and generally making gardening a learning process, adds to both skills and satisfaction. There is a wealth of information on the [VA Cooperative Extension website](#) via its search box or check the article [Books Every Gardener Should Have](#) in the December 2020 issue of *The Garden Shed*. In fact, the search function located on the [main page](#) of *The Garden Shed* gives you access to 5 years of research-based articles on many edible and ornamental plants, gardening science, and best practices.



Parasitic braconid wasp eggs on tomato horn worm. Photo: Ralph Morini

- Increasing pollinator-friendly plantings helps to assure that pollinators and beneficial insects will be around when needed. Plan now to make your ecosystem more insect-friendly. The article [Plant a Pollinator Paradise](#) from the July 2020 Garden Shed offers a step by step process for supporting beneficial insects and pollinators in your home gardens.

Supplies

- Check seed catalogs and websites for information about hybrids as you choose your seeds. Finding the right blend of size, taste, and disease resistance can really affect the success and enjoyment of the harvest. Purchasing whatever is available at the local garden shop or home center puts you at the mercy of the selections made by their buyers, which may not match yours.
- This year consider purchasing seeds early to avoid risk of availability issues. COVID restrictions have increased home gardening participation and seed supplies may be stressed this spring.
- If you have older seeds that may have outlived their viability, it makes sense to test their germination rate. *The Garden Shed* article [Good Seeds. Bad Seeds](#) explains how to test your seeds prior to planting.
- If you plan to do some container gardening, fresh potting mix is recommended. Old mix can be composted. Shop for good deals on new mix before the spring rush.



Compost batch in winter. Photo: Ralph Morini

- Use the winter to assemble a compost batch that will start to decompose when warmer spring weather arrives. Collect fall leaves or tear up and add newspapers and paper boxes to start. Add kitchen fruit/vegetable waste and coffee grounds throughout the winter. When spring temperatures reach 60 degrees, mix the ingredients, moisten the materials and let nature do its work. You can have great compost in time for summer plantings in May/June if you keep it moist and aerated. Learn more about home composting [here](#).

Tools:

- This is a good time to clean and maintain tools, pots, and planters. Both can be scrubbed and then soaked in a 90% water, 10% bleach solution. Store off the ground until they are put back into use. Clean, sharpen and oil cutting tools for ease of use and to avoid damaging plants during pruning work.
- If you end up with a stack of plastic pots that you don't need, recycle them. Some local nurseries will take them for their own or community reuse. Lowes has a chain-wide recycling program. Let's keep plastic out of landfills!
- While you are into maintenance, it is a good time to look over your garage or garden shed to identify ways to improve organization. Create an improved design or just straighten things up.

Other tasks:



Winter Feeder: Photo Ralph Morini

- A key to minimum chemical gardening is to cultivate the most diverse eco-system you can in your yard and garden. Feeding the birds in winter is a good way to keep these helpful predators around for when they are needed. Get some tips on good bird feeder practice in the article [Creating a Bird Friendly Garden](#) from the February 2019 issue of *The Garden Shed*.
- If you have a natural Christmas tree, please recycle it. The [county has a recycling program](#) for them. There are numerous drop off locations. Trees are ground into mulch which is given to residents free of charge at Darden Towe Park in the spring. Check out our latest Timely Topic on [How to Recycle Your Holiday Tree](#)
- If you burn wood in your fireplace, remember that wood ash is alkaline. It can be mixed with compost or soil but will raise the pH if added in quantity. Not all plants can tolerate alkaline soils. Ornamentals including lilac, weigela, pinks and mock orange as well as vegetables including spinach, beets, corn and cabbage are exceptions. For more info, check the article [Wood Ashes](#) in the January 2017 issue of *The Garden Shed*.
- If you feel like growing something edible, indoor herbs are a good idea. Use fresh potting mix. Moisten the mix well prior to filling a clean container, water after seeding and cover with plastic wrap or similar moisture preserving device until germination occurs. Then add liquid fertilizer as needed and provide regular care to enjoy fresh herbs before winter's end. Find guidance in the article [Be Inspired With Indoor Herb Gardening](#) in last month's *Garden Shed*.
- Aphids, spider mites, whiteflies, and other pests are winter houseplant nemeses. To minimize pest damage, keep new plants separate from plants moved indoors, remove dead/damaged foliage and check plants regularly using a magnifier to watch for pests. Washing with soapy water and placing sticky-card fly traps around plants will help manage pests.

Sources:

"Managing Insects on Indoor Plants," Univ.Minn.Ex.umn.edu

"Plants Grown in Containers: Indoor Containers - Houseplants," [N.C. State Ext.](#)

A Mishmash of Wonderful

By Susan Martin | January 2021-Vol7 No.1



While I was going over my notes from interviewing Fran Boninti, I couldn't help wondering how one person can have so much energy! When I googled that question, the usual advice appeared: get enough sleep, drink plenty of water, eat the right foods, exercise, spend time outdoors, don't over-caffeinate. In addition to these regular do-and-don't lists, another intangible explanation came to the fore: "See the glass as half full." I think that may be the energy driver with Fran.

Fran Boninti has accrued over 12,000 volunteer hours since becoming a Piedmont Master Gardener in 1991. She was the state horticulture chair for the Garden Club of Virginia, is a graduate of the first class of the Charlottesville Area Tree Stewards, a charter member of the Jefferson Chapter Virginia Native Plant Society, a member of the Rivanna Garden Club, and a board member of the Ivy Creek Foundation for nine years. She has also been a Monticello guide, as well as a guide for their "Saturdays in the Garden" tour. This is a list of her memberships and volunteer activities over the years. She makes a difference by participating so fully.

Our interest in talking with Fran for the newsletter is that she exemplifies how a Master Gardener can impact the community (see the feature article in this issue, "What Do Master Gardeners Do?"). Her home garden, a lifelong "labor" of love, is also a living classroom for fellow gardeners. This interview is really a

collaborative article, based on a Q & A format.

Fran, you and your garden have been together for about 40 years! It must be so special to have a garden that mirrors the course of your life and your interests.

Yes, 40 years this coming summer! I tell people, “Don’t move, and you’ll inevitably have a great garden!” You can’t buy time, which is what a garden needs most.

As you look back, what was that early garden like?

Awful! Lots of mishmash for sure. We had the house built when we were 28 years old, had an infant, and not a lot of money to spend. I started almost everything from seed, or planted gifts from friends and family. Our upper property was compacted, red clay. It had been a cattle farm for at least a century, and hadn’t been cultivated. I was raised in an area that was glacial soil. My dad was proud of the fact that he could plunge his arm, almost to his elbow, into his soil. Wasn’t everywhere like that? Not in central Virginia! The first thing I had to do was to work the soil and, consequently, I lost plants because the soil wasn’t cared for before planting.

Did you come from a gardening family?

Luckily, both sets of grandparents and my parents were avid gardeners. The troops showed up at our new house! Mom and dad helped tremendously. Daddy tilled (though this is not recommended now), and supplemented the soil with manure. He helped put in our small vegetable garden, as well as plantings around the house. We were surrounded by ALL sun. One poor native plum tree (still there) on the east side of our house provided a shade “garden” for a hosta gifted by my parents. The hosta is still there! Even my mother-in-law, an apartment dweller her whole life, helped plant azaleas with me. I cherish all these things because she and my father have passed.

Did you manage to get your husband and children involved too?

Although my husband, Andrew, grew up in an apartment, and knew nothing about gardening, his patience makes him a better gardener than I am. I’m not allowed to divide plants because I tend to mutilate them, while Andrew gently digs and coaxes. He’s planted almost every tree and shrub on our property—sometimes more than once! I like moving things around, and as I said, Andrew is patient! As our daughters grew, they helped us move rocks, lined walkways with bricks, planted, weeded, and enjoyed being outside with us. A joy for sure.

How did your interests change over time?

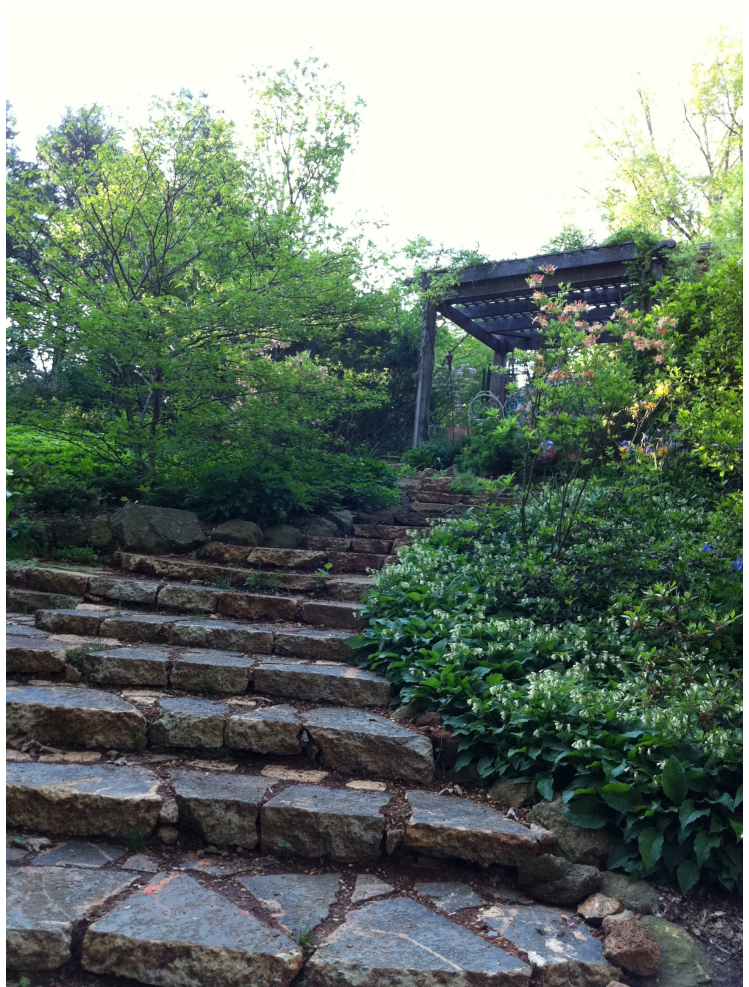
I have always been interested in native plants. Since childhood, I’ve loved insects and animals, and have wanted to plant anything that would attract either to the garden. I was lucky to be present at the first meeting of the Jefferson Chapter Native Plant Society in the early 80s. That set me on the right path. I’m a strong believer in Dr. Doug Tallamy’s message [author of *Bringing Nature Home* and *Nature’s Best Hope*], but anyone who gardens can tell you that more critters are attracted to the straight native species than to plants from Asia or Europe. People who deny our earth is in trouble are not gardeners, or they haven’t stayed in one place long enough to notice the subtle changes around them. Andrew and I keep a running tally of missing invertebrates and birds. Some vireos, certain warblers, chimney swifts, whippoorwills, and woodcocks are but a few of the birds we haven’t seen, or heard, for some time. We think that adding native plants to our property is a duty, rather than a task or a limitation.

Your garden is predominantly one of native plants. Does planting a nonnative put you in a state of

guilt, or can you just enjoy something beautiful?

I am not a purist, and I think we can have a few nonnatives tucked in. I love our evergreen nonnative azaleas, planted in the early years, that provide shelter during snowfall for many birds, especially for native sparrows. Birds flit in and out of the azaleas and use them for nesting. But those azaleas are surrounded on our property by native trees, shrubs, and herbaceous plants. We certainly enjoy growing vegetables, the majority of which are nonnatives. In direct answer to your question, a plant annoys me, more than guilt me, when it doesn't offer anything useful for the critters. For example, I enjoy the Chrysanthemum 'Sheffield Pink', which is full of bees, including honeybees, but I wonder if this plant offers the right kind of nutritional balance for native critters? This is an important question that we are learning more about. I do get aggravated with things like butterfly bush (*buddleia*). In addition to not having the right nectar for our butterflies, they seed everywhere. I haven't grown them in over 20 years and don't miss them a bit. Another issue is "frankennatives," which is a term for hybrids, such as double-flowered plants, of native plants. Novice gardeners with good intentions buy these so-called natives, not realizing that they are not always beneficial, or even morphologically accessible, to visiting insects. Sometimes, when I see people deciding which plants to buy, I am greatly tempted to offer unasked-for-advice! But in all honesty, the fact that people are gardening is a win! The rest is education and AVAILABILITY. But that's another larger topic.

Your garden has many pathways and steps which make it more beautiful, as well as more accessible. How did you manage those big hardscape projects?



"Urbanite" Steps Photo: Fran Boninti



"Urbanite" Patio Photo: Fran Boninti

We built pathways and steps out of "urbanite", aka, very cheap, broken concrete. When a nursery (The Gardens off 29 north) was closed and demolished, I paid \$40 for all the broken concrete that was their flooring. Andrew broke up the pieces, and brought them to me in a wheelbarrow. We put in a pond, and collected river rocks in our van. We were much stronger then! Rock work is beyond us now. Many lovely people have helped us over the years by allowing us to collect rocks on their properties. We also had a young man build the urbanite flooring over by our nursery areas. We also added a shed playhouse, and a fun "outhouse-like" shed. Fortunately, we never got into projects that would have changed the natural topography of our property. It retains the dips of soft hills and flat areas original to when we first moved here and built the house.

How would you describe your garden now?



Claytonia virginica Photo: Fredlyfish4, Wikimedia Commons,

Mature, like Andrew and I! Our tree groves, mostly tulip trees or tulip poplars (*Liriodendron tulipifera*), were not there when we first moved in. It was all brambles. The tulip trees are now major shade makers. The trees and shrubs planted three decades ago in the upper part of our property are now giving shade. Plants are reproducing like crazy in the beautiful soil we have worked so hard to develop. A rhododendron we planted many years ago came with a few accidental spring beauties (*Claytonia virginica*). Those spring beauties are now everywhere! That happens when the conditions are right. Many other plants are doing the same. It is well known that as young gardeners, we garden in the sun; as older gardeners, we (should) garden in the shade. Our vision of shade is now a reality, just when we need it most.

You've been active in so many garden organizations. I know you love to share both what you've learned, and what you plant. How have those activities influenced your garden design and objectives?

I learn so much from novice gardeners. They think their questions are silly and redundant, when in fact, they are fabulous! I always go home with more questions, and I love delving deeper. Andrew has mixed feelings when I make a new "discovery," as it inevitably leads to the purchase of a new plant(s), or his moving something else. We are all lifelong learners, and I still have a lot to learn and correct! It also makes me want to improve things, such as putting in more paths to make it easier to observe plants and insects. We enjoy sharing our garden with students and fellow gardeners, and I am sure we will continue tweaking our gardens for that reason.

Now we get to that list of contributions I mentioned earlier. This list is meant not to intimidate, but to inspire other gardeners to follow in the very busy footsteps you continue to leave. I read that in 1998, you were a major contributor to both the inspiration and perspiration for planting more than 130 native trees and shrubs in the area around the education building at Ivy Creek Natural Area, a spot that is now enjoyed by so many. You worked with a team of 27 Master Gardeners, and persuaded 16 nurseries to donate plant material. In recognition of this project, and for other conservation work, you were awarded the DeLacy Gray Medal for Conservation in 2001. The award also cites your teaching young and old to identify, safeguard and propagate native plants; spearheading development of the Holkham Hollow Natural Area; and heading the building of a butterfly garden and bluebird trail for the Meriwether Lewis Elementary School. In 2013, you spearheaded the design and implementation of a native planting project at Hatton Ferry. Phew!! Firstly, on behalf of our readers, thank you! When you go back to visit these public spaces now, what turned out to be some of your teams' best ideas?

Just like our own gardens, public places evolve. Initially, they're fabulous, but things happen that you can't foresee or predict. Lack of care is one such problem. Many projects I've been involved with (my garden club, the Rivanna Garden Club, was instrumental in a number of them) were initiated with the agreement that we would provide ongoing care for the completed project for 5 years, and then the apron strings would be cut. A small number of projects failed, but we learn from that as well.

Hatton Ferry, sponsored by the Rivanna Garden Club, was another story. With the blessing of my club, I did a lot of research, and tried to include only plants native to Albemarle County. [For a good resource on plants native to Albemarle County, see this [link](#).] Club members came out and planted MANY plants in one day. Almost immediately, wayward weed whackers, as well as deer, beaver, and voles, discovered this new smorgasbord of plants. To add insult to injury, a massive rainstorm inundated the whole area, washing away the new plantings downriver. During the planning phase, I had tried to imagine outside threats, and provide protection against them, but then Mother Nature decided to redesign it all anyway! Our club's Hatton Ferry project continued for a few more years with replantings and maintenance. A general lesson learned from the MANY projects I've been involved in is that you must be committed to anything you do. Without commitment, the effort becomes either a shadow of what it could have been or, a complete failure.

Fran, we are grateful for all you have done and continue to do. We look forward to visiting your incredible gardens, and learning from your experience, your curiosity, and your natural ability to enjoy giving. Thank you!

SOURCES

Rivanna Garden Club 90th Celebration History - 1922-2012, Betsy Henneman Woodard, July 24, 2013, <https://therivannagardenclub.org/site/2013/07/24/pellentesque-habitan-morbi-tristique-senectus/>

"Blooming Bountiful: In a Magical Ivy Garden, Change is a Constant," *c-ville*, <https://www.c-ville.com/blooming-bountiful-in-a-magical-ivy-garden-change-is-a-constant/>

Piedmont Natives - Plant Database, <http://webapps.albemarle.org/NativePlants/default.aspx>

Feature Photo: Patio Garden Photo: Fran Boninti

Upcoming Events

By Susan Martin | January 2021-Vol7 No.1

HOME GARDEN DAY 2021 - VIRTUAL

Monday, January 11

9:00 AM - 2:00 PM

Home Gardener Day 2021 features four lecture sessions to prepare you to *Grow Wild* in your own backyard. Four speakers - Doug Tallamy, Ryan McEnaney, Brie Arthur, and Ian Caton - will talk about:

- Why we should all plant native
- Breeding of cultivars
- Using natives in food gardens
- How to propagate these plants

The fee is \$45. For more information and to register see this [link](#).

LEWIS GINTER BOTANICAL GARDEN

1800 Lakeside Avenue
Richmond, Virginia 23228
804-262-9887

Enjoy the cozy heat of the **conservatory** filled with cacti, tropicals, and orchids, and sate your desire for seeing and sniffing beautiful blooms. The outside gardens also offer January blooms, such as winter jasmine (*Jasminum nudiflorum*), stinking hellebore (*Helleborus foetidus*), 'Jelena' witch hazel (*Hamamelis × intermedia* 'Jelena'), and more. Masks & online tickets required for entry to the gardens and the conservatory. See this [link](#) for visitor information.

PIEDMONT MASTER GARDENERS

SPRING LECTURE SERIES 2021 - VIRTUAL AND FREE

THURSDAYS IN MARCH

March 4, - Ira Wallace, Southern Exposure Seed Exchange - "**Better Backyard Tomatoes** "

March 11 - Carol Heiser, Retired from Dept. of Game and Inland Fisheries - "**What Is Conservation Landscaping?** "

March 18 - Mike Raupp, University of Maryland - "**What a Warming World Means for Plants, Pests and and Their Natural Enemies**"

March 25 - Robyn Puffenbarger, Bridgewater College - "**Robins to Raptors: Observing Birds in Our Backyards**"

Save the dates for this free educational opportunity just in time for spring! Check the [Piedmont Master Gardeners Website](#) for more information. Registration opens February 1, 2021.

CHARLOTTESVILLE AREA TREE STEWARDS

Free Classes via ZOOM Announced for first half of 2021

Registrations are now open for the January and February classes listed below. Further information on additional classes will be available nearer the time. These Virtual classes are free, but if you would like to

attend, we ask that you register through the links below. After you register, you will receive an email with a Zoom link a few days before the class.

“Pruning Landscape Trees”

Saturday morning, January 23

10:00 AM - Noon

This free class on pruning landscape trees is presented by Tree Steward Tim Maywalt. Learn how to prune to improve tree health and appearance, while reducing the risk of branch failure. Also, find out what tools to use and how to use them safely along with best pruning practices used by professional arborists. **Click link to register:** <https://forms.gle/N1jkyTM6HC4BiLuT7>

“Tree Basics Class: Tree Identification by Season: Winter”

Tuesday, February 9

7:00-8:30 PM

Throughout the winter season the underlying tree architecture is revealed, providing us with an opportunity to focus on the fundamentals of tree ID. Join us for an evening to learn some key characteristics to identifying trees throughout the year. Emily Ferguson, a Tree Steward, will discuss bark, branching patterns, and more. **Click link to register:** <https://forms.gle/9HuCoqobciMFaF5k9>

ADDITIONAL CLASSES - REGISTRATION AND TIMES TO BE ANNOUNCED

- **Select, plant and care for trees**, Saturday afternoon, March 20
- **Identify trees in spring**, Tuesday evening, April 13
- **Identify and control non-native invasive plants**, Sunday afternoon, May 23
- **Identify trees in summer**, Tuesday evening, June 15

See this [link](#) for information on when class registration begins.

3rd ANNUAL NATIVE PLANT SYMPOSIUM FOR BEGINNERS

“Stop Mowing, Start Growing!”

Saturday, February 6, REGISTER BY JANUARY 31

9:00 AM - Noon

Sponsored by: Prince William Conservation Alliance, VCE - Prince William Master Gardeners, Prince William Wildflower Society, and Prince William Soil and Water Conservation District. For detailed program information, fees, and to register, see this [link](#).

RIVANNA CHAPTER, VIRGINIA MASTER NATURALIST

2021 Training Class Registration Is Open

Tuesdays, February 2 - May 18, 6:30 PM, via ZOOM

Deadline for Applications: January 5

To learn about the 2021 training class, and how to become a certified Master Naturalist, please review [“Introducing the Rivanna Master Naturalist Program.”](#)

See this [link](#) for information on the program, and for registration instructions. QUESTIONS? Call Ida Swenson at 434-996-8405 or email idathefriz@gmail.com

ECOLOGICAL LANDSCAPE ALLIANCE

“Focus on Sustainability”

January-February Webinars

This webinar series is geared to landscape professionals, land managers, garden enthusiasts, and anyone who stewards the land. The series is presented through collaboration of the Ecological Landscape Alliance (ELA), the Chesapeake Conservation Landscaping Council (CCLC), ReScape, DeepRoots Kansas City, and the American Public Gardens Association (APGA). **Interactive webinars** are taught by experts from across the country and cover a wide range of topics relevant to sustainable landscapes. Additional webinars are being scheduled; please check back often for an updated list of offerings.

Wednesday, January 13 - "The Challenges of Restoring Native Urban Habitat"

Friday, January 22 - "Grassroot Seed Propagation of Native Plants"

Wednesday, January 27 - "Expanding Biodiversity - Attracting Birds to Your Yard"

Wednesday, February 3 - "American Oaks - Diversity, Ecology, and Identification"

Monday, February 8 - "Regenerative Design - How Living in Agreement with Nature Helps Organizations Thrive"

Wednesday, February 10 - "Oak Red-List Project - Main Threats to Oaks and Saving Oaks from Extinction"

See this [link](#) for information on Ecological Landscape Alliance, membership info, webinar descriptions, times, and fees.

VIRGINIA ASSOCIATION FOR ENVIRONMENTAL EDUCATION (VAEE)

"Seasons Through Virginia's Regions"

VIRTUAL Mini Conference Series

Attend one or all of the virtual mini conferences to be held on February 20, July 17, and October 23.

Registration for the February 20 event is now open. See this [link](#) for more information on session, fees, and to register.

UVA OLLI GARDENING-RELATED CLASSES

(Osher Lifelong Learning Institute)

University-level Short Courses and Classes for Seniors

Upcoming 2021 Spring Semester Catalogue

Look for gardening-related classes (and more) as part of the Spring 2021 course offering:

- "McIntire Botanical Garden: Its Past, Present and Future" (p. 28)
- "Bird Life of Central Virginia" (p. 32)
- "Tree Blindness - And How to Cure It" (p.32)

You will be able to purchase a Spring OLLI membership online beginning on Friday, **January 8**. A membership fee of \$75 per semester entitles you to register for courses offered in that semester. Additional fees for courses are listed in the catalogue. **Registration for spring courses begins Tuesday, January 19 at 10:00 AM.** Popular courses fill up fast, and you are advised by OLLI to sign up online as soon as possible after registration opens. View the 2021 Spring Brochure at this [link](#).

GREENSPACE SYMPOSIUM - LIVE ZOOM EVENT

"Back to Our Roots: Leveraging Native Plants to Restore the Environment"

Friday, February 19

9:30 AM - 4:00 PM

Join us for a fascinating day of innovative presentations that dig deep into how native plants can restore

natural ecosystems in a range of landscapes, from backyards and public gardens to urban and commercial projects. Experts will tackle the native vs. non-native plant debate: Is a native plant-only prescription necessary? Under what conditions should non-native plants be incorporated, and what are the risks of using cultivars? Join the conversation as experts assess the environmental benefits that native ecosystems create, such as decreasing pollution and fighting climate change.

Early Bird Fee, \$45 until January 8; Standard Fee, \$55 after January 9. Register using this link [ActiveMontgomery.org](https://www.activemontgomery.org) (Course #87621) or call 301-962-1470. Registration includes link to watch recordings of each session after the event.

**BLUE RIDGE PRISM (PARTNERSHIP FOR REGIONAL INVASIVE SPECIES MANAGEMENT)
“Invasive Control in Winter “- Panel Discussion via Zoom
Thursday, January 28, 2021**

This free **Zoom** quarterly meeting will start with a short update on PRISM activities followed by a panel discussion on “Invasive Control in Winter.” See this [link](#) for more **information and to register.**

**NDAL - NEW DIRECTIONS IN THE AMERICAN LANDSCAPE
Founded in 1990 by Larry Weaner
An Educational Series Dedicated to the Art and Science of Natural Landscape Design
Virtual 32nd Annual Ecological Landscape Symposium
“Guiding Theory into Reality: It Don’t Mean a Thing if the Landscape Don’t Sing”**

Cosponsored by New Directions in the American Landscape, Morris Arboretum of the University of PA, and Connecticut College Arboretum:

**January 21 & 22, 2021 | 1:00 - 4:30 PM EST*
January 28 & 29, 2021 | 9:00 AM - 12:30 PM EST***

*All four dates are distinct programs with different speakers - register for the full bundle or individual days.

Incorporating science into landscape design benefits both the people and the animals who share the landscape. In this virtual symposium, we will explore how scientific research can lead to tangible approaches for a new landscape tradition, one where ecological, anthropological, and sociological considerations expand the scope of landscape design. See this [link](#) for more information and to register.

**THE NATURE FOUNDATION AT WINTERGREEN
January/February Guided Hikes
Zoom Lecture Series, “The Birth of the Blue Ridge”**

The first of a four-part lecture series on “**The Birth of the Blue Ridge**” **will be offered on Friday, January 15, 7:00-8:00 PM.** Join TNFW staff and Virginia’s Department of Geology and Minerals Geologist Lorrie Coiner Skiffington for a lecture on the geological history of Wintergreen and the region, and the significance of the evolution of the region’s narrow passage. Please see this [link](#) to register.

The second lecture in the series will take place on **Friday, January 29, 7:00-8:00 PM.** Join Biologist, Chris Ludwig (Coauthor, *Flora of Virginia* book). Please see this [link](#) to register.

There will be an opportunity for questions after each presentation. Please include an email address for an invitation to the event. Payment is due at time of registration. The last two lectures in the series will be on **February 12 and 26.**

For information on **guided hikes**, difficulty ratings, and to register, please see this [link](#) to the January/February calendar.

MONARCH JOINT VENTURE

The 2021 Monarch Conservation Webinar Series

4th Tuesday of the Month *

2:00 PM EST

The Monarch Joint Venture is partnering with the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service National Conservation Training Center to put on another year full of informative and inspiring webinars on all things monarch. Starting in January, webinars will be held live on the 4th Tuesday of the month at 2 PM Eastern Time. * The November and December dates have been moved to avoid conflicting with major holidays. Each webinar will be recorded and [available here](#) for later viewing as well.

Check out the webinar titles and dates below, and click on a title to register:

- **January 26th** - [Evaluation of Canopy Structure, Light and Wind in California's Monarch Groves from Below and Above](#)
- **February 23rd** - [The Beauty and Resilience of Prairie](#)
- **March 23rd** - [Monarchs, Milkweed and Grassland Disturbance](#)
- **April 27th** - [Western Butterflies: An Overview of Threats and Population Trajectories](#)
- **May 25th** - [Monarch Butterfly Reproduction: From Physiology to Behavior](#)
- **June 22nd** - [Reinstalling Native Habitat on Private Property in the West](#)
- **July 27th** - [Aligning Mosquito Control with Pollinator Protection](#)
- **August 24th** - [Conserving Grasslands for Birds and Monarchs](#)
- **September 28th** - [Protecting and Restoring California's Overwintering Groves](#)
- **October 26th** - [Recovery of the Monarch Butterfly: Federal and State Legislation that can Provide Hope for this Iconic Animal](#)
- **November 16th** - [The Monarch Butterfly Fund - Supporting Monarch Conservation in Mexico](#)
- **December 21st** - [Eco-literacy and Conservation: The Convergence of Research, Policy and Education](#)

Please note this list is subject to change. Their [events page](#) will have the most up to date information on our webinar series, as well as a calendar of additional monarch-related events.

VIRGINIA COOPERATIVE EXTENSION (VCE) VIDEO LIBRARY

VCE offers a **variety of videos** on topics geared to both beginner and more advanced gardeners. Examples of topics include:

Small Fruits in the Home Garden

Good Bugs, Bad Bugs

Succulent Propagation and Care

Boxwood Blight: How it Spreads

For these and many more videos that address specific topics or those of more general interest, see this [link](#).

January Tips For the Ornamental Gardener

By Susan Martin | January 2021-Vol7 No.1



JANUARY BLOOMS OUTDOORS

The world hasn't stopped blooming in January! As described in the [January calendar](#) for the Lewis Ginter Botanical Garden, look for:

- Winter jasmine ([Jasminum nudiflorum](#))
- 'Winter Sun' Mahonia ([Berberis x hortensis 'Winter Sun'](#))
- *Mahonia x media* 'Underway'

- 'Early Sensation daffodil ([Narcissus 'Rijnveld's Early Sensation'](#))
- Giant snowdrops ([Galanthum elwesii](#))
- Smaller snowdrops ([Galanthum nivalis](#))
- Ozark witch hazel or vernal witch hazel ([Hamamelis vernalis](#)) – Native central/SE U.S.
- Witch hazel 'Jelena' ([Hamamelis X intermedia 'Jelena'](#))
- Stinking hellebore ([Helleborus foetidus](#))
- Christmas rose ([Helleborus niger](#))

JANUARY TASKS

The average coldest temperatures in Charlottesville occur in January. Historically, January is also the driest month. Therefore, our tasks should include:

Check for frost-heave. The freeze-thaw cycle can push the crowns of perennials or other shallow-rooted plants up out of the ground. Take a walk around and gently set perennial plants back into the ground. Push mulch back around the plant, or if not mulched, set some leaves or evergreen boughs around it.

Water! Be especially careful that newly planted trees, and fall-planted perennials and shrubs have enough water. The guideline for watering newly planted trees during the dormant months (November-March) is about one gallon per inch of caliper (trunk diameter at 12" above the ground) per week. It is recommended that the weekly watering should be spread over 2-3 days, if possible. For newly planted shrubs, a rough guideline is about 10 seconds with the hose per gallon of plant. If your shrub came in a 3-gallon container, water 2-3 gallons per plant, or about 30 seconds with the hose. These are approximations. The important thing is to not let plants dry out, without over-watering. If we have a wet January, extra watering will be less of an issue.

Protect evergreen shrubs and trees from heavy snow and ice damage. See the [December issue of The Garden Shed](#) for ways to prevent damage, and how to handle heavy snow and ice removal.

Don't forget the birds! In addition to planting bushes and trees that provide berries, we can also provide extra food and water from November-April to help the birds when natural food sources are less plentiful.

According to [Cornell's Project FeederWatch](#), **bird feeders should be cleaned once every two weeks.** Take the feeder apart and remove any visible debris. Then, soak the feeder for 10 minutes in a diluted bleach solution (1 part bleach to 9 parts water), or soak for one hour in a weak vinegar solution (1 part white vinegar to 4 parts water), and then scrub with a clean bottle brush. Rinse thoroughly and let dry completely before refilling with seed. Make sure that water sources are not frozen, and set them in an open space at levels that help provide protection from predators.

GEAR UP FOR THE GREAT BACKYARD BIRD COUNT

The **Great Backyard Bird Count (GBBC)** is a free, fun, and easy event that engages bird watchers of all ages in counting birds to create a real-time snapshot of bird populations. Participants are asked to count birds for as little as 15 minutes (or as long as they wish) on one or more days of the four-day event, **February 12-15, 2021**, and report their sightings online at [birdcount.org](#).

EVALUATE THE GARDEN

The beautiful structure of deciduous trees against a blue winter sky is an awe-inspiring aspect of a winter garden. Bare limbs covered with snow offers another, starker kind of beauty. This bareness also reveals the garden's structure, both its winning design elements, and some elements you may consider wanting. Use this

time to decide what types of changes you'd like to make. See this article from *The Garden Shed*, "[Reflections on the Winter Landscape](#)," for design ideas and plant recommendations.

JANUARY BLOOMS INDOORS

Cyclamen



Cyclamen persicum Photo: Susan Martin

There are many household plants to consider, but I have been enjoying red-blooming cyclamen as an alternative to poinsettia for the holidays. The genus, *Cyclamen*, contains about 20 species which are all native to the Mediterranean region. Hardy cyclamen species are small perennials for shade or part shade. **The houseplant, or florist's cyclamen (*Cyclamen persicum*), is a tuberous potted plant that flowers during the winter months.** It has lovely, heart-shaped green foliage mottled with silver, and blooms in shades of white, pink, rose, purple, and red. The flowers are available in single, double, fringed, crested, and frilled forms. Cyclamen has a mounded growth habit, and ranges in size from 6-16" in height.

Cyclamen prefers cool temperatures and bright indirect light. Ideal daytime temperatures are 60-65°F with night temperatures around 50°F. Bud failure can occur when temperatures reach above 70°F. Avoid placing cyclamen plants near heat vents, as this will cause the soil to dry out too quickly. Cyclamen prefers to be kept moist, but not soggy. Water when the potting medium feels dry to the touch, and always water along the edge of the pot, or from below, to avoid causing the tuber to rot. Like poinsettia, cyclamen can be made to bloom again next season if rather persnickety requirements are met, but many people discard them after their 4-week bloom is finished

Cyclamen Mites and Broad Mites

Cyclamen mite (*Stenotarsonemus pallidus*), and **broad mite (*Acari*)** are microscopic mites that can be serious pests of a wide range of plants including: African violet, cyclamen, begonia, snapdragon, impatiens, gerbera, ivy, and many indoor tropical plants. The mites are generally not detected until after they have caused significant damage, and then only with the aid of a dissecting microscope. Cyclamen mites avoid light, and prefer high humidity and cool temperatures (60° F.), the same cool temperatures that cyclamen plants prefer. Feeding by the mites causes stunted growth with **leaves generally curling upward.** Leaves become stiffened and brittle. Flower buds fail to open, or flowers are deformed or reduced. Broad mites are even smaller than cyclamen mites and generally go undetected until symptoms appear. They reproduce most prolifically at temperatures between 70-80° F. Typically, adults cause deformed leaves which **usually curl**

downward, and reduced flowering. Bronzing or purpling of the leaves commonly occurs on the underside of leaves where the mites feed.



Broad mites (*Acari*) on cyclamen Photo: Missouri Botanical Garden

Mites can easily spread from leaf-to-leaf contact, or from hands and clothing. The first line of attack is to separate infected plants, then spray the entire plant, especially the undersides of the leaves, with a stream of water from a hose or a sink sprayer. Cyclamen mites and broad mites are very sensitive to heat. They seem to be more difficult to control in winter than in summer, probably due to cooler temperatures. Submerging infested plants into water held at 110°F for 15-30 minutes will destroy these mites without damaging the plants. It can be difficult, however, to control a constant temperature. Insecticidal soap may also be used. You may decide to discard infected plants to keep the mites from spreading.

SUMMARY

With the shortest day of the year behind us, it won't be long until spring. Let's enjoy this quieter time of the year and look for the beauty that January brings. Notice the beautiful blooms of hellebores, winter jasmine, native and nonnative witch hazels, snowdrops, early-blooming daffodils, and some species of mahonias. Notice the garden structure that's revealed in winter, and note changes you'd like to make. Be mindful that the garden and the wildlife it shelters still need attention. Keep the bird feeders filled and cleaned; put out water; prepare for the Great Backyard Bird Count. While snuggling inside, check the December 2020 issue of *The Garden Shed* for a [great list of garden books](#) to enjoy.

SOURCES

Past January Issues of *The Garden Shed*:

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Feature Photo: Sinking Hellebore (*Helleborous foetidus*) by [Robert Flogaus-Faust](#), Attribution 4.0 International ([CC BY 4.0](#))

What Do Master Gardeners Do?

By mking | January 2021-Vol7 No.1



I imagine that many of you are familiar with the term “Master Gardener,” but if asked what that’s all about, you might come up short. For example, a common misconception is that we take care of private homeowners’ gardens free of charge. Let’s take a walk through the landscape of Master Gardening to find out more.

What’s the Master Gardener Program?

Master Gardeners are volunteers who provide research-based horticultural education, guidance, and resources in their local communities. As in most states, Virginia’s Master Gardeners are an arm of the Extension Service, the Virginia Cooperative Extension (VCE), and we assist the VCE in achieving its primary goal: sharing with the public the vast scientific expertise of Virginia’s two land-grant agricultural universities, Virginia Tech and Virginia State University. VCE is dedicated to Virginians working together in their communities, homes, and businesses.

Data from 2019 demonstrate the power of collective activity among Extension Master Gardeners (EMGs) in

our state. Virginia's 4,800 EMGs made 611,485 contacts with the public and contributed 413,804 volunteer hours. The total economic value of that service was equivalent to \$11.3 million.



Group clean-up at Morven Farm

Nearly all 50 states, as well as the District of Columbia, offer Extension Master Gardener programs that include intensive training through state land-grant universities. In 1972, as the nation's population continued to migrate away from agricultural regions and toward urban and suburban areas, the Master Gardener program was created to meet ever-increasing requests for information and support from enthusiastic home gardeners. To learn more about the history of the Master Gardening, read about [Dr. David Gibby, the father of the Extension Master Gardener program](#).

In our area, [Piedmont Master Gardeners](#) (PMG), a group of 156 volunteers and 24 interns from the 2020 class, serve residents of Charlottesville and Albemarle County. The local extension office and headquarters for PMG is located at 460 Stagecoach Road in the County Office Building at 5th Street Extension, where a coordinator and several staff members administer the program.

Who are Master Gardeners?

Extension Master Gardeners are volunteer educators who share knowledge and expertise with the public to promote sustainable landscape management. In the process, they increase public awareness and understanding related to healthy soil, integrated pest management, native plants, water quality, and invasive species. EMGs receive specialized training to prepare them for service as community leaders with in-depth horticultural knowledge of vegetable gardening, ornamental plants, trees and shrubs, turf management, and landscape design.



A Master Gardener answers questions from a garden newbie at the Annual PMG Plant Sale.

You might be surprised to discover that your PMG friends represent a variety of backgrounds and

professions. This diverse group includes people of all ages, from twenty-somethings to people who have experienced eight or more decades of life. Although everyone resides in Albemarle County now, many of us have lived in different parts of the United States prior to settling here. With regard to professional careers, Piedmont Master Gardeners hail from various vocations: nurses, doctors, medical researchers, attorneys, educators, engineers, artists, designers, accountants, professors, builders, landscape architects, counselors, psychologists, physical therapists, nutritionists, musicians, software engineers, and more.

What brings us together is a shared passion for horticulture and the natural world. The common thread is that each one of us is committed to growing public appreciation for plant life, scientific understanding of how to cultivate plants, and responsibility for a safe and healthy natural environment.

What do Master Gardeners do?

If you are wondering what Master Gardeners actually do, our myriad activities remind me of an artist's palette with many colors and hues. At the present time, PMGs are engaged with more than [15 different projects](#) in the community. Every project has an educational focus, and all public outreach is designed to incorporate at least one of the following goals:

- Environmental Horticulture- understanding and utilizing sustainable landscape management practices
- Youth Gardening- developing horticultural awareness and gardening skills among children and youth
- Landscape Value- appreciating the economic and aesthetic benefits of good landscape design
- Food and Nutrition- developing interest in nutrition and home food production, starting in the garden
- Quality of Life- experiencing positive outcomes from landscape management and home gardening on physical and emotional health



Poster entered in a children's contest about climate change, sponsored by the Piedmont Master Gardeners in September, 2019

Here's a quick look at our current projects and how they serve the community:

Appreciate in-depth information? If you're reading this article, you know about [The Garden Shed](#). It was conceived by Master Gardeners eager to share the latest horticultural research with our gardening neighbors. Each article is the product of extensive research by a local Master Gardener. If you haven't already done so, be sure to sign up online to get every issue. You can even search the archives of past issues to find information pertinent to your specific interests or concerns.



Master Gardener Help Desk at City Market

Have a question about plants? Reach out to the [Horticulture Help Desk](#) with questions about plant care, garden management, insect pests, plant diseases, or landscaping. EMGs respond promptly to email and telephone requests. Prior to the pandemic, it was also possible to make an in-person visit to the Help Desk, and we hope that option will once again be available soon. You will also find a mobile Help Desk staffed with PMG volunteers at certain community events, such as the Charlottesville City Market and the Albemarle County Fair. Stop by for a friendly conversation to grow your own knowledge. albemarlevcehelpdesk@gmail.com (434.872.4580)

Want to connect and learn more? The [PMG Facebook page](#) has a section called “**Ask a Master Gardener,**” where you can find quick answers to common gardening questions, as well as colorful photos for reference. You might discover that someone else has posed the same questions you have.



A Master Gardener shows how it's done at a Garden Basics Class.

Want a short course? **Garden Basics classes** are popular two-hour workshops that provide practical information about seasonal gardening topics, such as how to prune shrubs or get started with composting. To participate, you should sign up in advance on the [Upcoming Events](#) page online.

Enjoy evening presentations? PMG's **monthly meetings** usually include a continuing education presentation by a visiting expert on horticulture-related topics. Prior to the pandemic, these informative talks were free and open to the public, but are now conducted virtually via Zoom. We hope that it won't be long before these monthly meetings are again live and open to the public.

Our very popular **Spring Lecture Series** kicks off the gardening season with four evening presentations by well-known guest speakers. This spring, the lectures — some featuring nationally renowned experts — will be presented via Zoom. Visit the Events section of the PMG website for official announcements, but mark your calendar now. The virtual lectures are scheduled for March 4, 11, 18 and 25.



Panel of experts discuss impact of climate change on horticulture at PMG's 30th anniversary event.

Need a knowledgeable speaker for a group? Share your needs and inquire about a particular topic, so that the [PMG Speakers Bureau](#) can match your request with someone from our team of PMG experts.



As part of the Healthy Virginia Lawns program, Master Gardeners measure a homeowner's yard so that the right amount of amendments can be recommended.

Looking to improve your lawn? The **Healthy Virginia Lawns** Program includes a homeowner site visit by Master Gardeners who take soil samples, assess conditions, and measure the size of the residential lawn. Following soil analysis at the Virginia Tech lab, the homeowner receives a detailed nutrient management plan and recommended best practices to maintain healthy turfgrass without harming the environment. To take advantage of this program, [download the HVL application here](#).

Are you an educator with gardening ideas? School Garden Grants are available to K-12 teachers who would like financial support for horticulture projects in local schools. Visit the PMG website for [grant guidelines and an application form](#).

What about working with children?



A Master Gardener explains composting basics at Clark Elementary.

PMG volunteers lead **after-school gardening programs** at two local elementary schools, Clark and Jackson-Via, in partnership with City Schoolyard Garden/Cultivate Charlottesville. These after-school Garden Clubs meet weekly, and the children work alongside their Master Gardener mentors in planting vegetable seeds and transplants, watering, weeding, and caring for them until harvest.



Making salads with greens the children harvest from their gardens is a highlight of the Garden Club season.



Children learn about insects from a Master Gardener at Jackson-Via Elementary.



Master Gardeners guide children planting a dogwood tree at Jackson-Via Elementary.

*Like seeing the results of great gardening? The Sentara Martha Jefferson Hospital is pleased to have an attractive **demonstration garden** for patients and visitors to enjoy — and learn from — near the outdoor amphitheater. You can see the garden’s beginnings in the photo at right; the beautiful result of all that work is visible in the photo below. PMG volunteers make regular visits for gardening upkeep and maintenance.*



Master Gardeners creating a new demonstration garden at Martha Jefferson Hospital



The PMG Demonstration Garden at Martha Jefferson Hospital

Love touring beautiful gardens? From April to September Master Gardeners partner with local garden clubs to arrange for public tours of private gardens. Volunteers serve as docents for **“Through the Garden Gate,”** enlightening visitors with details about how these beautiful gardens were created.



Master Gardeners hosting a Garden Gate Tour

Like to learn at fairs and festivals? Look for our educational exhibits about environmental horticulture, including activities for children, at the Albemarle County Fair, Monticello's Heritage Harvest Festival, and other local events — once the pandemic subsides.



The PMG Annual Plant Sale offers plants of all types nurtured by Master Gardeners, and at great prices, too.

Want new additions for your garden? Don't miss our annual **spring plant sale** to get great deals on healthy plants nurtured by Master Gardeners. Watch for announcements about the date and time each year. We hope it won't have to be canceled in 2021, as was necessary in 2020, due to the pandemic.



Master Gardeners assist buyers in finding the just-right plant at the annual plant sale.

Intrigued with historic plants? PMG's

Monticello Garden Ambassadors

complement the services of Monticello's docents, sharing rich background about the ornamental plants and vegetable gardens with visitors at [Thomas Jefferson's historic property](#).

Love natural surroundings? [Quarry Gardens at Schuyler](#) is a 40-acre natural area and botanical garden of native plants nestled into six abandoned soapstone quarries, where PMG volunteers help with upkeep. They also lead informative tours on nature trails for school groups, clubs, and the public from April to November. Check the website to [arrange for a visit](#).



Eager to help others during the pandemic? In partnership with the Bread and Roses Community Kitchen and Garden Group, several PMG volunteers prepared "Gardens to Go" for families who received supplemental food supplies in 2020. Fabric grow pots with soil, seedlings, and seeds were distributed to these families, so that children could watch edible plants grow. The mature vegetables were intended as a source of good nutrition, as well as learning, for these families.

Garden to Go project, spring **How do you become a Master Gardener?**
2020

If you are passionate about horticulture and believe in the power of education, consider joining our team. The initial step is to complete an [application](#). The first 25 qualified applicants will be accepted for the next year's training class, which includes 55 hours of instruction on topics such as, soil, water quality, entomology, plant pathology, landscape site analysis, and more.



Master Gardener trainees practice pruning skills.



Trainees also complete 50 volunteer service hours before being certified as Extension Master Gardeners. To keep certification current, EMGs complete at least 8 hours of continuing education and 20 hours of volunteer service annually. For more details, visit [this webpage](#).

Later, individual EMGs can expand upon their expertise with additional specialized training to become Advanced Extension Master Gardeners in the following areas: Tree Stewards, Landcare Stewards, Water Stewards, and Master Naturalists. In the Master Gardening world, we embrace perpetual learning!

Mission and Strategic Goals

PMG's mission is to engage local communities through programs and resources that (a) support best practices for research-based horticulture and (b) encourage environmental sustainability. In 2020, we reflected on our accomplishments, considered current trends and community needs, and developed a strategic plan to guide future efforts. Going forward, PMG activities will target support in these areas:

- Environmentally-responsible horticulture, with emphasis on food security issues and outreach to underserved groups through new and existing projects.
- Partnerships and project collaboration with other like-minded organizations for public service.
- Growth of the organization, with emphasis on diversity, engagement, and retention.

The Piedmont Master Gardeners strive to be an exemplary organization equipped with the appropriate skills and tools to achieve our mission. If you have ideas or thoughts for how we can best serve the public, we welcome your feedback.

Looking ahead, whenever it's possible for people to safely congregate again, we hope to see you at some of this year's Master Gardener events. And, to everyone reading this article, we hope you will act on the suggestions in this brochure from our 30th anniversary celebration to be a [steward of the environment](#).



Like the note says . . .



Heartfelt message from a child