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## State Fair at the Meadow

Come one come all to the State Fair! Our MGACRA Team, Prez. Laura Collinsworth, Gwen Pote, Anna Reich, Michele Zusan, Betsy Ryan, John Tinder, Betty Marcum, and Michelle Thomas arrived for the morning shift at the drizzly Horticulture Pavilion. A bright bouquet of plants and trailing Ivy welcome us at the entrance.

The main attraction that holds the young people's attention as well as the adults is



the water table demonstration of active stream solid erosion in a community of homes and farm lands. Laura and Betsy demonstrate how the water flows through the land washing away the soil taking

trees and homes with it emptying all into the Chesapeake Bay.



Betsy explains in detail to the many students that come to the Pavilion just how devastating the erosion can be, causing the loss of homes and land.



The young man listening intently makes ready his camera to take a picture back to his classroom and explain how erosion can be prevented by employing a rain barrel or other form of water catchment system. Other ways to prevent erosion—plant trees and shrubbery especially near slopes and shoreline. These plants can reduce runoff by 50%. Trees can also be used to shade your house. Grow plants on slopes, plant a rain garden to soak up excess moisture and stop runoff. Use mulch to cover up bald spots in your yard or garden. Plant native plants with absorbent root structures.

The rain stops and gives us a break to go outside to enjoy all the beautiful plants that are showing off their colors all over the fair grounds.

Enjoy more of the state fair on the next page.

## Message From Our President



Laura Collinsworth

This has been an amazing year. Master Gardeners, I want to thank you for another successful year. Your positive attitude encouraged us all. You've given your time to make our projects a success. You've come out to meetings when it's been cold and snowy, hot and

humid or rainy and stormy. You've come out when the weather was perfectly lovely and you could have been sitting outside admiring the evening stars. You've used your talents and resources to teach us new, fun and exciting things. You were a joy to work with at plant clinics, at the fair, in the gardens, in the office and in the classrooms. Your laughter put a smile on everyone's face. You were ready with a hug when it was so needed. You were willing to do whatever was required without complaint. You are the reason

for MGACRA's continued success and I look forward to working with you next year.

Thank you ever so much.

—Laura Collinsworth

# More State Fair Fun

Anna works diligently on recording how many students come to our booths to count contacts for the new Virginia Tech form. This is not an easy task as there are many students and families that show up all at once making it very difficult to count how many are children, young people, women, men, and all their ages. She is an excellent recorder.



Michelle is talking to a young lady about good bugs and bad bugs. Hmmm! I wonder what she is telling her?



John is demonstrating how a worm farm works to make compost for his garden.



This could make a lot of pies... 1,019 lbs!

As a Master Gardener (through Virginia Tech), I signed up to volunteer several fun hours of community service at the Virginia State Fair in Doswell. It was fun, and I learned more by listening to visitors about gardening problems and sharing my knowledge with them. It was a good ole' time! After my shift was done, I visited the Arts and Crafts Center to see the full display of handwork/knit project entries, including my own. Many red, white and blue ribbons were awarded — giving credit to all for a job well done! The State Fair was a fun and valuable learning experience. This was a good way to further one's education and continue to reach out and learn more to make next year even better.

**Anna Reich**



Betsy is helping these boys write a report on a list of questions that their teacher gave

them about a worm farm to find answers to take back to their class for a discussion. "We will talk a few minutes about vermicomposting and I will give you a brochure to take back to your teacher for the whole class to learn from. In vermicomposting, the primary agents of decomposition are worms. They convert raw organic wastes to a nearly stable humus-like material. The main process by which organic materials are converted occurs as the wastes pass through a worm's gut and are digested by the worm. Worms stir and

aerate the waste pile, so that turning is not required. Worms can stabilize organic materials faster than microorganisms because they grind the material, thus increasing its surface area and speeding decomposition by microorganisms. The material that results from the vermicomposting process is called vermicompost. Material that actually passes through the gut of a worm is called castings. Worms are litter dwellers that like to live in piles of organic matter such as leaf litter.

**BETSY  
WORKING  
THE STATE  
FAIR.**

# The State Fair Continues



Gwen's shift is done and she comes over to pick up Betty and Anna to return to Fredericksburg. Michelle Thomas will continue on inspiring young people and adults in the wonderful ways of gardening.



Back Row Left: Laura Collinsworth, Anna Reich, Betsy Ryan, John Tinder, Michele Zusan, Betty Marcum, and Michelle Thomas.



The Potato Family



Amazing Sculpture

State Fair pictures and article by Betty Marcum

# 2011 International MG Conference



Left to Right:  
Linda Kline, David  
Close, Betsy Ryan,  
Clara Yates

*"The clinic provides an important service to the community and local farmers."*

## Color it Green by Attendee Betsy Ryan

The southwest route to Charleston, W.Va., wined and climbed through beautiful mountains in their full fall color. The sunshine shone through orange, yellow and red leaves setting my bright mood for several days of fellowship with like minded learners. From the opening ceremony to the last classroom session, I was not disappointed.

The crowded civic center contained attendees from 46 states, 2 Canadian Provinces, and a delegation from South Korea. After welcoming speeches, we shared "a taste of West Virginia" or multiple buffet tables groaning from the weight of treats like ramp potato pancakes, trout pate along with more typical offerings like roasted pork, pasta bar, and vegetarian curries.

As we strolled around the room filling our plates, we were entertained with dulcimer and guitar music. The walls and halls were decorated by quilts and scarecrows echoing the mountain culture and green themed conference.

The food and entertainment quality and abundance remained constant throughout the conference. The serving staff and conference organizers were gracious and eager to meet and exceed our needs.

Each day started with announcements and additional greetings from notable West Virginians then on to the keynote speakers. Anna Caroline Ball of the Ball Horticultural Company spoke on trends of plants, seeds and how we grow with limited traditional planting area. Joe Lamp'l, a nationally known speaker and writer, has had multiple broadcast shows. He described his newest venture *The Green Gardener's Guide* featuring eco-friendly gardening and living. On the last day Rick Darke photographer and author on regional landscape blended art, ecology and culture. Morning and afternoon break-out sessions gave multiple choices and excellent speakers to address each attendee's personal interests. Tours and outings were available prior to, during, and after the conference. I focused on taking advantage of classes to improve my gardening, landscaping,

and teaching skills. Again the speakers did not disappoint, I was delighted and enlightened with my sessions and felt as if I would incorporate much of my newly attained knowledge in my own small yard and clinics. For instance, did you know by grouping edibles and ornamentals you may avoid some pests while using a small area to its fullest? I thought I was just a Hillbilly Farmer, but it turns out I am cutting edge. Two weeks after the conference I had some difficulty remembering which speaker said what so I am particularly happy the lectures used at the conference were posted. Although my memory of the details is imperfect, I recall vividly the warm reception from the organizers and the opportunity to share a common passion in a marvelous venue. Attending the international conference was a truly unique and beneficial experience that I would recommend to any master gardener. The 2013 conference is an ALASKAN CRUISE, hope to see you there!

## Master Gardener Plant Clinic

The idea for plant clinics originated in 2002 when members from our MGACRA attended Master Gardener College at Virginia Tech. MG College presentations offered new insights and ideas for developing local programs to educate the public and strengthen horticultural knowledge and skills.

We learned that the Prince William MGs operated a plant clinic on Saturdays at local farmers markets to answer horticultural questions. Weekend availability benefited many people unable to visit an Extension Office on weekdays.

Back in Fredericksburg, we shared what we learned with Guy Mussey and obtained his support to initiate our first clinic at the Spotsylvania Farmers Market. This new service began with Richard Hicks as the Spotsylvania Farmers Market Plant Clinic Chair-

man. Later, a second plant clinic commenced at the Stafford Porter Library. Other clinics were added as the need arose.

The Fredericksburg Plant Clinic is the latest. Since 2010 the city has provided a prime spot at the Farmers Market for MGACRA to set up a consulting booth. The Farmers Market is in the heart of the historic downtown with lovely Hurkamp Park providing a pleasant place for families and friends to meet and shop for fresh market products.

The clinic provides an important service to the community and local farmers. At our clinic, we always staff 3 to 5 Master Gardeners and Interns to take on any challenges in the field of horticulture. When questions cannot be quickly answered, we research the problem and, when necessary, obtain assistance from Guy Mussey and Gwen Pote.

The clinic is available every Saturday from 9 a.m. to 12 noon from late April through the last Saturday of September. This summer we provided assistance to over 500 people. The amazing thing is that we meet people from far and wide: Planning District 16, Northern Virginia, south to Richmond and even one lady from Holland who wanted to know what flowers we grow in our area. She was given a tour of the plants in Hurkamp Park and provided with a list of Virginia native plants.

The great team of MGs and interns that served the Fredericksburg Plant Clinic are: Carolyn Allen, Elaine Hild-Benzio, Eileen Chartters, Chuck Heath, Lin and Soon Leong, Joan Levander, Josh Maddox, Caren and Michelle Meyer, Ann Reamy, Mary Stram, Michelle Thomas, John Tindler, Anita Tuttle, and Michelle Utt. Pictures on next page. **Lin Leong**

Support Local Green Space & Local Farmers

### Spotsylvania Farmer's Market

Saturday 8 a.m. - 1 p.m.

Stop by for Fresh, Locally Grown Produce

Farm Fresh Flavor beats chain store produce every time!

Okra • Seeded/Seedless Watermelon • Tomatoes  
Squash • Zucchini • Sweet Corn • Cantaloupe • Peaches  
Courmet Preserves • Fresh Cheeses • Fall Tunnel Tomatoes  
New Potatoes • Raspberries • Onions • Whole Pork Sausages  
& other cuts • Fresh Flowers • Plants

Master Gardeners of the Central Rappahannock Region will Present Plant Clinics each Saturday, 9-12 noon.

Commuter parking lot, Five-Mile Fork, Intersection Rt. 3 and Gordon Road

## Ask a Master Gardener

Let a Master Gardener help you solve your plant problems.

Master Gardeners will be available to answer your questions

**Tuesdays**  
May 7 - August 27  
6:30-8:30

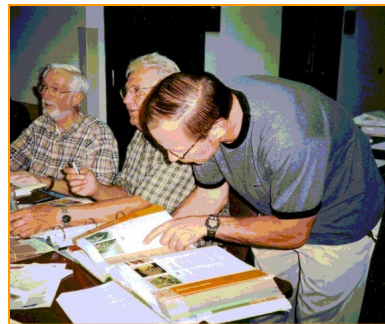
For more information call Porter branch adult reference desk at 659-4909.

Porter Branch  
Central Rappahannock Region  
1000 North Main Street  
Stafford, VA 22458

# Plant Clinic's Today and Yesterday



2002 First Plant Clinic at Spotsy Farmers Market Left to right: Chairman Richard Hicks, Bonnie Halford, Judith Wingert and Janet Skidmore



Third Porter Library Plant Clinic Chairman Donald Saunders From Left to right: Donald Saunders, Stan Zack, Arthur Rhoads.



Elaine Hild-Benzio, Caren Meyer, Lin Leong, Michelle Meyer



Left to right: Thomas Mason, Carolyn Beard, Eileen Charters, Lin Leong, Donald Saunders and Wendy Rogers.



2011 Chairperson: Lin Leong, Co-Chair Josh Maddox Left to right: Soon Leong, Lin Leong, Michelle Thomas, Ann Reamy, Anita Tuttle, Mary Stram, Josh Maddox

*Plant Clinic Chair Cathy Smith: "I would like to report that the Route 3 Plank Clinic has shown a 30 percent increase in participation from the general public over last year, since we started in March. The Food Bank has so far provided over 700 lbs of fresh produce to our local community. All the gardens are doing extremely well, in spite of the terrible heat we had. That certainly is a kudo for displaying the square foot gardening method."*

## Plant a Tree or Shrub this Fall

Each Friday the Free Lance Star publishes a column from a member of the Virginia Cooperative Extension or one of its colleague agricultural universities. It's no surprise then to find that a main contributor to this column is Guy Mussey. Guy authored one article in late October entitled "Plant a Tree or Shrub this Fall". In case you missed it, we are publishing it in this issue of The Latest Dirt.

### Plant properly now for a happy tree or shrub later.

Though summer is just a memory and many gardening tools are being put away, you may want to think twice about that, because fall is actually the ideal time to plant trees and shrubs.

Many homeowners think of planting new plants only in the spring, but if you have been waiting to plant a particular tree or shrub in that special spot in your yard, now is the time to do it. Most of our woody plants are changing color in preparation for winter, their roots are continuing to grow in the still-warm soil. This fact allows a plant to get established with little stress from high temperatures.

Fall rains further the chance of success of newly planted trees and shrubs. Trees and shrubs planted in the spring, on the other hand, get off to a slow start due to cool soil while fall-planted plants are becoming well established. Another benefit to fall planting is

that many garden centers put their inventory on sale.

**Please Note:** There are some plants that do better when planted in the spring. Avoid planting evergreens too late, as well as slow-to-root trees such as fir, birch, yellowwood, ginkgo, magnolia, ornamental pear and hemlock.

### Doing it right

When planting, make sure to plant at the correct depth. In most cases that means that the top of the root ball should be even with the ground surface or slightly above it. One of the biggest mistakes gardeners make is planting too deep. Roots need good aeration, and can easily suffocate if planted too deep.

Read more on the next page.



Guy Mussey

# More Tips From Guy on Planting Trees and Shrubs



When choosing a tree in the nursery, make sure you can see the root flare at the base of the tree. Sometimes nurseries and garden centers re-plant trees and bury the root flare, it was planted too

deep and is not one to choose. Do not dig the hole any deeper than the height of the root ball. If you dig too deep, add backfill to bring it up to the correct height. Don't be skimpy, because the backfill soil will settle over time and the tree or shrub could end up too deep.

Make sure you give the plant plenty of water to keep it from drying out. Water the newly planted tree or shrub with about an inch of water every week (if it does not rain) until the ground freezes.

Once the tree is planted, mulch it with about 2 to 3 inches of a good shredded hardwood bark mulch. This will keep the ground warm longer to allow the roots to get established.

Be sure not to form a "mulch volcano" around the tree. Instead, leave about an inch of space

between the mulch and the trunk of the tree. Too much mulch will actually keep the root ball dry during a light rain. It will also encourage the roots to grow into the mulch, causing problems down the road, especially in a prolonged drought. Mulch that's touching the trunk of a young tree will keep moisture against it and will soften the bark, allowing insect borers and disease easy access.

Planting trees and shrubs is not rocket science, but by avoiding common mistakes and planting at the right time, you can give your newly planted tree or shrub a better chance of survival.

**Guy Mussey**



**For more information on correct planting procedures and timing, feel free to contact Guy at the VCE office.**

## How Does Your Garden Grow

### The Victory Garden at Rowser

We had a bit of a late start in April, due to the rainy spring. But, thanks to a tight group of dedicated volunteers; Gwen Pote, Jack Green, Anna Reich, James Alderman, Luralee Cornwell, Henry Middleton and me, the Victory Garden is doing great.

We began most of the garden with seeds; radishes, beets, lettuce, kohlrabi, Swiss chard, cucumbers, okra, beans, squash, marigolds, zinnias, and giant sunflowers. A few tender transplants were purchased or donated by the volunteers to include tomatoes, green peppers, fennel, basil, mint, and sunflowers. Our plan to use natural materials; hand cut trees limbs and the sturdy stalks of the sunflowers to support the climbing vines was put in practice. We wanted to start a compost pile on the site but found it too difficult to put into practice due to requirements necessary for the public property. We hope to work

out the details so we may have compost in the future.

Early harvests included radishes, lettuce, kohlrabi, Swiss chard and beets. Around the last of June, Japanese beetles struck the green beans, sunflowers, and zinnias hard. Because we do not use chemicals on the garden, control consisted of hand picking the insects and drowning them in soapy water. Surprisingly, 2 weeks later only a few beetles were present. The green bean leaves were heavily damaged, but the vines continued to produce lovely bean pods. The sunflowers soared to the sky and each blossom provided a haven to multiple pollinators including honey bees. It is interesting to note the difference in height and size of the plants in direct sunlight as opposed to those within the shade of a near- by tree. As expected those in shaded areas were smaller but grew to an acceptable size.

In July, the cucumbers, okra, tomatoes and to small extent squash are producing. Unfortunately, like last year, the squash bugs are heavily present. Water sprayed directly on the bugs washed them off, but more will be necessary to save the plants. The very hot, dry days of mid July have made more frequent watering necessary.

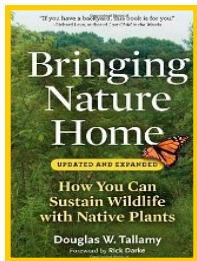
Multiple opportunities arise for teaching, many of those working and attending events at Rowser, frequently stop to ask about the garden. We discuss soil, pest control, and what plants can grow well in this area, to name a few broached subjects. Some find encouragement that a small area can produce many desired plantings.

So to answer the leading question, our garden grew very well.

**Healthy Gardening,  
—Betsy Ryan**

*Note from the editor: "I saw this garden from it's beginning through its flourish and to it harvest. What a great demonstration of gardening for us all to learn from."*

# From the Library of Joan Lindsey



**Bringing Nature Home**  
**How You Can Sustain Wildlife**  
**with Native Plants,**  
*By Douglas W. Tallamy*

Is your butterfly garden a McGarden? Do your butterflies sweep in for the nectar and then leave? A butterfly sustaining garden must be designed with plants that provide nectar for adults and native plant species as hosts for their larvae. Mr. Tallamy's Bringing Nature Home makes the case for using native plants for our benefit and that of the butterflies. He clearly states the rationale for using native plants: insects, like people, have distinct food preferences. Replacing a native plant with its alien cousin — an advertised pest free plant - means that the insects and the birds that feed on the insects have lost a food source.

Mr. Tallamy is professor and chair of the Department of Entomology and Wildlife Ecology at the University

of Delaware in Newark, DE. In his book he warns that in our backyards and “throughout suburbia, we have decimated the native plant diversity that historically supported our favorite birds and mammals.” The good news is that “most species could live quite nicely with humans if their most basic ecological needs were met.” Plants support the entire evolutionary chain — from insects to wildlife to humans.

Throughout Bringing Nature Home, Mr. Tallamy uses photographs of birds, plants and insects to make his point. How to make our suburban yards into balanced communities of nature is discussed in the chapter “What Shall I Plant?” Even if you are not fond of insects, the pictures of these fascinating creatures are awesome as presented in the chapter “What Does Bird Food Look Like?” Encourage insects to populate your garden. Studies have shown that as much as “ten percent of the foliage in a garden can be damaged before the average gardener even notices.”

Bringing Nature Home has three appendices: (1)

Native Plants with Wildlife Value and Desirable Landscaping Attributes by Region — helpful lists, (2) Host Plants of Butterflies and Showy Moths — tables of butterflies and moths matched with the plants they use as host for their larvae, and (3) Experimental Evidence — factual charts.

Professor Douglas Tallamy spoke at the 28<sup>th</sup> Annual Central Virginia Landscape Management Seminar in Charlottesville this spring and is an inspirational speaker. He has a buggy web site:

<http://udel.edu/~dtallamy/> and a web site for his book: <http://bringingnaturehome.net/> and also the site <http://www.plantAnative.com>.

Bringing Nature Home by Douglas Tallamy is available on loan from CRRL and can be purchased at Amazon and Timber Press web sites.

-Joan Lindsey

## Upcoming Holiday Events

Don't forget two of our big holiday fundraisers are coming up. The first is the Boxwood Wreath Making Workshop. Here's the timeline of events:

Gathering of the Boxwood — Saturday, November 26th, 9AM

Wreath Making Training Class - Tuesday, November 29th at the Stafford Extension Office

Wreath Making Workshop — Thursday, December 1st, and Friday, December 2nd, at 7PM at the Stafford Extension Office.

Contact Laurie Clarkson at [garadh@verizon.net](mailto:garadh@verizon.net) if you are interested in participating in any of the wreath making workshops..

A new fundraiser that we have this year is the sale of Grapevine Trees. Several trees were made at recent workshops and are now for sale. Contact Ellen Westerholm at [dwestholm1@msn.com](mailto:dwestholm1@msn.com) if you are interested in purchasing a tree.

Go to [www.mgacra.com](http://www.mgacra.com) for additional information.



A Beach Themed Grapevine Tree

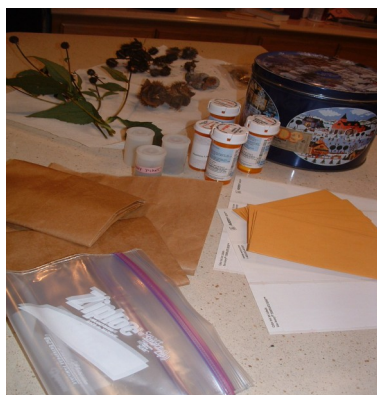
## MGACRA Officers for 2012

Elections for 2012 officers was held at the November 2011 meeting and we are pleased to announce the following executive positions:  
**President, Laura Collinsworth; Vice President, Tina Will; Secretary, Linda Dunn; Treasurer, Karen Erhard**

## Success With Seeds: Collecting and Saving Seeds from Your Garden

The nights are cool, the days are still warm and most plants have bloomed all summer and are now ready to rest for the winter. This is prime time to collect seeds. There are a couple of things you need to know about saving seeds. There are some early blooming plants for which it is too late to collect seeds such as poppies, foxgloves and columbines. These plants have already dispersed their seeds by now, but plan to collect these seeds next spring. You can collect and save seeds from any plant in your garden that produces viable seeds, but be aware that not all plants will come "true to type"; that is, they will not look exactly like the parent plant. Most plants, with the exception of hybrids, will come true to type unless you have different cultivars of the same plant in your garden and they are cross-pollinated by the wind, insects or animals. I don't mind if the plants are not exactly like the parent because I like a little variety, plus I find it exciting to see what kind of plant will be produced.

This photo shows most of the items needed



to collect and store your seeds. Shown are seeds collected from my Oriental Hibiscus, Caster Bean Plant, Datura, Black Eye Susan, Poppy Plant and Purple Cone Flower. The rodent proof cookie tin is perfect to store your envelopes and zip locked bags of seed. Brown paper bags are great for collecting seeds in the garden. To save time, I print information about the plants on computer address labels. You can print a full page in a few minutes. These are used on the medicine bottles, old film cases and anything else you are using to store your seeds. You can write directly on the zip lock bags.

### Seed Collecting

When collecting seed, you should look for

plants that are disease free and have particular characteristics that you like. Look for plants with the most beautiful flowers. You might collect seeds from plants that stay small, because they will need less space and less water to look great. Or you might choose plants with multiple blooms and large seed heads or pods. You may want to collect seed from the plant that has the tastiest fruit or vegetable. You might also look for plants that suffered less pest damage than others. Seeds from these plants are likely to produce plants with these same special qualities. Wait until the seeds ripen completely, then pick them. When seeds turn dark and/or form a hard coat, they are ready for picking. It is okay to dead head your favorite annuals until about a month before first frost. At that time you should leave the flowers to form seeds. After flowers fade, check plants weekly for seed formation and ripeness. Seeds should be as dry as possible when you collect them. Choose a dry sunny day when there isn't much wind since many seeds are very light and easily blown away. Collecting in the middle of the day will give them even more time to dry. The way I collect seed is to label a brown paper bag with the plant name. I carefully cut or break off the seed heads or pods, allowing them to fall in the bag. If I collect more than one kind of seed at the same time, I use a different bag for each type of plant. I always check the corners of my bags and envelopes for any holes or gaps through which seed can fall. If seeds are not completely dry, I spread them on sheets of newspaper in my shed so they can dry naturally with no artificial heat. Once the seed heads or pods are dry, I remove the seeds from the flower, seed head or pod by shaking the bag or lightly scrunching them with my fingertips. I then remove any large pieces of debris such as dried petals or pods. If seeds are stored with debris, you run the risk of also storing insect eggs and mold that may ruin your seeds.

### Storing Collected Seeds

Make sure to store your collected seeds in a cool dry place out of direct sunlight. They can be kept in the refrigerator, but do not freeze. Seeds can be stored in used prescription bottles (labels removed), plastic zip lock bags, small envelopes or airtight jars. I add the little silica crystal packs like those found in handbags or shoe boxes, to absorb moisture. If you don't have these on hand, you

can purchase silica gel or crystals at most craft stores. Moisture can damage seeds and prevent them from germinating. Some perennial seeds are best sown immediately after collection; they may need a period of stratification (cold treatment). For best results, I recommend you check the germination requirements of seeds you collect. If storing your seeds in paper envelopes, I suggest you place the envelopes in a rodent-proof container such as a metal can with lid or a metal file box. Cookie tins or old coffee cans are great choices. If you use the file box, you can file your seeds in alphabetical order. Make sure all seed containers or packages are labeled with the seed type, plant name, variety and date collected.

### To summarize:

- Determining the correct time to gather mature seeds is done by careful observation. There is no substitute for observation.
- Throughout the seed cleaning process, keep in mind that your objective is to separate as much debris as possible, but within reason.
- Make sure you do research on the germination requirement of seeds from new plants in your garden.
- Cool or cold store your seeds until sowing time. You can keep seeds in an unheated room, basement or garage, or store them in the refrigerator as long as they're sealed and protected from moisture.
- Computer mailing labels or slips of paper with typed information covered with clear tape are great for labeling whatever way you decide to store your seed.
- You will have better germination success if your seeds are used within a year of collection. I have kept seeds for more than one year and still had great success with them. Sometimes life happens, but strive for the one-year target.

When I have extras, I like to share them. Some of my favorite seeds to collect are Four o'clock (*Mirabilis jalapa*), Caster Bean (*Ricinus communis*), Blackberry lily (*Belamcanda*), Hollyhocks (*Alcea rosea*), Cock Comb (*Celosia cristata*), Moon Vine (*Ipomoea alba*), Money Plant (*Lunaria annua*), Columbine (*Aquilegia*), Calla Lily (*Zantedeschia*), Marigolds (*Tagetes*), Datura, Oriental Hibiscus, and Cleome. Some of these I have extras now, so call me if you would like some.

*It is okay to  
dead head your  
favorite annuals  
until about a  
month before  
first frost. At  
that time you  
should leave  
the flowers to  
form seeds.*

If you are a beginner, I recommend you try annuals first. Most are easy to grow and some can be sown straight into the garden in early spring (March or April) with almost immediate gratification.

Happy Gardening  
—Clara Yates

# Basic Pruning

Carpenters say “measure twice and cut once.” As Gardeners, we say “answer questions first and prune second.” There are four questions that you should answer before you start cutting. *First.* Why do I want to prune? It is very important to have in mind what you want the result to be before you start pruning. *Second.* How will the plant respond? Will it produce a lot of new foliage or a little? *Third.* When to prune? Knowing the proper time to prune a plant is essential. *Last.* What tools do you need to prune? The right tool is essential to get the right cut.

## Why prune?

Are you trying to improve the shape of the plant? Is it too large for the space, and you want to reduce the size? No matter your reason for pruning, the end result should look natural. Another reason to prune is to maintain a healthy plant. The three D’s rule is: prune diseased, dead and damaged wood. For diseased wood, the cut should be made in healthy wood below the point of infection. Sterilize your cutting tools in a 10% bleach solution between each cut to make sure you don’t spread the disease. Make sure you remove any damaged branches as well as any that are crossing.

## How will the plant respond?

Study or research the growth habit of each plant before you prune. Each plant grows differently and the right pruning technique for one plant may be death to another. For example, *Buddlia davidia* (Butterfly Bush) should be pruned 8 to 12 inches from the ground in late winter to grow to a beautiful shrub with loads of blooms during the summer. If you prune *Salvia greggi* (Autumn

Sage), which looks very similar in structure, in the same manner, plan to purchase another plant. I can guarantee it will die.

## When should I prune?

To minimize damage, you should prune a plant based on its natural growth cycle. Plants like *Abelia*, *Beauty Berry*, and *Crape Myrtle* should be pruned in winter (January & February). Avoid heavy pruning as leaves are emerging in early spring (April, May) because tree energy reserves are low at this time. Timing for light pruning and the three D’s is not critical and can be done any time needed. To improve your display of spring blooming flower species such as *Azalea*, *Forsythia* and *Lilacs*, prune after they bloom (June or later).

## What tools are needed?

There are four basic pruning tools to use depending on the job. Hand pruners are used most. They are useful for smaller branches up to about ½ inch diameter. Use long handled loppers to remove larger diameter branches. Pruning saws come in many styles. They can be used to cut large and small diameter branches quickly and cleanly. There are curved blade saws that only cut on the pull stroke. There are those that are available with a fixed or folding blade and others mounted on a pole for pruning high branches. I have discovered another saw that was not intended as a pruning tool, but is now one of my favorite — the battery-operated reciprocating saw.

## Do’s and Don’ts of Pruning

### Do’s:

Always cut back to the main trunk, base of a

branch or above a bud.

Use the three-cut method on branches one inch in diameter or larger. This will prevent the branch from stripping away bark on the trunk as it falls.

Leave the slight swelling (branch collar) at the base. This will allow for a smaller wound resulting in quicker repair.

Plan pruning work in advance.

Keep tools sharp and clean. Sharp tools require less effort on your part and clean cuts heal quicker.

Buy the best tools you can afford.

Prune dead, damage and diseased branches any time.

### Don’ts:

Don’t leave a stub, or cut in the middle of a branch or twig. These will create entry points for pests.

Don’t cut large branches using one cut. The weight of the branch will tear the bark away from the tree producing a larger wound.

Don’t leave jagged cuts or cut branch flush with the tree. This will cause larger wounds with longer heal time.

Don’t over prune. Remove no more than 25% of a tree or shrub in one year.

Don’t prune with sprung, dull or improper tools.



*Carpenters say  
“measure twice and  
cut once.” As  
Gardeners, we say  
“answer questions  
first and prune  
second.”*

Happy Gardening  
Clara Yates

# Crown Vetch in my Garden



Checking on my little *Caryopteris* (Blue Mist) shrub I found Crown Vetch, *Coronilla varia* L., completely covering it. After a pulling/cutting/digging session the green vine with pretty purple flowers was removed from the *Caryopteris* but discovered growing vigorously elsewhere around the garden. Used as a ground cover in the northern states, from this gardener’s ground level view it seems that Crown Vetch, while not new to the garden, is increasing perhaps due to the cold winters of 2010 & 2011. The USDA Forest Service describes this ground cover as an invasive plant. It is an perennial legume with pink flowers clustered on long stalks that produce flattened seed pods. Crown Vetch forms large clumps that cover and shade out plants and shrubs. One plant can cover an area up to six feet in diameter. The plant spreads through the dispersal of seeds and rapidly creeping rhizomes. If spotted early the entire plant can be pulled out. Heavy concentrations of Crown Vetch might require the use of a herbicide to control it.

-Joan Lindsey

# Creating a Dish Garden or a Terrarium

Have you ever created a Dish Garden or a Terrarium? ...Linda starts out at a presentation of "How to create a dish garden." She continues with; "This night we are going to have a fun time learning How to Create Dish Gardens and Terrariums for Gifts." The following was a presentation by Master

a variety of scenes. Christmas time could fill our imaginations



Gardener Linda Dunn at the Salem Church Library.



with mini decorations. Transplant cacti, succulents, sedum, and other rock garden plants like hen and chicks carefully and water them in. Then set the container where it will be exposed to light levels, temperatures and relative humidity appropriate for the plants.

A terrarium is a garden of plants growing in a clear container, such as a bottle, glass



Dish gardens and terrariums are like miniature gardens. The main difference between them is that the dish garden is open and the terrarium is enclosed.

What are Dish Gardens? A dish garden is a garden of plants growing in a shallow dish or bowl. The dish garden can be landscaped to represent a scene in nature. It is a miniature ecosystem. The plants used in a dish garden should be compatible and cultivars that stay small or grow very slowly are most commonly used. The medium should be well drained, but hold adequate moisture and should not be very fertile, since a fertile medium would tend to encourage rapid growth. If the container has drainage holes, a saucer or other protective device should be put under it.

First pick out your dish garden container. You want a shallow container. A good place to find containers could be in local stores, but also check out thrift stores such as Good Will or antique stores. Then put in the soil. I prefer a mixture of about half sand and half potting soil. I suggest that others may also choose to use cactus potting soil. "Embellish" the dish by planting "Mondo Grass" using rocks, miniature animals, seashells and a Santa figurine and children. Be created with

globe, old aquarium, or similar object. The terrarium can be landscaped to represent a scene in nature, or a miniature ecosystem. Miniature African violets, small orchids, pitcher plants, ferns, and some begonias do well in terrariums as they stay small or grow very slowly. The medium should be well drained, but hold adequate moisture and should not be very fertile, since a fertile medium would tend to encourage rapid growth. The key in putting together plants for either type of grouping in a single container is choosing plants that require basically the same environment and care. A dish garden of moisture-loving tropical plants will work; a dish garden of desert plants will work. Mixing them in a single garden, however, means that you can't possibly provide care that will meet the needs of both sorts of plants.

Desert plants are more suited to a dish garden than to a terrarium because the whole point of a terrarium is to create a humid environment for plants that aren't well adapted to dry indoor air. Desert plants such as cacti and succulents not only don't need that sort of environment but also won't tolerate it. For tropical plants, commercial potting soil, a prepared peat mix, or a combination of equal parts sand, sterile soil, and peat will do nicely. For each



garden, select several small plants that vary in size, color, form and texture. A grouping typically includes an upright plant, a trailing plant and a colorful focal plant.

Fill container with the appropriate growing medium and experiment with various arrangements of plants. In a container to be viewed from all sides, the tallest plants are usually placed near the center, in one to be viewed from one side, tall plants typically form the backdrop for the shorter ones.

Transplant plants carefully and water them in. Then set the container where it will be exposed to light levels, temperatures and relative humidity appropriate for the plants. Succulents and cacti generally grow fairly slowly and a grouping of such plants will be slower to out grow its container than a grouping of tropical plants. Some plants can be pruned, others will need to be removed and replaced by smaller plants to keep the dish garden from looking over grown.



Terrariums are similar in that they consist of several plants in a single container, but they are usually planted in aquariums or large bottles or other containers that can be closed to hold humid air around moisture-loving plants. Clear bottles are better than tinted ones.

Once plants are in place and watered in, an enclosed terrarium may not need watering again for weeks. In fact, it may need to be opened if moisture builds up to the point where it is streaming down the sides. Sand, soil, and wood hold succulent plants in place where rabbits and squirrels romp around the colored glass. Direct sun and a terrarium are a bad combination. Choose plants that do well in low light or supplement natural light with light from fluorescent tubes.

To keep plant groupings from outgrowing their containers as long as possible, avoid fertilizing. All agreed, "This was a fun class!" Let's do it again sometime.

Josh Maddox, Linda Dunn, Karen Ehrhard, Linda Burch, Skip Smith, Joan Gaston, Vicky Kealher, Barbara Daley, Ann Tebbutt, Kena Hengy, Tracy Day, Luratee Cornwell. And so many more...

—Betty Marcum, Author/Photographer

# Remembering George Davis, III

I am truly saddened by the recent passing of our fellow Master Gardener, George Davis III. George contributed so much to both our organization and his community.

During my presidency in 2001, George was a newly minted Master Gardener Intern with new ideas and boundless energy. His goal was to start a community garden in Bowling Green. His eventual site of orange colored

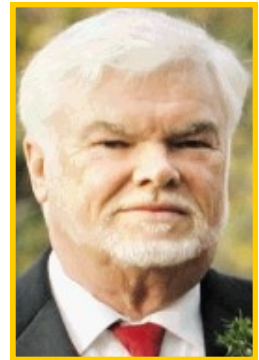
clay soil was near the landfill and attracted deer, yet he persevered. He joked that he would be perfectly happy if it produced only one vegetable for George, one for the food bank, and two for the deer. We all were very happy when he brought some of his bounty to share at our monthly meetings.

George and I shared many meals and happy times together, either in his kitchen or mine, and conversed on many topics. When I

needed help in my small community garden, he was very helpful and generous with his seeds, seedlings, and advice. Now and then, I would find an encouraging note in my garden under a rock that said "great garden."

I shall always cherish George's friendship.

- Lin Leong



George Davis III



2006 Lin Leong and George Davis III



2002 A term of advisers to Bowling Green Community Garden.

Left to right: Mike Costa, Guy Mussey, Beth Jimenez, Lin Leong, Ann Gorrell, Community Aide and George Davis

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