

July/August 2021

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Into the Garden

President's Letter

Faith Vosburgh

Summer doldrums are just about upon us (and will it ever rain!). It seems as if when my vegetable garden starts to ramp up, my perennial beds start to look tired. But fall is around the corner, my perennial beds will perk up, and by the end of August RAMGA events will start up again. RAMGA always has a booth or two at the Rockbridge Community Festival, this year on August 28th and during that same time period, the Horticulture Show, run by RAMGA volunteers, will also take place. More on both events can be found within the body of this newsletter. And this leads me to the main topic of this letter – volunteers.

I am sure all of you have been noticing the Help Wanted signs everywhere. RAMGA should have its own "Help Wanted" notice. During the midst of the pandemic all of us were hunkered down and barely left our homes. I suppose you could say we were all in a state of suspended animation. Gradually, as Virginia started to open up again, RAMGA members began trickling back to the various projects. We were able

to host a very successful plant sale and our Zoom Plant Clinics were a hit. We also have a new community newsletter.



Moving on, our new volunteer recording system allows me to run various reports and I see in 2021 there have been only 59 RAMGA members volunteering and of that number about 6 or 7 only recorded one hour. Now maybe people aren't recording their hours. I hope so. And looking through the list, I see it is the same people who volunteer for everything. Many of the 2020/21 class has done a great job during these trying times of accumulating their fifty hours and should be commended.

The School and Demonstration Garden project leaders, Dave Bryer, Lucia Owens, and I are working on a volunteer survey. What can we do to increase volunteerism? Do we need more

projects, fewer projects, more one-time projects? If you are not volunteering, what is holding you back? The three of us recently met with many of the individual project leaders and got their input, now we need yours.

Along with the survey, I'll be sending out a list of all our current projects with descriptions.

Our organization is only as strong as our members. Help us take down the "Help Wanted" sign

Faith

RAMGA FYI...

All RAMGA members can now download a free copy of the Master Gardener Handbook.

The handbook is available by signing into Better Impact, clicking "Go to Files" on the Home page of www.ramga.org and selecting "Extension Master Gardener Handbook". The benefit of this approach is that members can always have the updated handbook.

RAMGA is now registered for the **Amazon Smile program**. Register under smile.amazon.com. Once you are registered, when you go to shop on Amazon (and we all do, especially during this pandemic), start your shopping at smile.amazon.com. Everything is the same as it is on amazon.com, but when you shop under the smile address, 0.5% of your purchase will be donated to RAMGA.

Virtual International Master Gardener Conference 2021. The program has been released here <https://www.internationalmastergardener.com/schedule/> and registration opened on Monday, April 5th. Register early to sign up for the modules you are interested in; they fill up fast. Now registration for the conference is open to the general public.

Implemented on the RAMGA website is a new feature, the Plant Library. This takes the hard work the Plant Sale team did on the recent online Plant Sale and preserves it as a plant information resource for RAMGA members and the public. The library is constructed for ease of adding more plant information. The Plant Library may be accessed in the *Gardening Questions* or *Members Section* on the RAMGA website.

New Master Gardeners!

Congratulations to Sharron Burgess, Keri Gould, Kalia Holmes, and Ginger Reed. This was an awesome commitment, considering the past year and all its handicaps.

Do you recognize these masked new certified Rockbridge Area Master Gardeners?



Sharron Burgess



Kaila Holmes



Ginger Reed



Keri Gould

VOLUNTEER NEEDS...

The Jackson House Museum Gardens need volunteers. They meet Thursdays and Saturdays at 9am. Please contact Deb Shade, dbbie@alive.com if you would like to help. The gardens are in the process of a huge facelift, being reworked to represent a pre-1860's Virginia town home garden.

Rockbridge Community Festival

By Jill Alvarado

The Rockbridge Community Festival is back again this year! This wonderful, end-of-summer event offers a great venue to see old friends and meet new ones. Amongst the food, music, and shopping, many organizations set up booths to engage with the public and share information. Our RAMGA booth will offer information about Master Gardeners, our class, as well as information on many garden topics. **The festival will be held in downtown Lexington on Saturday, August 28th from 9:00 to 3:00.**



If you are in need of hours, this is a one-time commitment to have fun and spend time with some of the nicest people in town—master gardeners—plus educate our public about RAMGA. Shifts available are: set-up (7:30 to 9:00), first shift (9:00 to 11:00), second shift (11:00 to 1:00), third shift (1:00 to 3:00), and take down (3:00 to 4:00). Please contact Jill Alvarado at alvarado.rca@outlook.com or call me at 540-784-5750 to sign up for a shift(s).

Master Gardeners that have materials they would like to display at our booth can also contact me to arrange getting me the materials.

I am still looking for an assistant to train in how to run our RAMGA Community Outreach Booth for events in the future. Please let me know if you are interested.

Horticulture Show, Rockbridge Fair and Expo, August 26-28

By Faith Vosburgh

The Fair is being held in Glasgow this year. Horticulture and Floriculture are both being held in the Glasgow Baptist Church across the street from the Market Pavilion where the Fair and the rides are being held. The Quilt Show and the Art Show will also be held at the church.

RAMGA runs the Horticulture Show where area gardeners can bring stems and branches of plant specimens (perennials, annuals, trees, shrubs, herbs and houseplants) to be judged. Prizes are given to the winners in three categories – Child, Teen, and Adult.

Registrants can bring their specimens to the church from 10 until noon on Thursday, August 26th. Judging will follow.

Keep an eye on your email mid-August. I will be sending an information sheet on how to prepare your specimens for judging. I'll also be sending out a volunteer sign-up via a Google doc.

We will need volunteers for all three days, with Thursday in need of the most volunteers. Volunteers register the entries, help the general public prepare their entries, record the entries and help the official judges. This year we will try to cover all three days of the show. There will be a RAMGA information table at the show as well.

Abbreviated RAMGA Board Minutes, May 27, 2021.

Records (Bob Kovach): Ten members achieved milestones last year despite the pandemic

Treasurer's Report (Karen Lyons): Reports of the Investment Committee were submitted. The committee recommends that RAMGA's excess funds be invested in an index fund (low risk, greater return, and liquid). Forming a permanent Investment Committee was recommended. Further discussion included setting up a reserve fund, participating in the Community Foundation, and setting up a RAMGA fund for charitable purposes, such as scholarships for further training or for RAMGA's training course. A Financial Audit was completed and the recommendation was that RAMGA keep six months' worth of expenditures in the bank and invest the rest.

Help Desk (Karen Lyons): Karen participated in the May Zoom Plant Clinic. Help Desk members will be asked to contribute article to the Garden Gate newsletter.

Plant Clinic (Vera Winkler): There will be no more plant clinics until the fall. Help Desk participation may be desirable for future clinics.

Plant Sale (Margaret Howard): the plant sale netted more than \$7000. The gross for the combined plant sales was around \$12,000.

Programs: There is a need for a new Program Chair as Jane Stange is stepping down.

School and Demonstration Gardens (Dave Bryer): Lucia Owens is the co-chair for this position. Projects are redoing their MOUs or creating them if there hasn't been one in the past. Educational programs will begin at the Jackson House gardens on Saturdays at 9am with programming based on the food cycle, from seeds to harvest.

Waster Reduction Roundtable (Phyllis Fevrier): A single-use plastic resolution was passed by the Glasgow Town Council. Members with extra one-gallon pots and 4" pots should return them to Boxerwood alongside the barn, for use in next year's sale.

New Business: The annual RAMGA September picnic will be held Thursday, September 14th at Wades Mill in Raphine. A Nominating Committee has been formed consisting of Vera Winkler, Peggy Agnor, Jan Smith and Maureen Becker. Upcoming RAMGA events include the Horticulture Show at the Rockbridge County Fair in Glasgow, August 26-28 and the Rockbridge Community Festival the last weekend in August.

BOOK REVIEWS

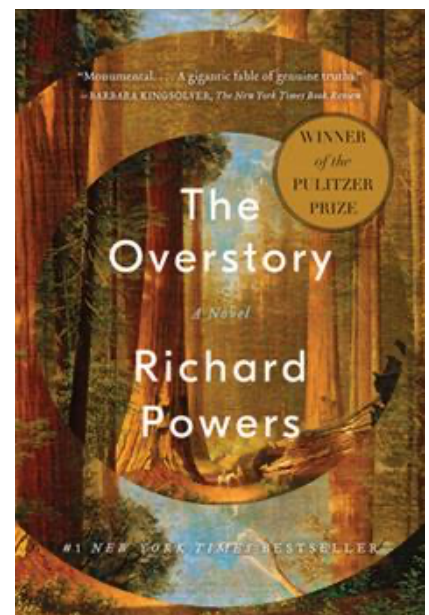
By Tamara Teaff

***The Overstory, a Novel* written by Richard Powers. W.W. Norton & Company. 2018.**

This book is classified as environmental fiction. Yes, it is fiction but facts about the vital role trees play in nature are woven into the story. Actually, instead of one story, the book is a range of interlocking stories that start in antebellum New York and end in the late twentieth century timber wars of the Pacific Northwest. Divided into two parts, the book forces readers to examine their personal roles in and relationship to nature. At least, the book did that for me.

Part 1 introduces nine protagonists through a series of multi-generational sagas. Although separate stories, each is linked by interactions with trees. In Part 2, the author cleverly converges the characters as their lives become linked through their unique experiences with trees. Before the book ends, trees become a tenth character with their own story to tell.

The Overstory is not an easy read (500 pages). Fair warning! It will make you think. The novel is part short story, part tree poem, and part tree science. Through it, the reader will become aware of the importance of the forest to the world's ecosystems and biodiversity. Added to that is the realization that humanity is using up natural resources at a speed which nature cannot continue to restore and replenish. To be brief, the message of the book is that trees are integral to the survival of human life.



In the form of storytelling, this book is a passionate plea for the protection of trees. A quote from one of the story characters is the perfect summary. "The best argument in the world won't change a person's mind. The only thing that can do that is a good story."

Consider adding this book to your summer reading list. It will linger in your memory for a long time after you finish the last page. It is important to note that I discovered my paperback copy was printed on recycled paper, thus “saving 637 trees, 614,962 gallons of water, 206,700 pounds of greenhouse gas emissions, and 62,925 pounds of solid waste”. *Copied from The Overstory’s copyright page.*

Faith’s Garden Notes...

With so many new plant varieties out there, it I hard to tell when walking through the garden center, what will manage to survive in your own garden. I have always been a sucker for the newest and brightest, but throughout the years, I’ve learned to do a bit of research before I buy. Too many initially lovely – and expensive - plants are now part of the compost pile having petered out after a year or having reverted to some muddy color. I am thinking of you, coneflowers! How many of us have purchased that beautiful bright red coneflower only to see it return in the following year a sickly yellow – or to not return at all. To forestall an unlucky purchase, I usually poke around on the internet for various plant trials to see what the experts are recommending. The Chicago Botanic Garden is one very reliable source and can often be found in Fine Gardening magazine. Or you can go right to the source and look here:

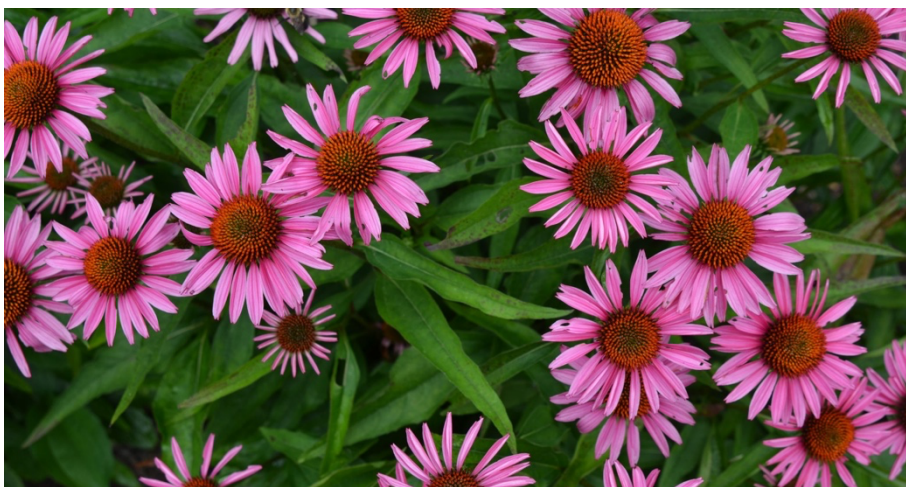
https://www.chicagobotanic.org/plantinfo/plant_trials_articles

Another good place to look is Mt Cuba Center in Delaware, a botanical garden specializing in native plants (<https://mtcubacenter.org/research/trial-garden/>). Their latest published trials are on coneflowers (*Echinacea*). The RAMGA field trip to eastern Pennsylvania in 2019 visited Mt. Cuba and witnessed the Echinacea trials firsthand. Now I know I should be looking for ‘Pica Bella’, their most highly rated coneflower, a bright pink with long-lasting flowers.

The Missouri Botanical Garden lists their yearly “Plants of Merit” for the past twenty years on their website, <https://www.missouribotanicalgarden.org/gardens-gardening/your-garden/help-for-the-home-gardener/plants-of-merit.aspx>

‘Pica Bella’ Coneflowers

www.mtcubacenter.org



I always check the Perennial Plant Association's website for their Perennial Plant of the Year (<https://perennialplant.org/page/2021PPOY>). This year's winner is Lesser Catmint (*Calamintha nepeta*), a great edging plant with fluffy tiny white flowers. I haven't seen it locally, but I did pick up three on a nursery trip to Lancaster County. Of course, I had to have it. I think I have every winner from the last twenty years in my garden.

And, the Pennsylvania Horticultural Society has their own annual awards, the "Gold Medal Plants", <https://phsonline.org/for-gardeners/gold-medal-plants/2021-gold-medal-plant-winners>

I am sure many other horticultural associations and botanic gardens have their own lists. Let me know if you find something interesting!

"Into the Garden" is the monthly internal newsletter for
the Rockbridge Area Master Gardeners.

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Penny Wilson, Proofreader

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