

THE GARDEN GATE

A Community Newsletter by the Rockbridge Area Master Gardeners



JUNE 2021

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The Virginia Extension Master Gardener Association is hosting the International Master Gardener Conference this fall, September 12 – 17, and the general public is invited. The event is virtual and will include world class speakers covering everything from planting sustainably, the foodscape revolution, plant breeding, hydroponics and much more. For more information: <https://www.internationalmastergardener.com/about/>

AREA HAPPENINGS

Saturday, June 12, 1-4pm and Thursday, June 24, 1-4p. Blue Ridge Prism's Summer invasive species workshop via Zoom. The workshops contain the same content as in-person workshops except the outdoor elements will be conducted when it is safe to do so. www.blueridgeprism.org

Tuesday, June 15, 7-8:30pm. Virtual "Tree Identification by Season: Summer", sponsored by the Charlottesville Area Tree Stewards. Register here: <https://www.charlottesvilleareatreestewards.org/learn-about-trees/take-a-tree-steward-class/>

Saturday, June 19, 2 – 3:30pm. The Piedmont Master Gardeners present “Garden Basics: The Challenges of Shade Gardening” via Zoom. Register here:

<https://piedmontmastergardeners.org/events/>

Thursday and Friday, June 24-25, 9am – noon. 2021 Virtual Tree Steward Symposium sponsored by Trees Virginia. Free. Registration: https://zoom.us/webinar/register/WN_cqxccRgRQi6eTYR8I48vw

Saturday, June 26, 9am – 5pm. Garden Tour: Gardening in the Valley sponsored by the Northern Shenandoah Master Gardener Association. Fee - \$10. For more information and to buy advance tickets: <http://nsvmgga.org/events/garden-tour/>

JUNE GARDEN TIPS

By Donna Campagna

JUNE GARDEN TIPS

Well, June is here and although most garden plants have been planted and/or will continue to be planted, it is time to plan for your fall garden. The cool weather vegetables planted in the spring can be planted again in the fall. They are broccoli, brussels sprouts, kale, cabbage, celery, etc. Unfortunately, these plants never seem to be available for purchase for fall planting so, it's much better to grow your own.

By June, the following vegetables should be ready for picking: peas, onions, lettuce, radish, turnips and others planted in early spring. Heat-loving plants such as tomatoes, peppers, and eggplants are ready to be planted. Also, keeping ahead of the weeds can be a challenge. With all of this going on it is not easy to remember to start plants for a fall garden. Timing is important so be sure to make note of the length of the growing season for each vegetable so they can be planted at the proper time.

STARTING FALL SEEDS

You may start seeds in trays under indoor lights or on a sheltered porch. Inside, under lights, young seedlings are better able to be protected from insect damage and less easily forgotten when it comes time to being watered. If planting on a shelter porch, make sure plants receive at least 4 hours of direct sunlight each day.

Another option for starting plants is a cold frame with the top cover being screen instead of glass or plastic. The screen will protect them from insect damage while allowing rain in and



heat to escape. If no rain, you will need to water them, of course.

INSECT PESTS

June is also the time that gardeners must be more vigilant concerning insect pests. There are different ways to combat insect pests. There are a few listed here.

1. In most cases, if you have healthy soil, you will have a healthy plant that can better resist insect attacks. Composting is a great way to add healthy nutrients to your garden soil.
2. Cleaning up your garden in the fall can reduce the number of hiding places that insects use to overwinter especially around plants that had pests during the summer.
3. Crop rotation is another practice that helps with insect pest control. If you planted squash in one location and it had problems with squash bugs, in the following year plant your squash in different location and hopefully you can fool the squash bugs. A simple chart of plant placement made each year can help you remember what was planted where so you can practice crop rotation.
4. Another way to protect plants is to cover them with a floating row cover or portable cold frame. Some plants, like squash and cucumbers, can only be covered during their early stages of growth. For others, it's when they bloom that covers must be removed for pollination by the good bugs. Plants like broccoli or cabbage can remain covered until harvest.
5. As the season progresses you will need to check your garden daily for insect pests. This will allow you to catch the infestation early and possibly stop or slow it down before things get out of hand. Being in your garden everyday helps in observing the life cycle of many insects as well. Make notes of when eggs appear when larvae emerge and when insect feeding is heaviest. This will help in altering planting dates to prevent insect damage. In helping to identify insects in your garden there are many excellent resources both old and new. One is the ***Color Handbook of Garden Insects*** by Anna Carr published by Rodale Press and recommended by Nancy Johnston of ***Dirty Knees***.
6. There are also many avenues for handling insect infestations once you have identified them. There are botanical pest controls like Pyrethrum, Rotenone, Sabelbitter, BT, Neem, Diatomaceous Earth, and Insecticidal Soap. It is best to do your own research and decide what is best for your situation.

My favorite is a container of soapy water. I pick or knock the bugs into the container as I go around my garden. In ***Vegetables Love Flowers*** by Lisa Ziegler, she uses many non-chemical methods to control pests. One is marigolds. Marigolds are a trap crop for Japanese Beetles. During beetle season, she suggests going to your marigolds early in the morning with a bucket of soapy water. Place the bucket under the bloom and tap. The beetles will drop off the bloom into the soapy water.

Enjoy this time! It is a busy time in the garden!!

References:

Johnston, N., (1995), Dirty Knees, Nancy Johnston Books

Ziegler, L, (2018), Vegetables Love Flowers, Quarto Publishing Group USA, Inc.

The Language of Flowers

By Karen Carlton

I was interested in the subject of the language of flowers when I read a novel called ***The Language of Flowers*** by Vanessa Diffenbaugh. I was intrigued by this fascinating way to communicate to others. Since June is the season of weddings, I thought it would be fun to give some insight into the message of a bouquet of flowers.

The art of communicating with flowers was started in Turkey and was brought to England around the 18th century by a diplomat's wife. The Victorians liked the idea of being able safely and properly convey their passions to the opposite sex or to rebuff a suitor. Each flower had a meaning and would allow a whole host of feelings to be said without any embarrassing social missteps to happen to the sender or the recipient.

For example: Roses the symbol of Love and depending on the color could give a different meaning to the bouquet. The number of red roses would say how much one loved someone, for instance, 50 red roses mean "my love is unconditional". Other colors of roses have their meanings as well: White – charm, wisdom, sympathy; Pale pink- grace, perfect happiness; Orange- desire or enthusiasm; Yellow- friendship and joy.



Other flowers have meanings as well: Begonia- intuition; Marigold- creativity; Daffodil- unequalled love; Zinnia- remembrance. Bouquets of flowers can give a whole message. For example, for a wedding bouquet, Lily of the valley (return of happiness), Myrtle(love), and Orange blossom (your purity equals your loveliness). Instead of sending a thank you note, you can say it with flowers: Freesia (lasting friendship) and Oak-leaf geranium (true friendship). There are plenty of books to tell you about the different meaning of flowers. I have listed some references for you to pursue the Language of Flowers. Enjoy the language that flowers can give and the fun you can have giving messages to someone.

Resources: *The New York Times*, Sunday May 9, 2021, page 5
A Victorian Flower Dictionary by Mandy Kirkby
The Secret Language of Flowers by Samantha Gray Cicada

PEST OF THE MONTH - BAGWORM

If you have arborvitae, I am sure you know what bagworms look like. Bagworms love arborvitae and many other evergreens, including juniper, pine, and spruce. I have even seen confused bagworms on shrubby willows. The “bag” of bagworm refers to the case that the caterpillar forms around itself and suspends from the conifer it feeds on. They look a bit like brown Christmas ornaments. The 1 – 2” bag is made of host foliage and bits of silk the larvae spin to help strengthen the case.



Female bagworms lay 500-1000 eggs in each bag in the fall. The eggs start hatching from late May until early June. Young larvae crawl out of the bottom of the bag and start constructing their own bags, continuing to enlarge the bags as they grow. When the bag is complete, the mature larvae reverse their positions in the bags and change into a pupae state where they will rest for about a month. In the fall the males leave their cases and fly to bags containing females where mating takes place. The females lay their eggs in the bag, then crawl out, drop to the ground, and die. Pity the poor female. She lacks eyes, wings, legs, and mouthparts and never leaves the bag she has constructed until death.

The easiest way to rid your evergreens from bagworms is to hand pick them, but often they are too high to reach. There are several registered pesticides that will take care of the pest. The best time to apply being in early summer when the larvae emerge. A biologic control recommended in Virginia Tech’s Pest Management Guide are parasitic wasps. Chemical controls recommended include Permethrin, Malathion, Carbaryl, Neem Oil, Bacillus thuringiensis (Bt), Spinosin, Pyrethrins, and Soybean Oil.



Resources: <https://extension.psu.edu/bagworms>
“2020 Pest Management Guide: Home Grounds and Animals”, Virginia Cooperative Extension, Publication 456-108

VEGETABLE OF THE MONTH

PUMPKINS

By Faith Vosburgh

I have not grown pumpkins for years, but now that I have two small toddler grandchildren I am going to try again.

Pumpkins usually mature in between 90 and 120 days, depending on the variety, so now is a good time to start seeds for Halloween. There are so many choices out there, so many shapes and now even colors to choose from. From the catalog, *Johnny's Select Seeds*, one of my favorite sources, I ordered 'Racer' an early variety, 12-16 lbs. and some mini 'Jill-Be-Little' pumpkins.



Pumpkins are members of the cucurbit family, including squash, cucumbers, gourds, and melons. They are fairly simple to grow. If seeding directly, make sure the soil temperature is at least 65 degrees as the vegetable is very susceptible to frost. Direct seeding does work best. Plant a few seeds in a hill and then thin out to one or two plants. Make sure you will have enough room for the vines to grow. Your seed packet or catalog should give you that information. Pumpkins do require a fair bit of water

so water assiduously. Drought will cause blossoms to drop and you don't want that.

All cucurbits suffer the indignities of squash borer, and my enemy, the squash bug. I routinely scrape the eggs off the leaves as a preventative measure, but when all else fails, I bring out the spinosad, an organic pesticide.

I did not realize until doing a little research for this article that pumpkins have separate male and female flowers on each plant. The male flowers open first and are short-lived, so there is a narrow opportunity for female flowers to be pollinated. One way to ensure bees will pollinate your vegetables is to grow plenty of flowers directly in your vegetable garden. Let some of your early crops such as radishes or arugula go to seed. Bees love those flowers, too. Phosphorus and potassium are also needed for fruit production, so apply a complete fertilizer such as 19-19-19.

Pumpkins are ready to harvest when the rind and stem harden. Cut the vegetable from the vine with sharp pruners and leave in the garden to cure. Make sure to leave enough of the stem.

And enjoy your home-grown Halloween!

Resources: Jett, Lewis. "Growing Pumpkins". West Virginia Extension Service.

Master Gardeners at Work for You: Rockbridge Waste Reduction Roundtable

By Phyllis Fevier

RESOLUTION DECLARING JULY 2021 TO BE PLASTIC POLLUTION REDUCTION MONTH!

The Rockbridge Waste Reduction Round Table has news to report. A Resolution declaring July 2021 to be a Plastic Reduction Month was adopted by the City of BV and Lexington, with Rockbridge County voting at the June Board of Supervisors meeting. See below.

The Virginia State government has also committed to reducing plastic pollution. The General Assembly established a Plastic Waste Prevention Advisory Council phasing out single use plastic bags and polystyrene food service containers, straws and plastic cutlery in government agencies. Local colleges are also participating.

We are encouraging local participation in a world-wide initiative to Choose to Refuse Single Use Plastics for the month of July. This Plastic-free July is designed to empower people, businesses and municipalities to come together to shift away from single use plastics. The best way we can all participate in this effort is to avoid purchasing consumer goods in plastic packaging, avoid using plastic straws and cutlery, and to buy bulk items in reusable containers when possible. Gardeners can help



reuse plastic plant containers after the plant sale by returning one gallon pots to Boxerwood throughout the year.

Master Gardeners have been busy this spring with the Rockbridge community's effort to reduce landfill waste. The RAMGA Composting Coaches and Exhibit have reached out to over 60 people who purchased compost bins through Boxerwood and are mostly new to home composting. Our purpose is to better understand the nuances and science of composting, sharing this information with the public. Home composting enables gardeners to create their own soil amendment and to reduce the food scrapes going into the landfill garbage. Look for the RAMGA Composting Coaching team at events throughout the summer.

Phyllis Fevier with the RAMGA Compost Exhibit at Boxerwood

In May, many RAMGA members participated in a community-wide non-recyclable plastic audit. The purpose of this effort is to increase awareness of the volume of non-recyclable plastics that go into the

landfill each month. RAMGA volunteers will be on hand at the Rockbridge County High School on June 5th for the plastic collection and measurement.

We also looking at many ways to increase awareness and take action at each RAMGA project sites to reduce single use plastic and increase composting. We hope to educate the public through our actions.

**RESOLUTION DECLARING JULY 2021 TO BE
“PLASTIC POLLUTION REDUCTION MONTH”**

WHEREAS, single-use plastic pollution is one of the primary environmental threats to the well-being of people and wildlife everywhere, and

WHEREAS, reducing the use of plastic is important because plastic production requires an enormous amount of energy and resources, which in turn causes carbon emissions and contributes to global warming, and

WHEREAS, reducing the use of plastics is important because plastics are discarded into the environment where toxic chemicals linked to cancers, birth defects, impaired immunity, and endocrine disfunction leach into the water supply and food chain, harming humans and wildlife, and

WHEREAS, reducing the use of plastics is important because plastics are discarded into the environment where they can be ingested by wildlife and kill, for example, at least 100,000 marine mammals and one million seabirds every year according to the United Nations, and

WHEREAS, reducing the use of plastics is important because plastics are discarded into the environment where they create unsightly pollution that spoils roadways, parks, neighborhoods, and other areas inhabited by humans, and

WHEREAS, dramatically more single-use plastics are being generated in the United States than in prior decades, with, for instance, the United States Environmental Protection Agency (“USEPA”) reporting that 35,680,000 tons of plastics were generated in the United States in 2018, as compared to 390,000 tons in 1960, and

WHEREAS, dramatically more single-use plastics are being landfilled now in the United States than in prior decades, with, for instance, the USEPA reporting that 26,970,000 tons of plastics were landfilled in the United States in 2018, as compared to 390,000 tons in 1960, and

WHEREAS, only a fraction of the plastics produced and discarded in the United States are recycled, with, for instance, the USEPA reporting that only 8.7% of the plastics generated in the United States in 2018 were recycled while 75.6% were landfilled that year, and

WHEREAS, the City of Lexington’s residents, businesses, and visitors use and discard many tons of plastic waste each year which is costly to landfill and reduces future landfill capacity, and

WHEREAS, the City of Lexington has concluded that recycling plastics is not currently cost-effective and, in any event, many types of plastics used by Lexington residents are either not recyclable or are not actually recycled by the user even when recycling is available, and

WHEREAS communities world-wide are promoting campaigns to encourage their residents to choose to refuse single-use plastics, and,

WHEREAS, “Plastic Free July” is a global movement aimed at empowering people, businesses, and entire communities to shift away from single-use plastics in their lives, and

WHEREAS, July 2021 will be the tenth international “Plastic Free July” worldwide, and

WHEREAS, the Virginia state government has committed to reducing plastic pollution, with the General Assembly establishing a Plastic Waste Prevention Advisory Council in 2020, and the governor signing Executive Order 77 on March 23, 2021, which mandates the phasing out of single-use plastics by Virginia state government agencies, including disposable plastic bags, single-use plastic and polystyrene food service containers, plastic straws and cutlery, and single-use plastic water bottles, and

WHEREAS, numerous local organizations, including Rockbridge Area Conservation Council, Main Street Lexington, Boxerwood, 50 Ways Rockbridge, North Rockbridge Women’s Club, Rockbridge Area Master Gardeners, Rockbridge Community Health Foundation, and the Blue Ridge Garden Club are combining efforts to launch a “Choose to Refuse to Use Single-Use Plastics” campaign in July 2021 aimed at encouraging the residents and businesses of Rockbridge County and the Cities of Lexington and Buena Vista to reduce their consumption of single-use plastics, and

WHEREAS, both the Virginia Military Institute and the Washington and Lee University Sustainability Committee support this resolution and the City’s commitment to reducing single-use plastic consumption and plastic pollution.

WHEREAS, single-use plastic consumption can be reduced in myriad ways, including avoiding selling and purchasing consumer goods in plastic packaging, buying in bulk and refilling reusable containers, declining plastic straws, using compostable take-out containers, and using reusable storage containers, covers on leftovers, shopping bags, and water bottles.

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED, that the City Council of the City Lexington, Virginia, by this resolution, formally declares July 2021 as Plastic Pollution Reduction Month. Adoption of this resolution demonstrates support for the “Choose to Refuse to Use Single-Use Plastics” campaign.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that the City Council of the City Lexington, Virginia, encourages the businesses operating within city limits to take all available steps to reduce consumption of single-use plastics in order to preserve and improve the environment and well-being of all.

ADOPTED this ____th day of April 2021.



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