
 May 2021

Inside this Issue

- 1 President's Letter
- 2 RAMGA FYI
- 3 More FYI
- 4 Master Gardeners at Work
- 5 More MGs at Work
- 6 Environmental Stewardship
- 7 Volunteer Needs Abbreviated Minutes
- 8 Continuing Education
- 9 Book Reviews
- 10 Faith's Garden Notes

Into the Garden

President's Letter

Faith Vosburgh

May is all about the RAMGA Plant Sale. This event has been an institution for over 25 years. The Rockbridge community knows they can find reasonably priced, healthy, locally grown plants at our sale. The Plant Sale takes many hands to be successful. Our plant sale team, Peggy Bateson, Margaret Howard and Saundra Martis do an amazing amount of work in preparing for this sale. Hats off to them. We cannot thank them enough. In pre-pandemic days, just about every MG volunteered for the sale in one way or another and the team will need your help again for this upcoming sale.

This year, due to Covid restrictions, the sale will be held online. Bob Kovach has done an incredible job developing an e-commerce site, www.mgplantsale.org

When you go to order your plants, you will be amazed. Each plant offering has a photo and a description of the plant. The plant sale will run from May 8th at noon until May 14th at noon. Pick up will be at the Kerrs Creek Fire Station, Friday, May 14th for

MGs and Saturday, May 15th for the general public.

This is an extremely busy time of year for gardeners. I know I could spend the next couple of months just pulling violets. For all of you vegetable gardeners out there, please consider



planting an extra row of vegetables for the hungry. The Food Pantry at RARA depends on our produce during the growing season. Its hours are Monday, Wednesday, and Thursday from 2:30-4:30pm and Saturday from 10am-noon. Jim Kvach, Master Gardener extraordinaire, has told me in the past that green beans are always needed. And green beans are about the easiest thing to grow (though not the easiest to pick – try 'Amethyst', a purple-podded bean, very easy to spot). Ask your friends and neighbors who vegetable garden if they would also be interested in donating their extra produce and your little group of farmers could take

turns delivering the produce to RARA.

Faith

RAMGA FYI...

The famous RAMGA Plant Sale will be held May 8th – 14th. Bob Kovach has created an E-commerce site at www.mgplantsale.org which goes live on May 8th. MGs and the general public will be able to order from the website and then pick up their plants at an assigned time on Friday, May 14th for MGs and Saturday, May 15 for all others at the Kerrs Creek Firehouse. Pass the word to your friends and neighbors.

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.

Take A Walk...at Brushy Hills.

Members of the local James River Chapter of the Virginia Native Plant Society have marked notable wildflowers and a few invasives with flags at Brushy Hills. You can download the Smart Phone Version and



Brushy Flag
4-17-21_print.pdf



Brushy Apr17
phone.pdf

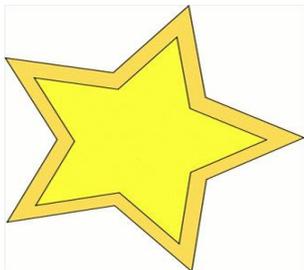
the Printer Friendly Version here:

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.

Choose to Refuse Plastics Initiative: As individuals and households, MGs can participate in the county-wide audit of single use plastic trash. Sign up to participate on RACC's website, www.rockbridgeconservation.org and start collecting your own single use plastics for the month of May. Bring your plastics to the Rockbridge High School on June 5th to be weighed and recorded. The Flippy the Whale sculpture will receive plastics and continue to serve as an educational symbol of reducing plastic waste stream. MG volunteers might also help at the high school June 5th (5-6 people). Phyllis Fevrier (phyInfred@gmail.com), is your contact point.

A New Master Gardener!

Congratulations Jen Coluzzi on completing your fifty hours!



The Plant Sale team would like to thank four amazing MGs for their hard work in researching and composing the write-ups for all the plants in the upcoming Plant Sale: Vicki Hall, Jenny Childress, Carol Humphries, and Ginger Reed.

From Bob Kovachs, A Better Impact Tip: By now most RAMGA members are using Better Impact to log volunteer and continuing education hours, using their laptop or desktop computers. There is another way to access Better Impact, using your smart phone. Most of us have their smart phones while performing volunteer work, so using an app on your phone will facilitate entering your hours on the go and avoid forgetting to log hours.

The app for iPhones can be found in the App Store by entering “Better Impact” and downloading the “My Impact” app. For Android phones go to the Google Store and enter “Better Impact” and download the “My Impact” app. These apps will also work on iPad and Android tablets.

You can also auto save your username and password on your phone to open the app with very few keystrokes. Try the apps and you should find that they help with entering your volunteer and CE hours.

MASTER GARDENERS AT WORK:

Work has begun at the Teaching garden at Buena Vista’s Rockbridge Regional Center branch of Dabney Lancaster Community College.



Penny Wilson and Molly McClure admire their hard work. They spent the morning emptying that bed of mint and oregano.



*The Work Crew at the
Rockbridge Regional Center*

*Petra Visscher tackles
honeysuckle*



Rockbridge Waste Reduction Roundtable News

By Phyllis Fevrier

Thanks to the dedicated Master Gardeners, Nancy Stikes, Marjorie Connolly, Jen Coluzzi, Sharron Burgess, Claudia Cutler, Tamara Teaff and Lucia Owens, the Earth Day event with RACC was a successful joint adventure.

We donated 80 hand-crafted origami boxes made from reused calendars, filled with RAMGA website and online plant sale information, as well as a kind donation of two seed packets from our Seed Swap folks. This was a collective effort to spread the love and word about RAMGA. These gift boxes went out with the 120 box dinners RACC sold as their fundraiser.

At the same Earth Day event on Saturday April 24th, we shared our Compost Exhibit with several curious visitors at Jordan's Point. Answering questions about composting and watching how this new interactive display would be received, we set our traveling compost exhibit into action. It's a lot of fun to share the Joy of Composting!

There are many more local events to attend this year. We are hoping to have an opportunity to help educate people about composting.

Thanks again to all who helped create this display. Any volunteers who would like to help us, contact Phyllis (phylnfred@gmail.com).



Phyllis channels Vanna White at the RACC Fundraiser

VOLUNTEER NEEDS...

The Jackson House Museum Gardens need volunteers. They meet Thursdays at 9am. Please contact Bob Kovach (bobkovach1@gmail.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.

Environmental Stewardship Opportunities:

Boxerwood's Backyard Composting Challenge, <https://boxerwood.org/composting-march21/>. **MG volunteers are needed to answer the Compost Hotline for families in need of composting advice.** MG volunteers will help distribute purchased compost bins at Boxerwood after the first phase of ordering is completed and a second batch of 60 composters has been ordered. Volunteers will then be on site to answer questions and run the traveling Compost exhibit. **Contact Phyllis Fevrier if you would like to help.**

Brushy Hills Invasive Plant Pull begins April 29th and will continue Thursdays at 5:30 through the month of May. No experience necessary. Share light refreshments after. Meet at the Town Spring kiosk on Union Mill Rd. Bring work gloves and clippers. Questions? Contact David Rosher at 540-784-8291.

Abbreviated RAMGA Board Minutes, February 25, 2021.

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

Class Steering (Peggy Agnor, Tamara Teaff): Ten people have expressed interest in the class of 2022.

Website (Bob Kovach): Bob continues to work on the eCommerce store platform to the RAMGA website.

Plant Clinic (Peggy Agnor): RAMGA's contribution to the 150 Chamber Welcome bags will include a bookmark, a one-page information sheet and a packet of seeds. Karen Lyons, Donna Compagna, and Karen Carleton will work on coordinating the Help Desk and the Plant Clinic.

Plant Sale (Margaret Howard): Bob Kovach demonstrated the new e-commerce site for the plant sale on the www.mgplantsale.org website.

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

School and Demonstration Gardens (Dave Bryer): Lucia Owens will be the co-chair for this position.

Old Business: Phyllis Fevrier discussed the Rockbridge Waste Reduction Roundtable of which RAMGA is a member. Volunteer hours for working with them would count as Environmental Stewardship CEUs.

Continuing Education Opportunities

RAMGA Virtual Plant Clinic, Saturday, May 8, 11am. Rockbridge Area Master Gardener's Virtual Plant Clinic Topic: "Planning.....Purchasing.....AND Planting Tips...It's that TIME!" The 3 P's plus answering any of your gardening concerns. Send in your questions or concerns when you register for this zoom talk at www.ramga.org. **Please pass the word on to your friends, families, and neighbors. This will also help get the word out about the upcoming virtual Plant Sale, May 8 – 14th!**

Tuesday, May 4, 6 – 8pm. "The Right Plant in the Right Place with John Magee", 2021 Spring and Fall Landscaping with Virginia Natives Webinar Series. <https://www.plantvirginiannatives.org/webinars-landscaping-with-virginia-natives>

Ecological Landscape Alliance, Wednesday Walks in the Garden, Free Webinar series, Noon – 1pm. <https://www.ecolandscaping.org/free-webinar-series-wednesday-walks-in-the-garden/>

- Wednesday, May 5, Webinar: "Beauty and Biodiversity at Cornell's Mundy Wildflower Garden"
- Wednesday, May 12, Webinar: "The Journey of Edible Landscapes"

Saturday, May 15, 2pm – 3pm. May Virtual Garden Workshop: "Tomatoes and Tomato Diseases" presented by the Piedmont Master Gardeners. Registration required: www.piedmontmastergardeners.org/events/

Sunday, May 23, 2 – 4pm. Free Virtual class, "Identify and Control Non-Native Invasive Plants", Charlottesville Tree Stewards, <https://www.charlottesvilleareatreestewards.org/learn-about-trees/take-a-tree-steward-class/>

Does anyone have any great ideas about a Welcome Back celebration in September? Ordinarily we have a potluck picnic at 5pm at the VMI McKethen pavilion the last Thursday in September. I am hoping by September more restrictions will be lifted and we can all get back together in person again. We don't necessarily have to have our celebration on a Thursday or at KcKethen Pavilion. Let me know your thoughts –

Faith

BOOK REVIEWS

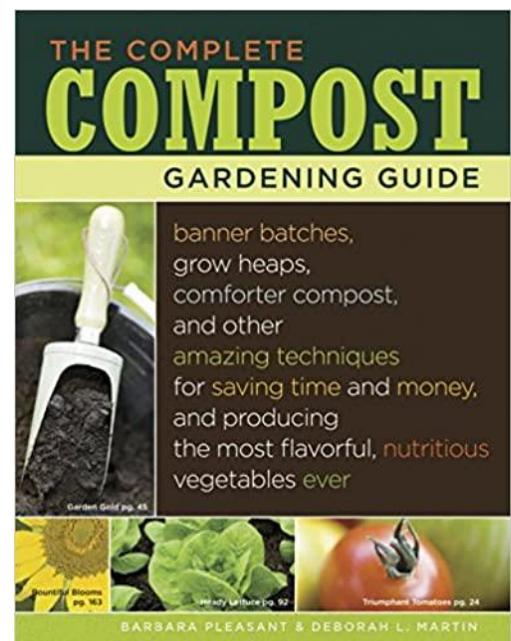
By Tamara Teaff

Reviewer's Note: With RAMGA making its on-the-road debut of the traveling compost exhibit, this month's book reviews focus on the topic of composting.

The Complete Compost Gardening Guide, Banner Batches, Grow Herbs, Comforter Compost, and Other Amazing Techniques for Saving Time and Money, and Producing the Most Flavorful, Nutritious Vegetables Ever, written by Barbara Pleasant and Deborah L. Martin. Storey Publishing .2008.

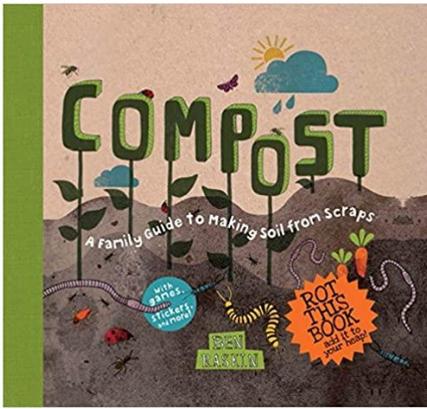
This is perhaps the longest title I have ever typed but there is a reason for that. Tagging this book as a comprehensive composting and organic gardening guide is a bit of an understatement. The book encourages gardeners to use and recycle organic matter in the yard and around the house. The authors argue that making your own compost reduces your personal carbon footprint. You do not need to get into your car and drive to buy what the authors call "designer dirt". They teach you how to make your own "dirt". And if that is not enough of a motivator, they remind you that you will be keeping your "garbage" out of the local landfill.

For a guidebook, this one is readable and entertaining. There are excerpts from "Barb's Journal" where you learn about Barbara Pleasant's journey as a gardener. The authors explain about the different kind of composting methods with clever titles such as "Pits of Plenty", "Hot Hospital", "Layered Craters". Beautifully illustrated with colorful photos, there are charts and graphs to enhance the reader's understanding. The authors define Home Goals of Composting: on-site recycling, improved soil quality, self-sufficiency, and healthy productive plants. All good reasons for composting. Treat yourself by becoming acquainted with this book. It adapts well to skimming with a cup of tea on a rainy afternoon or a ready source for your gardening reference shelf.



Compost, a Family Guide to Making Soil from Scraps, written and illustrated by Ben Raskin. RB Boulder .2013.

Although recommended for parents to use with their kids, this book explains what anyone needs to know about making compost, along with the creatures that make compost happen. The beginning of the book states that rotting is nature's way of recycling the nutrients, found in decaying plants, to help new plants



grow. The cover even encourages you to “rot this book”. Add it to your compost! But before you compost the book, be sure to check-out the worm measuring chart, the worm game, compost Bingo, the worm identification guide, and the stickers. The book is full of interesting facts such as “there are at least 100 million bacteria in one teaspoon of soil”. Who knew? Cartoon worms, each with a speech bubble alerting the reader to “wormy facts”, abound throughout the book. Oh, and before you compost the book, be sure to register for the Worm Lovers Society and receive an official membership card. This book is a one stop guide to everything composting.

Faith's Garden Notes...

One of my favorite native grasses is Switchgrass (*Panicum virgatum*) and I hear there are a couple cultivars in the sale. I have two: ‘Shenandoah’ (and how could I resist that name!) and ‘Dallas Blues’.

Switchgrasses have many characteristics to recommend them. They are drought tolerant and deer resistant. And they like our clay soil. In fact, if the soil is too rich, they tend to flop. Full sun is best. Their form is an upright clump. Switchgrasses do not self sow. Instead, they increase quite slowly by rhizomes, but are easy to divide. One of my favorite aspects of the plant is their summer bloom – lots of tiny white to pink to red flowers. With morning dew, a splash of the hose or after a rainfall, the flowers catch the water and sparkle in the sunshine. In addition, switchgrass seed heads provide food for the birds in the winter.

As with many grasses, cut back the clumps in early spring. For taller grasses, we bind them with string and cut them to about 18” or so and then burn them to the ground with a propane torch, usually in mid-March. This works great and doesn’t leave those 6-8’ or so of unsightly dead grass.



‘Shenandoah’ Switchgrass
www.midwestgroundcovers

The cultivar ‘Shenandoah’ gets to be about 3’ tall or so and is one of the shorter switch grasses. Its green blades have red tips that darken through the summer to burgundy in late June. In summer there are tiny pinkish red flowers.



'Dallas Blues' is a taller grass, topping out at about 5-6'. The grayish blue blades are wider than 'Shenandoah' and its summer bloom has more of a purplish hue. It looks great next to some of the bluish conifers.

You might have heard of switchgrass used as a biofuel – so, ornamental and useful, though you would have to grow fields of switchgrass to get the fuel!

'Dallas Blues' Switchgrass

www.monrovia.com/dallas-blues-switch-grass.html.
<https://www.monrovia.com/dallas-blues-switch-grass.html>

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

Faith Vosburgh, Editor
Penny Wilson, Proofreader

Virginia Cooperative Extension programs and e /affirmative action employer. Issued in furtherance of Cooperative Extension work, employment are open to all, regardless of age, color, disability, gender, gender identity, gender expression, national origin, political affiliation, race, religion, sexual orientation, genetic information, veteran status, or any other basis protected by law. An equal opportunity Virginia Polytechnic Institute and State University, Virginia State University, and the U.S. Department of Agriculture cooperating. Edwin J. Jones, Director, Virginia Cooperative Extension, Virginia Tech, Blacksburg; M. Ray McKinnie, Administrator, 1890 Extension Program, Virginia State University, Petersburg

