

December 2020  
January 2021

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# Into the Garden

## President's Letter

*Faith Vosburgh*

What a year this has been! It has been an unusual year for our Master Gardener group, too. Although I've met our 2020 class of MG students several times, I don't think, once the masks come off, that I will recognize many of them. Fortunately, I have that great group photograph Bob Kovach took of the class to prod my memory. Stick that on your refrigerator, everyone.

Speaking of the class of 2020, our hats go off to our devoted Class Steering Committee, headed by Peggy Agnor and Tamara Teaff. They persevered, along with ingenuity and help from their committee, in fielding a new class despite the COVID-19 handicaps of masks and social distancing. Several of those interns are now fully fledged Master Gardeners. Virus restrictions curtailed work on our schoolyard gardens this year, but work continued by loyal MGs at the Paxton House, Boxerwood, and the Buena Vista Visitors Center with masked faces and distancing. It certainly helps that gardening is an outdoor activity! We started laying the groundwork for a new

demonstration/learning garden on Village Way, down the road from the Habitat houses off of Greenhouse Way. The Plant



Clinic is working with the Help Desk in beginning a series of Zoom presentations on various gardening topics. And we cannot forget the very successful non-contact, socially distanced plant sale under the leadership of Peggy Bateson, Margaret Howard, Jan Smith and Sandra Martis. Thank you, everyone. What an amazing bunch of people! Gardeners are the best.

We will have our challenges next year. Your guess is as good as mine as to when things will return to a new normal. The biggest challenge will be reengaging our membership. Another trial will be a new volunteer management system from Virginia Tech to replace VMS. But we gardeners know how to handle challenges. Some would say gardening itself is a challenge – and I wouldn't disagree.

## Waste Reduction Roundtable Update

By Phyllis Fevrier

Rockbridge Area Master Gardeners have a seat at the Rockbridge Waste Reduction Roundtable.

This group of local citizens will meet quarterly but share information when needed about their common effort. See below for more information on the Waste Reduction Roundtable.

Our responsibilities as Master Gardeners grow as we find opportunities to demonstrate earth-friendly practices. Many of our demonstration gardens serve this purpose to educate the public and ourselves. I would love to know what recycling efforts you are doing at your project site. I will be reaching out to you soon to hear your story. Or if you would like any help getting started, please contact me at [phylnfred@gmail.com](mailto:phylnfred@gmail.com).

Meanwhile, here are some of the practices we are hoping to see more often.

- Reuse of plant sale pots (return pots to Boxerwood)
- Reduce use of all single-use plastics when possible
- Recycle nutrients through use of compost bins, brush piles, weed bins, leaf mold, and mulch chips.
- Educating community and ourselves about proper disposal of herbicides, pesticides, oils, and fertilizers
- Educating community about composting and nutrient recycling in their own landscapes

The Waste Reduction Roundtable's mission statement is to facilitate organizational sharing for coordinated waste reduction actions that result in a more sustainable, healthier community.

Here are some of those organizations with websites for more information on plastic recycling, composting:

Virginia Plastic Pollution Prevention Network ( <https://virginia-plastic-pollution.business.site/> ), Green Mountain Technologies ( <https://compostingtechnology.com/> ) and Virginia Conservation Network ( <https://compostingtechnology.com/> ).

AND we hope you can join us for a talk by Tom Stanley on incentivizing regenerative agricultural practices December 9th at 7pm

HAPPY HOLIDAYS, EVERYONE!



*Lucia Owens (above) and Jeanne DeSantis (below) recycling nutrients in place*



*Composting operation at Paradox Farm*



*Compost system at the Vosburghs*



## VOLUNTEERS NEEDED...

Do you have any experience in desktop publishing, videography, or graphic design? We need experts in all of these categories. Contact me, Faith, [fvosburgh@gmail.com](mailto:fvosburgh@gmail.com), if interested and we can talk more.

**Boxerwood** - social distanced volunteering continuing by 3-6 folks to maintain pollinator, native plant, and rain gardens. Phyllis is opening up Saturdays for volunteers to accumulate hours. Completed design and planting around the expanded catch basin/rain garden in November. MGers from Boxerwood assisted in the tree planting riparian buffer effort at Kendal along Ross Rd and Woods Creek. Planning and preparations for fall/winter are underway. VOLUNTEERS NEEDED.

**Buena Vista Visitors Center** - 4-5 volunteers continue working to maintain the BVVC. Work completed in front and at entrance to clear beds and prepare for some replanting. Pine chips were placed on top of black landscape fabric along the path near the fence. Efforts previously to diminish weed growth (corn gluten) were utilized to minimize weed germination. Preparations for fall include planting crimson clover. Landscape fabric was used to cover the deer-damaged area worked up with corn gluten. The BVVC group continues their porch talks at the end of volunteering to discuss questions and learning.  
VOLUNTEERS NEEDED.

**Paxton House** - Socially distanced volunteering continues with 3-6 folks doing garden maintenance and learning about historical Paxton gardens. Lori has set up a google drive to share general plant info including cultivation and use of various herbs with volunteers. The group plans to gather on Nov 19th for their last 2020 garden blast. Plans are to discuss best 2020 garden moments and what to plant in 2021. VOLUNTEERS NEEDED.



*Paxton House crew, L to R: Keri Gould, Sharron Burgess, Lori Wood, Lucia Owens, Jane Howell*

## FYI...

**From Bob Kovach, RAMGA Records Chair:** Don't forget to update your volunteer hours and continuing education hours for 2020. You can log on to the Volunteer Management system (VMS) by accessing the RAMGA website ([www.ramga.org](http://www.ramga.org)), clicking on the "Members Section" and click on "Volunteer Management System". If you do not remember your sign on to VMS, or the password for the "Members Section", contact Bob Kovach at [bobkovach@embarqmail.com](mailto:bobkovach@embarqmail.com)

**Master Gardener College 2021 Update:** MG College will be held virtually as part of the International Master Gardener College VA Tech is hosting this year. For more information: <https://www.internationalmastergardener.com/about/>

**There will not be a new Rockbridge Area Master Gardener class held in 2021, but we still need to recruit for 2022. Pass the word to your friends, family and neighbors.**

**SEED SWAP from Karen Lyons:** January 23rd is the target date for our 3rd annual RAMGA Seed Swap. Due to the pandemic, we are planning a virtual event with a listing of seeds on our RAMGA website prior to the event. You will be able to make your selections for a nominal fee (required by PayPal) and pick them up later from a convenient spot in Lexington. Additional details will be made available in an upcoming Tuesday email blast and on our website by mid-January. Wouldn't you like to grow this beautiful Monkshood grown by Aline McKenna, pictured at right?



**CONGRATULATIONS** to Joy McKee, Class of 2020 who recently completed her 50 volunteer hours to become an official RAMGA Master Gardener volunteer!

## NEWS FROM THE HELP DESK....

By Karen Lyons and Katherine Smith

### Bug of the Month: Tent Caterpillar

It is difficult to think about Spring as the leaves fall and the temperatures drop. But it will be here before you know it, with all its splendors and challenges. One of those challenges is the infamous tent caterpillar, *Malacosoma americanum*, recognized for those unsightly webs of squirming insects spoiling the beauty of our fruit and landscape trees.

As MG Katherine Smith points out there are two good times when gardeners can intercept this pest's life cycle, and one of them would be now. During winter, the egg clusters that were laid in late summer become visible and are easy to remove. (See photo for close-up of egg mass.)

The next opportunity comes as the unfound egg clusters hatch in spring and begin to weave their unsightly tents, usually in a tree crotch. These can be manually removed by inserting a stick and twisting to loosen the web. If left undisturbed, the caterpillars will begin to wander off after they have either defoliated their birth-tree or the leaves become too tough for them to ingest.

Mother nature may assist in control of the tent caterpillar through viruses, fungus or predation by small mammals, spiders, or birds, especially Blue Jays and Cuckoos.

For more information, refer to Fact Sheet by the New Hampshire Extension "Fall webworm & Eastern Tent Caterpillar": <https://extension.unh.edu/resource/fall-webworm-eastern-tent-caterpillar-fact-sheet> .



Eastern tent caterpillar egg mass. Credit: Alan T. Eaton

## Abbreviated Board Minutes, October 9, 2018

1. Treasurer's Report (Margaret Fletcher): \$2200 was received from closing out the account of Lexington Horticultural Symposiums.
2. Class Steering (Peggy Agnor and Tamara Teaff): Virginia Tech is raising the cost of printed Handbooks, although they can be downloaded for free.
3. Plant Clinic (Vera Winkler): The plant clinic team is looking into holding virtual plant clinics.
4. School and Demonstration Gardens (Dave Bryer): **Motion: The Board approved a project to develop a teaching garden at Village Way across from Grace Presbyterian Church.**
5. New Business: Karen Lyons of the Help Desk noted that the Help Desk team would like to provide monthly reports to the Board. They would also like to increase their activities with the Plant Clinic team.

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## Continuing Education Opportunities:

(Local opportunities in **Bold**)

Stuck inside this winter? Take advantage of all the great Continuing Education offerings on the Master Gardener intranet including their new webinar series on "IDs and Diagnoses" on January 26, February 2, February 9, and Feb. 16 at 1pm. Register in advance. This is a must for Help Desk and Plant Clinic teams. <https://virginiatech.zoom.us/meeting/register/tZUodu6qqzguHt3jJ7D6UtyYZvho8T-3hl81>

Did you know you can get 3 hours of Continuing Ed. just by reading a book on this list? [https://docs.google.com/document/d/11GcvQr\\_wm\\_oH2BaNCLZuXzY6POD2f0FXD0TgY5DIBs8/edit?usp=sharing](https://docs.google.com/document/d/11GcvQr_wm_oH2BaNCLZuXzY6POD2f0FXD0TgY5DIBs8/edit?usp=sharing)

New Directions in the American Landscape (NDAL) and the American Horticultural Society are going to be teaming up to offer a series of home gardener virtual programs this coming January through March. Piet Oudolf (my idol) will be giving one of the talks. I will let you know when the registration opens.

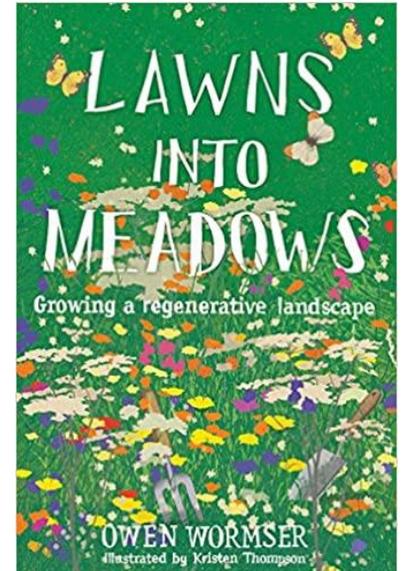
## BOOK REVIEWS....

By Tamara Teaff

***Lawns into Meadows, Growing a Regenerative Landscape***, written by Owen Wormser with illustrations by Kristen Thompson. Stone Pier Press. 2020.

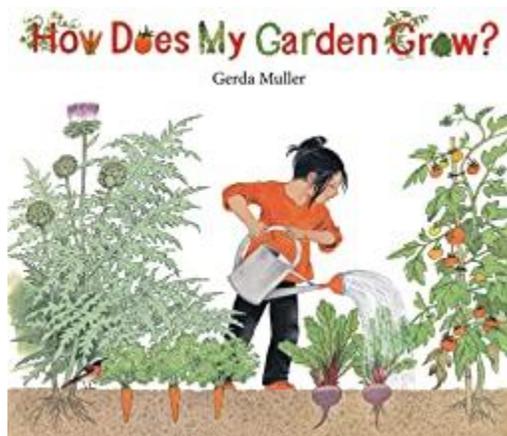
As we all know too well, lawns create havoc on our natural ecosystems. The author of the book is a landscape designer who realized that lawns equal an environmental wasteland. He set a professional goal to plant meadows and create beneficial wildlife and pollinator habitats.

In this book, the author offers a compelling argument for planting meadows. He presents easy-to-comprehend facts that support planting meadows. There is discussion as how meadows have built-in resilience to climate extremes and “park” loads and loads of carbon. Included in the book are pages on specific types of meadow grasses and flowers. Included are accounts of plant reliance, regional compatibility, soil conditions, and deer resistance. Attached to the plant descriptions are the author’s personal anecdotes about each plant along with the importance of incorporating native plants in the meadow design. From evaluating the land and soil, creating a design, turning over the lawn, selecting the correct plants to fit your particular ecosystem, sowing the seeds, maintaining the meadow, this book has every piece of information you need to plant and maintain a successful meadow. There are helpful graphics and charts as well as black and white illustrations of each suggested plant. ***How to Transform Lawns into Meadows*** strikes a tone of hope for the environment. This book is part of Stone Press’s Citizen Gardening series.



***How Does my Garden Grow?***, written and illustrated by Gerda Muller. Floris Books. 2016.

This picture book is about a little girl, named Sophie, who lives in the city and thinks that all the vegetables she eats come from the supermarket. One summer, Sophie visits her grandparents in the country. Grandpa John provides Sophie with her own small garden along with tools and packets of seeds. And Sophie’s adventure begins. She learns about ladybugs that eat aphids and the importance of bees as pollinators. She discovers that when she eats broccoli, she is really eating a flower for dinner, and that some vegetables grow underground. Sophie even learns how to make compost.



The illustrations are a mix of vignettes from the story and contain garden elements such as insects, tools, and a flower becoming a pea pod. Cut-aways of the garden show plant roots, root vegetables, and underground animals. An added feature are the

end papers which illustrate the eight vegetable families (fruits, bulbs, tubers, flowering, stem, pulses, leafy, and root vegetables). It is important to note that this book is a translation from French. There are a few words that might need to be further translated, such as gherkins and courgettes (zucchini). Also, there are animals not common to America highlighted in the story (wild hedgehog).

***How Does my Garden Grow?*** follows Sophie through all the seasons of gardening. In the end, she applies her gardening skills to create a garden on the balcony of her city apartment and shares the harvest with her neighbors and friends. This book presents a delightful discussion of the benefits of vegetable gardening for both the novice or the experienced gardener.

## **Other Garden Books of Interest this Year (from Faith):**

### **Winners of The American Horticultural Society Book Awards 2020:**

- *Fruit Trees for Every Garden: An Organic Approach to Growing Apples, Pears, Peaches, Plums, Citrus, and More.* By Orin Martin with Manjula Martin. My hat is off to anyone who can grow fruit organically!
- *The Melon* by Amy Goldman; photographs by Victor Schragger. Amy Goldman's books are always a feast for the eyes. She has also done a book on heirloom tomatoes, an earlier melon book (another AHS winner), and one on squash.
- *The Scentual Garden: Exploring the World of Botanical Fragrance* by Ken Druse; botanical photographs by Ellen Hoverkamp. I have many of Ken Druse's books and I just ordered this one. They, too, are beautiful and informative. In garden books, I think great photographs make all the difference.

A couple other books on my Christmas list include:

*Windcliff: A Story of People, Plants, and Gardens* by Daniel J. Hinkley. Dan Hinkley and his partner, Robert Jones are amazing gardeners, most known from their now defunct Washington rare plant nursery and garden, Heronswood. This book talks about the development of their new garden (not open to the public) on a beautiful site overlooking the Puget Sound.

*Uprooted* by Page Dickey. This well-known garden writer writes about creating her new garden in northeastern Connecticut and "starting over" after leaving her well-established and often written about Duck Hill in upstate New York. Here is a lesson for all of us aging gardeners.

Hmmm – both of these books talk about being uprooted. Do I have a theme here? Although I have to say as awful as this year has been, I have never enjoyed – or appreciated – my garden more. How about you?

## *Penny's Garden Musings....*

### Sugi, the National Tree of Japan

My first experience with *Cryptomeria japonica* was at Buffalo Springs Herb Farm. It is a great evergreen to decorate with. We used it at Christmas time to decorate around the farm. It has become one of my favorite evergreens. I should have researched it a little more before I planted one. I wasn't aware that it could grow to 230 feet tall and have a trunk diameter of 13 feet. I'm hoping mine doesn't get that tall!

There are several cultivars to choose from. *Cryptomeria* definitely makes a statement in the garden.



*Penny Wilson's Cryptomeria, Up Close and Personal*



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