



# The Gardeners' Gazette

Newport News Master Gardeners  
<http://www.nnmastergardeners.org>

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Virginia Cooperative Extension

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## Go Green Expo 2020: The show goes on

Instead of a crowd gathering at Brittingham-Midtown Community Center, customers drove up to collect rain barrel and vermiculture kits to take home and build. Eager plant buyers donned masks to check out the plant sale in Janet Rash's driveway. The new NNMGA YouTube channel attracted almost 200 views.

This is how Go Green works in the age of COVID 19. Several small or online

activities took the place of the large-scale Expo. The rain barrel workshop started with customers driving through at the community center to pick up their kits and then assemble them at home with the help of a video on the Go Green YouTube channel, although the MGs at the Center provided some assistance, particularly with drilling holes. Ray Robinson called the event **continued on page 5**



Who are those masked MGs? Connie Horn-Clark, Dale Timmer and Ray Robinson assist a customer at the rain barrel workshop.

## October Happenings

**While many of our in-person events have been cancelled due to COVID-19, some live activities have been scheduled. Check our Facebook page, VMS or contact the event chairperson.**

### October 7

**NNMGA Monthly Business Meeting 10 a.m. (9:30 a.m. Social Time)**

Meeting will be conducted via Zoom. Sign-in information will be emailed to members.

Recipe Show and Tell. See article on page 3 for more information.

Milestone award recipients will also be recognized.

### October 5

**Grin & Grow Maintenance 8:30 a.m.**

Riverview Farm Park

Masks and social distancing required.

Bring your own tools, water and snacks. Contact Janet Rash for more information.

### October 11

**November Newsletter Deadline**

Submit stories, pictures, recipes, notes, events etc. to [verderosachristina@yahoo.com](mailto:verderosachristina@yahoo.com). If you have been working on a special project in your garden, please send pictures.

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## Go Green Expo on YouTube

Our Go Green YouTube channel has over 20 videos on a range of subjects with more to come. Search for Go Green Newport News Channel and become a subscriber.



# Homegrown National Park

The President's Message I wrote in February of 2019 was about reconsidering my priorities. In it I encouraged all of us to think about what we present to the public when working with them as community horticulture educators and place an emphasis on the use of native plants whenever possible. That article was inspired, in part, by Doug Tallamy's book, *Bringing Nature Home*.

This past month, our Book Study Group's selection was Tallamy's inspiring follow-up work, *Nature's Best Hope*. The group's discussion was filled with passionate enthusiasm for action, so much so that the Board has decided to make it the starting point for our December regular NNMGA meeting program. I'm hoping that each of us will bring to that meeting a long list of ideas for how to best encourage our community to take part in the **Homegrown National Park** movement. Why should you buy a copy and read it? Doug states it better than I. "Ninety-five percent of the country has been logged, tilled, drained, grazed, paved, or otherwise developed. Our rivers have been straightened and dammed (damned), and several no longer reach the sea. Our air has been polluted, our aquifers pumped nearly dry and our climate changed for centuries to come. We have purposefully imported thousands of species of plants, insects, and diseases from other lands, which have decimated many native plant communities on which local food webs depend, and we have carved the natural world into tiny remnants, each too small and too isolated to support the variety of species required to sustain the ecosystems that support us."

I'll assume he got your attention - he certainly got mine. He then makes the case for taking action. "In this book I argue that we can no longer tolerate

actions that degrade our local environment; there are simply too many of us for the earth to sustain the cumulative impact. A neutral impact is not good enough, either, for we no longer have the option of leaving things in their current degraded state. We must now act collectively to put our ecosystems back together again. What is needed is nothing less than a cultural transformation: rather than acting as if we were independent of nature, we need to behave a little more reverently or respectfully toward nature, as if we were the product and beneficiary of a vibrant natural world, rather than its master."

There is the call to action. The call to have us all do something about the "80 percent of the plants in our yard that are species that evolved in Asia, Europe, or South America - species that are unable to support the complex food webs necessary to sustain ecosystem functioning in our area." I can tell you that I have already begun to remove non-natives from my yard, specifically my mother's azaleas, to make room for plants that contribute to the ecosystem. I was old school, a gardener who, as Tallamy described, made plant choices based on aesthetics. "...it is tempting to garden only for beauty, without regard to the

many ecological roles our landscapes must perform. All too often, such narrow gardening goals result in a landscape so low in ecological function that it drains the vitality from the surrounding ecosystem."

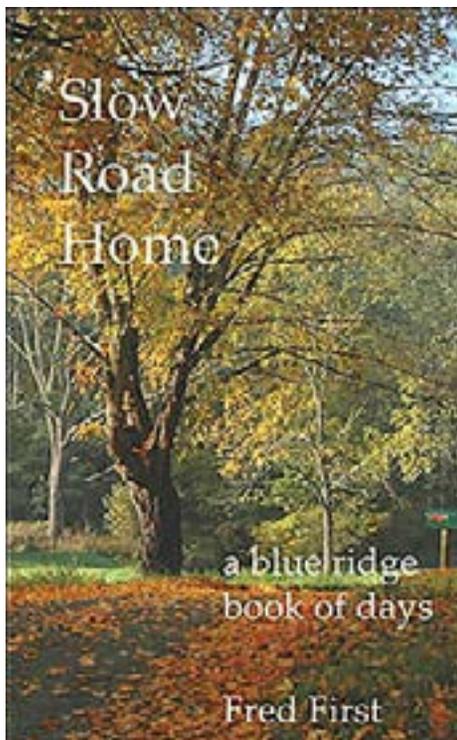
Will Tallamy help us find the motivation to look critically at our own landscapes while encouraging us to work with the community beyond to "adopt a new relationship with nature." This will be the topic of our discussion in December. Imagine the depth and breadth of our ideas when each of us comes to the table armed with inspiration from reading his work. Yes, I encourage each of you to join the members of the Book Study Group and read *Nature's Best Hope* by the December meeting. And, I encourage everyone, whether you've read the book or not, to participate in the discussion because we will benefit from your ideas and passion. I look forward to incorporating your suggestions into new programming we will create this winter that follows up on Tallamy's call for a **Homegrown National Park**. With your help, our community can become a leader in this work to "adopt a new relationship with nature."

Wishing you inspired reading,  
-Janet



**The steps toward achieving the goals of the Homegrown National Park may involve some drastic changes. Janet has begun removing long-established azaleas. But the rewards of moving to natives will make it worthwhile.**

# Book Study Group News



The Book Study Group has chosen *Slow Road Home ~ a Blue Ridge Book of Days* as its November selection.

According to the overview on [www.bn.com](http://www.bn.com), “Author Fred First’s background as naturalist, teacher and photographer inform this collection of more than a hundred lyrical essays and stories, many originally shared with weblog readers in the author’s weblog, *Fragments from Floyd*.”

*Slow Road Home* is a book to read slowly as it unfolds through the seasons. Readers have commented that having read through once, they intend to read it again. Another reader states that *Slow Road* stays by her bedside where ‘it just makes me thankful and at peace, and I go to bed looking forward to what the next morning will bring.’ If you live in or long for the southern mountains, the pages of this book will remind you of the unique sights, sounds and smells of

Virginia’s Appalachian hills and home. Fred First is a physical therapist who practices part time at a clinic near Radford, Virginia and teaches as adjunct faculty for the biology department at Radford University. He lives on the headwaters of the Roanoke River in a remote part of Floyd County, Virginia, with his wife Ann and yellow lab, Tsuga.”

The group will meet via Zoom Monday, October 26 at 10 a.m. Contact Jimmie Espich to RSVP and to get the Zoom passwords. Book Study group participants get CE hours for reading and discussing the books. All Master Gardeners, including those in other units, are welcome to participate.

## Virtual picnic set for October meeting

We can’t be together for our annual NNMGA picnic this year, so instead we will hold a virtual picnic. NNMGA vice president Ashley Powell explained, “Our October 7 ZOOM meeting will feature our membership’s cooking skills. Choose a recipe you love which uses any of this summer ‘s vegetables. Prepare it in advance and we will take turns “showing” and “telling” about your recipes (wish we could be “tasting”). Mention whether you had success growing any of the ingredients in your own garden.”

Email the recipes to Ashley Powell at [amp23606@gmail.com](mailto:amp23606@gmail.com). They will be posted in a special section of our VMS (information to follow) and may appear in a future newsletter.

## Recipe Corner

Alison DeWitt has been taking the bounty of her garden and turning it into delicious food in her kitchen.

‘Here she presents Bruschetta with garden harvest - Quadro roma tomatoes and Genovese sweet basil. She made a balsamic vinegar reduction to drizzle on top. For detailed information on how to make this recipe, go to:

<https://natashaskitchen.com/classic-bruschetta-recipe/>

### FB professionalism

We invite all our NNMGs to become active participants on our Facebook group page. If you’re new to the page, we remind you that this is our official public face, so always respond to questions or comments with the professionalism of a trained EMG. -Janet



# “Scaled down” plant sale is a big success



Plant Sale chair Gary Wright reported that the sale was a big success! “The weather cooperated; we had a good turnout; and everyone had a great time. We also made some money. Our total sales were much better than we expected.

“Thank you to everyone who donated plants and helped work the sale! Thank you also to those of you that bought plants. And, a very special thank you to Janet for letting us invade her home. It was great working and visiting with each of you.”



Photos by Janet Rash

## October Happenings

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October 19, 20

**TREX Pickup**

Please bring your plastic to the VCE office on these days only.

October 24

**Grin & Grow Maintenance**

**8:30 a.m.**

Riverview Farm Park

Masks and social distancing required.

Bring your own tools, water and snacks. Contact Janet Rash for more information.

October 26

**Book Study Group**

**10 a.m.**

*Slow Road Home* by Fred First

Meeting will be conducted via Zoom.

Contact Jimmie Espich for RSVP and password.

October 28

**NNMGA Board Meeting**

**10 am**

Meeting will be conducted by Zoom.

Contact Ashley Powell for more information.

*Fresh from the garden*



Alison DeWitt planted these Henderson Bush Limas. “Pollinators love the flowers. Humans at my house love the limas.”

# Grin and Grow Learning Garden just keeps growing



Master Gardeners are officially back to work in the Grin and Grow Learning Garden just in time to appreciate all the later summer, early fall activity. (Left and below right) the milkweed is providing a great place for caterpillars. (Bottom) The ninth themed garden, the Shade Garden, was installed Saturday, September 19. Planted under two weeping yaupon hollies, the garden includes heliobores surrounded by a variety of native plants including: *Heuchera americana*, native ginger, blue-eyed grass and partridgeberry.



photos by Alison DeWitt

## Go Green

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which attracted 20 people a success. "Some of our registrants are even interested in attending a workshop in 2021," Robinson said.

The fall plant sale normally is part of the Fall Festival rather than Go Green, but this year, like just about everything else, some new thinking was required. The sale was moved to Janet Rash's driveway but the new time and location worked out well. The sale raised over \$1,600 and most of the plants sold out. (See the story and pictures on page 4.) The YouTube channel was an innovation this year. As of September 20, the channel had 26 subscribers and 194 views. The most popular videos included the virtual tour of the Grin and Grow Learning Garden, the Rain Barrel and Vermiculture Workshops, and Go Green chair Charlie Tiedeken's introduction. YouTube channel coordinator Christina Verderosa also compiled playlists of videos from other organizations on lawn care, native plants, and tree care. The channel will remain up on YouTube and Verderosa hopes to add more videos to support the Master Gardeners' educational mission.

## More caterpillars



Janet Rash sent this photo of a Black Swallowtail caterpillar preparing to form a chrysalis.

# September Help Desk Highlights

It was a big month for critter questions and oak tree issues as the Help Desk continues to field a steady stream of questions.

A caller wanted to know if he should go ahead and plant fruit trees next year, since the 17-year cicada is expected. VCE ANR Program Assistant Jeffrey Williams explained that most adult cicadas don't eat much; they mate and lay eggs. The females can cause some damage since they make thin slits in the branches to lay their eggs. When the grubs hatch they enter the soil and feed on roots, but usually don't cause much damage. The insect questions continued with an inquiry about Fig Eater beetles. The homeowner was concerned that

they were in her yard and would cause serious damage. This particular beetle is harmless, but if she really wants to get rid of it, flooding is the most environmentally-friendly option. There are also chemical treatments.

Another question involved spider identification. A client sent a picture of a spider and Jeffrey said he was not sure of the exact species but it looked like a type of spiny backed orb weaver.

Christina Verderosa and Carol King answered a Tree Steward call about a Southern Red Oak. Leaves on the tree were turning brown and falling prematurely. The owner said the problem first surfaced about a month ago. There is another oak nearby which seemed to have the same condition, although less serious. Other trees were unaffected.

King and Verderosa studied the tree and said the condition looked like oak blight, although that is usually a spring-time problem. The lab at Virginia Tech is not accepting samples right now, but King took some samples and pictures to confer with Hampton VCE Agent Gaylynn Johnson, on this case and three other oak trees she had looked at recently.

King found that the Agricultural Research and Education Center in Virginia Beach would look at samples so she brought them from all the oaks. The diagnosis was leaf blister and the recommendation was to clean up the dead leaves around the trees and take other steps to avoid environmental stresses.

**-Jeffrey Williams and Christina Verderosa contributed to this report.**

## Discovering the secret space



These young visitors to Janet Rash's garden have found the perfect "secret place," to observe the wonders around them. Photo by Janet Rash



The green fig eater beetle is mostly harmless.



Cicadas may be noisy, but they don't cause a lot of damage.

# VCE-Newport News Directory

Unit Coordinator/FCS Agent .....  
Sonja Mitchell  
ANR Program Assistant...Jeffrey Williams

## NMGA Officers

President .....Janet Rash  
Vice President ..... Ashley Powell  
Secretary ..... Alison DeWitt  
Treasurer .....Jimmie Espich

## Committee Chairs:

Vol. Coordinator ..... Vanessa Connell  
Apparel ..... Ashley Powell  
Community Gardens ..... Beth Smallridge  
Finance .....Jimmie Espich  
Go Green Expo ..... Charlie Tiedeken  
Grin and Grow Garden.....Janet Rash  
Co-chair ..... Sue Campbell  
Help Desk.....Peggy Armstrong  
Historian .....Cathy Haskell  
Horticultural Therapy..... Kathy Gallo  
Hospitality ..... Jo Blum  
Co-chair ..... Nancy Morin  
Land Care Stewards ..... Vanessa Connell  
Newsletter Editor ..... Christina Verderosa  
New Members .....Janet Rash  
Co-chair .....Cindy Graham  
Nominating ..... Anne Winkworth  
Plant Sales .....Gary Wright  
Co-chair ..... Judy Gounley  
Publicity .....Seth Fisher  
Rain Barrels .....Ray Robinson  
Co-chair ..... Charlie Tiedeken  
Remote Help Desk ..... Alison DeWitt  
Co-chair ..... Christina Verderosa  
School Programs .....Ray Robinson  
Co-chair .....Dale Timmer  
Speakers' Bureau.....Barb Foley  
Tree Stewards..... Christina Verderosa  
TRES Recycling .....Harold Hairston  
Co-chair .....Connie Horn-Clark  
Trips/Special Events .....Cathy Haskell  
Co-chair .....Julie Mericle  
VMGA.....Peggy Fox  
Water Stewards .....Ray Robinson  
Web Site .....Beth Smallridge  
Record Keeper .....Janet Rash

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## New signs at Grin and Grow



The Grin and Grow Learning Garden is continuing to expand its educational mission and in particular to highlight native plants. The new sign calls attention to the Native Tree Grove. Photo by Janet Rash.