



The Gardeners' Gazette

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

Volume 23 Issue 11 November 2020

Virginia Cooperative Extension

739 Thimble Shoals Blvd., Suite 1009

Newport News, VA 23606-3562

757-591-4838



Newport News EMGs earn 2019 Milestone awards

November Happenings



Ray Robinson and Janet Rash earned 3,000 hour Milestone Awards for 2019.

Eight members of NNMGA were recognized at the October meeting with Milestone Awards for hours earned by December 31, 2019.

Two longtime members, Ray Robinson and Janet Rash, earned 3,000-hour certificates. Rash is the current president of NNMGA, but her major project through the last few years has been expanding the Grin and Grow Learning Garden in Riverview Farm Park into a community-learning garden for children and adults. Rash also launched the program that became the Go Green Expo.

Robinson is a past president of NNMGA who has been involved in many, many projects through the years. Two of his major accomplishments were to set up and operate the NNMGA website and to set up the Rain Barrel Workshops. These workshops have grown into one of NNMGA's best fundraisers.

Peggy Fox earned her 1,000-hour certificate. She has been NNMGA secretary and vice president as well as a "worker bee." On the state level, she is the Newport News representative to VMGA and editor of the VMGA newsletter.

Joyce Bennett, who earned her 500-hour award, has "participated in almost all programs," including the Go Green Expo, the Grin and Grow Garden and plant sales.

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

November 4

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.

Guest speaker Beth Smallridge
"Visit to the Monarch Butterflies"

November 7

Rain Barrel Workshop 12 p.m.

Curbside pickup at Brittingham-Midtown Community Center.

Register in advance preferred. Call 757-591-4838

Cost \$60

More information on page 3

November 11

November Newsletter Deadline

Submit stories, pictures, recipes, notes, events etc. to verderosachristina@yahoo.com. **If you have been working on a special project in your garden or kitchen or if you have visited an interesting garden, please send pictures.**

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Inside this issue...

2021 NNMGA Officers nominated

See page 4

President's Message

We need you for the Help Desk

At the October meeting we heard our NN VCE Unit Coordinator, Sonja Mitchell, talk about the importance of all the work we do as Master Gardeners, but specifically at the NN VCE Help Desk. I think a lot of us were surprised to hear that this service is a large part of our office's outreach to the public. And although much of our work has been sidelined, working with the public to answer questions or help solve problems has not been put on hold. What is different now is that, with Jeffrey's departure, there is no longer an ANR Associate in the office to respond to these calls. We must step up to help the few EMGs who have been carrying this responsibility for a long time.

What kind of calls do we get? Based on 2020 Help Desk data, here's a list of the call topics we received:

Insects - 20

Water issues - 3

Lawn - 8

Soil and tests - 10

Trees - 31

Vegetables - 16

Shrubs (often disease related) - 14

Flowers - 3

Plant identification - 6

Plant Disease - 2

Weeds - 6

Where are we at this time? Peggy Armstrong has very graciously offered to coordinate all calls and requests that come in from the Help Desk line and email, as well as the Contact Us page on our website. How's that for dedication? Additionally, Christina Verderosa coordinates all tree calls and Barb Foley handles lawn questions and Speaker's Bureau requests. Our Water and Land Care Stewards, Ray Robinson and Vanessa Connell, will continue to take care of those problems for our clients, and Cindy Graham will respond to questions about Master Gardener training.

Questions about vegetables will be handled by Alison DeWitt, Peggy Fox will serve as our weed and plant disease specialist, Charlie Tiedeken will respond to calls about insects, and Dale Timmer will respond to inquiries about soil quality and vermiculture. Jimmie Espich will continue to serve the community as the Healthy Landscapes chair - making arrangements for home visits when necessary.

How does the process work? Let's say you volunteer to answer questions about house plants. Peggy will send you an email with the client's contact information and related question. First, you will reply to the HD Volunteer Team that you have accepted that client's question. You will contact the client, gather any information you need and either answer the question if you can, or tell them you will be in touch soon with the information they seek. After you do your research, you send that info to the client through email or a phone call. Then you email Peggy telling her that the inquiry has been handled and a brief statement about the solution/response. That's it!

To be a part of this new expanded Help Desk Volunteer Team, please contact Peggy Armstrong. You don't need to be an expert to work the desk. Perhaps you've always wanted to learn more about house plants. This would be a great way to learn while helping our neighbors. Your time doing research could count toward your required Continuing Education hours.

I'm so proud that our members have stepped up to support this service to our community. The expanded Volunteer Team will enable us to quickly, efficiently and remotely conduct the business of the Help Desk. A heartfelt THANK YOU to you all!

—Janet

Get ready for December meeting and earn CE hours

The idea of a Home-grown National Park is the focus of our December meeting program. In addition to (or instead of) reading the book, *Nature's Best Hope*, you can watch these videos to hear from Doug Tallamy about saving nature one little yard or garden at a time! AND, you can earn CE hours reading and/or watching if you also attend the discussion during our program at the December meeting. You can earn up to six hours of required CE time!

Here are three options for accessing the information.

1. This is the link to the Doug Tallamy talk on YouTube about *Nature's Best Hope* presented by the WWF of Canada.

<https://youtu.be/iDRGryX1uVI>

(with the meeting discussion, earn 2 CE hours)

2. This is the link to a 1/2 hour public TV program *Growing a Greener World* that featured Doug Tallamy Oct. 10: https://www.youtube.com/results?search_query=Growing+a+Greener+World+1008

(with the meeting discussion, earn 1.5 CE hours.)

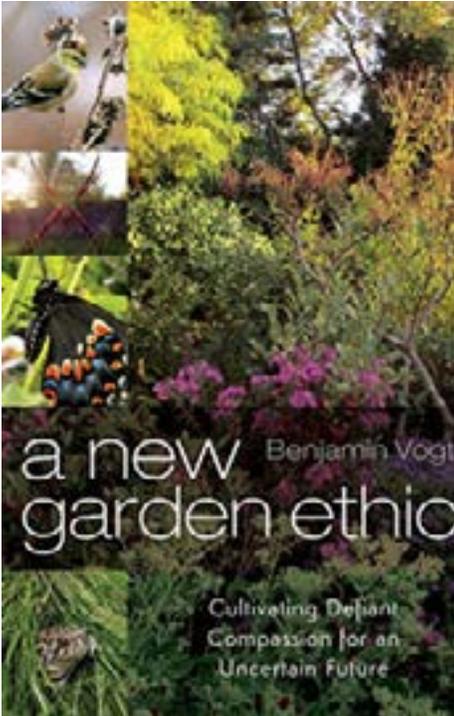
3. Or read the book, *Nature's Best Hope*. It can be purchased in ebook form, or you can buy a new or used copy online or at an independent bookstore. (you can earn up to six CE hours, depending on how long it took to read the book, if you also attend the meeting discussion.)

Contact Janet or Ashley if you have questions about December's program.



Book Study Group News

*Nothing is safe
from the deer!*



The Book Study Group will be continuing to look at the impact of native plants in the garden and in the environment at large. The November selection is *A New Garden Ethic* by Benjamin Vogt.

According to the book's jacket notes, "Plenty of books tell home gardeners and professional landscape designers how to garden sustainably, what plants to use, and what resources to explore. Yet few examine why our urban wild-

life gardens matter, and not just for ourselves, but for the larger human and animal communities.

"Author Benjamin Vogt addresses why we need a new garden ethic, and why we urgently need wildness in our daily lives — lives sequestered in buildings surrounded by monocultures of lawn and concrete that significantly harm our physical and mental health. He examines the psychological issues around climate change and mass extinction as a way to understand how we are short circuiting our response to global crises, especially by not growing native plants in our gardens. Simply put, environmentalism is not political, it's social justice for all species marginalized today and for those facing extinction tomorrow.

"By thinking deeply and honestly about our built landscapes, we can create a compassionate activism that connects us more profoundly to nature and to one another."

The group will discuss *A New Garden Ethic* at its meeting on Monday, Nov. 23 at 10 a.m. The meeting will take place on Zoom. For more information or to RSVP contact Jimmie Espich. All EMGs are welcome to participate and can earn CE hour for reading and discussing the books.

Drive-up rain barrel workshop scheduled for November 7

NNMGA will hold its second drive-up rain barrel workshop Saturday November 7 at noon at the Brittingham-Midtown Community Center.

Customers will come to the Community Center pavilion to pick up their barrel and the parts. They can take it home and watch the video on the Go Green

YouTube channel on how to assemble the barrel.

Cost of the barrel is \$60 and all proceeds go to fund EMG projects. To register in advance call the VCE office at 757-591-4383. You can also register and pay at the NNMGA website www.nnmastergardeners.org.



Beautyberry is considered a deer-resistant plant but this picture from Janet Rash shows that is not always the case. Actually many wild animals eat beautyberry and in some parts of the South, it is an important deer food. Whitetails will eat the plants stems, leaves and fruit. Although they prefer certain plants, deer will eat just about anything if they are hungry enough.

Monarchs at work



Don't cut down grasses at the end of summer! This was one of two Monarch butterfly chrysalises found in the native switchgrass at the Grin and Grow Learning Garden. (photo by J. Rash)

Board will have both new and familiar faces in 2021



The new slate of officers for 2021 was announced at the October meeting and will be voted on in November. Janet Rash (center) will serve a third year as president, while Gretchen Slack (left) and Sue Campbell (right) will join the board as vice president and secretary, respectively. Jimmie Espich will continue to serve a treasurer. The new Board will take office in January.

Plant Swap Corner

I have native seeds to share with anyone who would like to start them as a fun, overwintering activity. It's a "set it and forget it," "sow and let grow" effort. You need a few 6-10 inch pots filled with a mixture of compost-based potting mix. Sow seeds thickly on top of soil and cover lightly with coarse sand and water. Label pots and place in shady level spot for overwintering. Cover with wire mesh or screen to keep squirrels, etc. out. In early spring, there should be signs of germination. You can transplant seedlings in clumps of 3-6 in pots. Water regularly through summer, plant out in September. Seed-

lings could also be sold at our spring plant sale.

Native seeds available for sharing include liatris, New York ironweed, Stokes aster, New England aster, swamp rose mallow, red columbine, anise hyssop, zizia (golden Alexander), and Joe Pye weed. I have pictures of these if you want them.

If anyone has native seeds to share, I would love to be able to overwinter them--especially looking for purple coneflower and milkweed seeds.

Plant for pollinators--grow food, not lawn.

—Alison DeWitt

November Happenings

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November 16,17

TREX Pickup

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

November 23

Book Study Group

10 a.m.

A New Garden Ethic

by Benjamin Vogt

Meeting will be conducted via Zoom. Contact Jimmie Espich for RSVP and password.

November 25

NNMGA Board Meeting

10 am

Meeting will be conducted by Zoom.

Flowers of fall at Grandview



The trails and dunes of Grandview Nature Preserve in Hampton are full of goldenrod in full bloom. This is also a great plant to add to your garden. It's a native and pollinators just love it. And no, it won't bother your allergies!

photo by Christina Verderosa

October meeting features “virtual pot luck”

Normally, October is NNMGA picnic month where we would gather at Riverview Farm Park to enjoy lots of yummy food prepared by our fellow EMGs. This year we had to be satisfied with looking at a lot of delicious dishes on Zoom. But Ashley Powell has set up a recipes newsletter on VMS. Recipes will also be featured in *The Gardeners' Gazette* so everyone can have the opportunity to try these at home. Get started here:

Wellesley Coffee Cake

Sue Campbell

1 cup butter
2 cups sugar
2 eggs
1 cup sour cream
½ tsp. vanilla
½ tsp. almond extract
2 cups sifted flour
1 tsp. baking powder
¼ tsp. salt
4 tsp. sugar
1 cup chopped pecans
1 tsp. cinnamon

Cream butter and sugar. Add eggs one at a time beating after each addition. Add sour cream, vanilla and almond extract. Beat well.

Combine flour, baking powder and salt. Add to mixture and beat.

In a separate bowl, combine sugar, pecans and cinnamon for filling. Place 1/3 of the batter in well-greased and floured tube pan. Sprinkle with ¾ of the filling mixture. Spoon in rest of batter and sprinkle with remaining mixture.

Bake at 350 degrees for one hour.

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Israeli Salad

Ashley Powell

2 large tomatoes, diced
1 European cucumber, diced
½ medium red onion, diced
2 bell peppers (any color), diced. Recommend orange and yellows
Juice from 1 lemon (to taste)
1 ½ Tablespoons Italian seasoning
4 Tablespoons olive oil
Salt and pepper, to taste

Toss tomatoes, cucumber, red onion, and bell peppers with Italian seasoning, lemon juice, olive oil, salt and pepper.

Salad is ready to eat, or refrigerate

Fresh Corn Salad

Janet Rash

8 ears corn, shucked
6 fresh tomatoes, chopped (I used grape tomatoes)
2 cucumbers, peeled, seeded, and chopped
3 green onions, chopped
1 green pepper, seeded, and chopped (I used 1/2 pepper)
1 jalapeno, seeded and chopped (I used ½)
¼ cup chopped fresh cilantro
4 tbsp. white balsamic vinegar
3 tbsp. olive oil

Preheat grill to med-high. Brush corn with a little olive oil. Grill corn until lightly browned, turning often to cook evenly; cool. When cool enough to handle, cut corn from cobs.

Toss with tomatoes, cucumbers, green onions, pepper, jalapeno, cilantro, vinegar, and olive oil. Season with salt and pepper. Toss and marinate at least 2 hours in the refrigerator before serving. Bring to room temperature to serve.



Zucchini Chocolate Orange Cake

Jimmie Espich

2 1/2 cups all-purpose flour
1/2 cup unsweetened cocoa powder
2 1/2 tsps. baking powder
1 1/2 tsp. baking soda
1 tsp. salt
1 tsp. ground cinnamon
3/4 cup butter
2 cups white sugar
3 large eggs, beaten
1/2 cup milk
3 cups grated zucchini
1 tbsp. orange zest

Glaze:

1 1/4 cups confectioner's sugar
1/4 cup orange juice
1 tsp. vanilla extract

Preheat oven to 350 degrees (175 C). Grease and flour a bundt pan.

In a medium bowl, sift flour, cocoa, baking powder, baking soda, salt and cinnamon. Set aside.

In a large bowl, cream butter and sugar until fluffy. Add two eggs, two teaspoons vanilla and milk to the butter mixture. Stir in dry ingredients and mix until well-blended. Fold in zucchini and orange zest.

Pour into bundt pan. Bake until a toothpick inserted into center of cake comes out clean, 50-60 minutes.

Cool in the pan for 15 minutes before inverting onto a wire rack to cool completely. Before serving drizzle with glaze.

To make the glaze mix confectioner's sugar, orange juice and vanilla extract in a small bowl. Invert cake onto a serving dish and pour glaze over it.

Milestones

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Donald Sasso, who also earned his 500-hour award has been active in many programs, most notably the Farmers' Market information booth and the Boys and Girls Club gardens. "Donald adds spark and joy to any activity," NNMGA president Janet Rash said.

Three EMGs earned their 250-hour awards.

Harold Hairston serves as chair of the TREX committee, taking charge of collecting thousands of pounds of plastic film for the TREX recycling project. So far, at least six benches have been placed, two at Newport News City Park, two at Greenwood Elementary School and two at Discovery STEM Academy.

Sue Campbell has served on the Go Green Expo committee as vendor chair and is also co-chair of the Grin and Grow Garden. "I have enjoyed sharing my knowledge," she said.

Charlie Tiedeken has been chair of the Go Green Expo, worked with the Rain Barrel workshops, the Grin and Grow Garden and recently completed Tree Steward training. "I'm learning every day," he said.



Donald Sasso earned a 500-hour certificate.



Peggy Fox completed 1,000 hours.



Joyce Bennett earned her 500-hour award.

COVID 19 steps up role of social media for EMGs

Since the COVID 19 pandemic has severely limited in-person contact with the public, traffic on NNMGA Facebook pages has increased substantially. The Newport News EMGs have two Facebook accounts, the official NNMGA page and the NNMGA Group which is open to the public.

Christina Verderosa, who administers NNMGA social media accounts, found that the group has added members steadily since lockdowns began back in April and is now up to 141 members, including members of other Master Gardener units. Many of them have questions that previously might have gone to the Help Desk.

Any Master Gardener is encouraged to answer questions on the Facebook page and can earn hours for answering them. It is important to identify yourself in your response as a Master Gardener and to maintain the same professional standards that you would use in answering Help Desk questions. Follow up with an email to Peggy Armstrong with the person's name, the date, the question and your response.

The NNMGA page got a substantial boost, when it was used to advertise the virtual Go Green Expo. The page is up to 141 followers and the Go Green ads reached an additional 805 people.

The newest addition to the NNMGA social media presence is the Go Green YouTube channel. It contains locally produced videos as well as a series of playlists on specialized topics. As of Oct. 3, the channel has 29 subscribers, 136 views and 520 minutes watched. Although Go Green is officially over, the channel is still available and can be expanded. For more information contact Christina Verderosa.

VCE-Newport News Directory

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

NMGA Officers

PresidentJanet Rash
Vice President Ashley Powell
Secretary Alison DeWitt
TreasurerJimmie Espich

Committee Chairs:

Vol. Coordinator..... Vanessa Connell
Apparel..... Ashley Powell
Community Gardens Beth Smallridge
FinanceJimmie 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 MembersJanet Rash
Co-chair.....Cindy Graham
Nominating Anne Winkworth
Plant SalesGary Wright
Co-chair..... Judy Gounley
PublicitySeth Fisher
Rain BarrelsRay Robinson
Co-chair..... Charlie Tiedeken
Remote Help Desk Alison DeWitt
Co-chair..... Christina Verderosa
School ProgramsRay Robinson
Co-chair.....Dale Timmer
Speakers' Bureau.....Barb Foley
Tree Stewards..... Christina Verderosa
TRES RecyclingHarold Hairston
Co-chair.....Connie Horn-Clark
Trips/Special EventsCathy Haskell
Co-chair.....Julie Mericle
VMGA.....Peggy Fox
Water StewardsRay Robinson
Web SiteBeth Smallridge
Record KeeperJanet Rash

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Activity renewed at Causey's Mill buffer zone



Ashley Powell, Diane Fleming, Jimmie Espich, Charlie Tiedeken, Nancy Bender and Barb Foley donned their boots and masks to conduct a clean up at the Causey's Mill buffer zone. Newport News EMGs worked with the City and schools to clean out invasive plants and plant natives to enhance water quality and wildlife habitat in 2014. The project lapsed for awhile, but the Water Stewards have started an effort to revive interest. Espich has planned weekly clean-ups while the weather is still good. Contact her for more information.