



Trumpet Vine

Knowledge for the Community from Loudoun County Master Gardeners

Spring 2014

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LOUDOUN COUNTY MASTER GARDENER LECTURE SERIES

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April 3. *Dragonflies* with Kevin Munroe, Manager, Huntley Meadow Park

May 1. *Deer Resistant Gardens* with Robert Woodman, horticulturalist from Merrifield Gardens.

June 5. *Lavender* at Blooming Hill Lavender Farm in Philomont with Cyndie Rinek, owner. At Blooming Hill Lavender Farm.

July 10. *Tour of Banshee Reeks Nature Preserve* in Leesburg with Ron Circé, Manager. At Banshee Reeks

For more information, please visit our web site at loudouncountymastergardeners.org

Visit us on Facebook: Master Gardeners of Loudoun County, Virginia.

Spring! - Finally

This winter has held us in its grip right up until the end, but the vernal equinox or first day of spring arrives on March 20. Despite the snow and freezing temperatures, leaf and flower buds are swelling, the spring wildflowers are poised to erupt through the leaf litter and the bluebirds are trying out nesting boxes.

This is a good time to do some clean-up pruning to repair broken limbs and to assess your gardens to plan and prioritize the work that needs to be done.

This is also a good time to get some inspiration and motivation. Three events will help with that:

Fifth Annual Loudoun County Master Gardener Symposium

March 29th & 30th, at Leesburg's Ida Lee Recreation Center offers a wide variety of speakers and topics to interest any gardener. See the agenda and registration form at the end of this issue or see [Gardening Symposium](#) on the Loudoun County Master Gardener website.

2014 Spring Plant Sale allows you to give your garden a head start with all the basics – tomatoes, peppers, herbs of tried and true varieties. Preorder by March 28 and pick-up on April 19. See the order form at the end of this issue and full information on [Spring Plant Sale](#) on the Master Gardener website.

24th Annual Leesburg Flower & Garden Festival, April 26th and 27th. Visit the Master Gardener booth for gardening advice and a wonderful array of plants.



The Children's Education Team

The Children's Education Team was organized about two years ago to provide youth-oriented educational activities as part of the larger Loudoun County Master Gardener mission to educate county residents about safe, effective and sustainable landscape management practices. Examples of services we provide are activities at a community event, tour of the Demonstration Garden, tips on starting a school garden, and workshops for a class or small group. Some of our topics include: Dirt and Worms, Good Bug/Bad Bug, Pollinators and Edible Plant Parts. There were 52 requests last year during which time our team worked with over 300 youths.



While the Master Gardeners presented a talk in January on "Winter Gardening" to parents at Gum Springs Library, members of the CET had the opportunity to reach out to children who accompanied their parents by providing age appropriate activities. The activities included a discussion of parts of a plant, what it needs to grow and the various parts of plants that make up the vegetables we eat every day. The children, mostly early elementary school age, eagerly planted lettuce seeds and took them home to observe their growth. Probably the most fascinating part of the program for them was to observe earth worms with a magnifying glass and hear how important they are to the health of soil in a garden.



In February the CET spoke to a group of Brownies in Lansdowne on the subject of Monarch butterflies. Members of the team explained the round trip journey the butterflies make from Mexico northward, encompassing four generations of butterflies, and why milkweed is so important to their survival. The girls planted milkweed seeds that hopefully will become plants they can use in creating their own butterfly gardens. The Brownies also had a chance to collect pictures from catalogues of nectar producing flowers and native plants that they could add to their gardens as well.

The enthusiasm and curiosity of young children makes these activities very worthwhile indeed!

Beatrice Ashford, Master Gardener

Spring has Arrived in the Vegetable Garden!

Spring has come to the vegetable garden! The last vestiges of the long, cold and snowy winter have mostly faded. Throughout the area vegetables gardeners are shaking off the winter blahs, sorting their seed packets and searching for their garden gloves in anticipation of a new season.



Spring lettuce

However this year before getting to work in the garden in preparation for spring planting, caution is advised, *especially after this last winter*. The bitter cold froze most garden beds several inches down. While the sun is increasing in intensity each day, time and patience will be required for the soil to warm up and dry out. Working with soil which is too wet will create huge problems like soil compaction and recovering from this condition could take several years.

How to know when soil is ready to be worked? With a garden trowel, scoop up some soil, place in your hand and then make a fist squeezing the soil together. If the soil forms a sticky or wet ball which stays together then your soil is too wet. *Wait a few days and sample again*. If the ball crumbles slightly in your hand and/or some soil falls through your fingers than it is ready to work. If the soil will not make a ball at all than you're your soil is too dry and should not be worked until moisture has arrived.

Preparing the vegetable garden for spring planting depends upon how well you prepared the beds last fall. *Many gardeners prepare their beds in the fall for the next season*. All gardeners should begin the spring season by removing old plant debris which could harbor disease or overwintering insects. Pull newly sprouted weeds which have also felt the sun's warming rays and can't wait to grab their own share of water and nutrients from your vegetables seedlings. If you covered your beds with a winter mulch this should come off even if you cannot work the soil as it will help warm the soil faster. If your winter mulch has decayed enough do not throw away but turn into your soil and use as an organic matter amendment.

If no amendments were added to the soil last fall then early spring is the time to incorporate organic materials such as mature compost, leaf



Spring cabbage

mold mulch or other well decomposed organic material using a garden fork, broad fork or tiller. *Remember if using a tiller not to overdo it as it can cause soil particles to breakdown too much resembling dust which will not hold water or nutrients.* It is also time to incorporate dry fertilizers appropriate for vegetable gardens for those cool season vegetables which are awaiting their planting time over the next month or so. Make sure fertilizers are applied according to label instructions and have been watered in well before planting seeds or plants.

Install hardscape items such as fences to thwart animal intrusion. Build trellises which might become difficult to put up when tiny seedlings are getting started. Mulch pathways around your garden with wood shavings or other materials to keep from creating muddy trails as well as holding down weed growth between garden beds. Take stock of needed garden tools and supplies and purchase these.

When ready to plant in early and mid spring consider the many possibilities! Some cool season vegetables are spring or sugar snap peas (usually the first seed planted in late March), radishes, spinach, kale, lettuce, Swiss chard, carrots, cabbage or broccoli transplants and beets. You can find out more information about specific planting dates at the link listed:

http://pubs.ext.vt.edu/426/426-331/426-331_pdf.pdf .

Let us welcome spring and along with it, the promise of a new season filled with fresh vegetables!

Denise Palmer, Loudoun County Master Gardener



Planting Strawberries

Strawberries are celebrated every spring in festivals all over America. The taste of the first strawberry of the year is as exciting as the sight of the first robin in the spring.

Growing strawberries organically, whether in raised beds or containers is easy and inexpensive. Plants will bear a full crop within a year and are relatively simple to grow.

Buying Plants- Choose cultivars suited to your region. Your local Extension office or nursery can provide you with the proper information.

Cultivars (F.x ananassa) are divided into 3 types - *Junebearers*, *Everbearers* and *Day Neutrals*, which all flower at different times in response to day length.

- Junebearers- Bear fruit in June or July or as early as March or April in southern states. They produce many runners and spread rapidly and are prolific producers for 3 or 4 weeks. Growing in the 'matted row' method is considered the most effective means of propagation. That method is discussed later.
- Everbearers-Are the most productive in northern areas where summer brings extended daylight hours. They are not as prolific as Junebearers, but, are suited for an intermittent growing supply. Also, you get fruit the first year after planting. Remove the first set of flowers after planting, and pull up all the runners throughout spring and summer to increase production.
- Day Neutral- Bear fruit early fall to late winter in the temperate zones and from early summer until frost in colder climates. They are quite prolific but more temperamental about their growing conditions in that they fare poorly from heat and weeds.



Strawberries come in various forms. *Bareroot runners*, *Pot grown plants* and *cold stored runners*. This allows for flexibility in planting times.

- Bareroot runners- Should be planted as soon as they become available in stores and catalogs. They can be planted as late as autumn, but need to be deflowered in their first year to allow plants to become strong.
- Pot Grown- Plants can be planted as late as autumn or early winter or held until spring if weather does not permit. Keep them out of the cold to ensure flowering and they can be allowed to fruit their first year.
- Cold Stored Runners- Are held back in growth by keeping them artificially cool. Sold in early summer for immediate planting, when they rush into growth and produce a crop late in the season. They will fruit normally the following year.

Preparation & Planting

Raised Beds- First thing to do when starting a new bed is to take a **soil test**. You can obtain soil test kits and instructions from your local agricultural extension office. Prepare a weed free site that gets at least 8 full hours of sun a day. Well drained soil with a ph of 6-6.5 is ideal, although they can tolerate less than ideal conditions. Do not plant in areas where raspberries, strawberries or any solanaceous plants (tomatoes, peppers, eggplants etc) have previously grown. This is to avoid verticillium wilt or other diseases. Mix or till in 3" to 4" compost or leaf mulch. Plant in spring as soon as the soil has warmed. If you buy plants or receive them through the mail, you can store them in the refrigerator for a few days, or 'heel' them in a sloping trench outside of the wind, covering the roots lightly with soil or sand for up to a week.

When planting, dig holes deep enough so as to not bend roots. Shape soil into a mound and place plants so the roots are spread out, holding the crown so it stays level with the soil line. Make sure the crown is not buried or protruding too high above the soil line. Water the plants well.

Bed Layout

There are 3 methods of planting in soil: *matted rows*, *hill rows* and *spaced runner system*.

- Matted Rows- Space plants 1 ½' - 2' apart in rows with 4' between rows. Remove flowers that appear in the first 3 to 4 weeks to give plants a good start. Cut down to 2 ½" after the 2nd and following years with a mower and add several inches of compost or well rotted manure and work it in. The plants will send out new 'runners' and produce a great crop the following year. The matted row system is well suited for Junebearers. For everbearers and day neutrals, reduce the initial spacing within the row.
- Hill system- Space plants 1' apart with 2'-3' between rows. Remove all flowers the first 3-4 months to help the plants get a strong start. Remove all runners so plants direct all their energy into producing fruit. In the 3rd year, keep enough runners to replace the 'mother' plants. Remove the mother plants in the fall after the last harvest. The hill system is good for everbearers, as they produce fewer runners than Junebearers.
- Spaced Runner System-This system is intermediate between the matted row and hill systems. Space plants as for the matted row, and allow only a few runners to remain. Pin down the tips of the runners so the new plants will be spaced about 8" apart. Care and renew as for the matted row.

Care

Weed control is essential to prevent weeds from competing with shallow rooted strawberries. Drip irrigation works the best. Strawberries need about an 1" of water a week. Lay down a thick layer of straw around plants in the summer to hold the moisture. After the ground has frozen, cover the plants with fresh straw, pine straw or boughs, or row cover (a spun bonded fabric). Pull mulch away from plants in early spring to allow the soil to warm up. Reapply fresh mulch around the plants to smother early weeds.



Harvesting

Harvest berries by pinching through the stem rather than pulling on the berry. Pick ripe berries every other day. Always remove *all* malformed or infected berries to prevent disease problems. Keep moldy or infected berries separate from good berries.

Problems

Verticillium wilt and red stele infect the roots. They are made worse by heavy wet soil and often come in on new plants. Remove and destroy infected plants. Replant new plants in a new location. Gray mold rots the berries. Caused by wet humid weather and overcrowded beds with poor air circulation. Keep rows narrow and thin out crowded plants. The tarnished plant bug causes the plants to remain small or form hard, seedy tips. The plants don't grow or ripen properly. Slugs and snails will take bites out of ripe strawberries. Consult your local Extensions 'PMG' or Pest Management Guide for control. Birds also love strawberries. Netting will protect your plants.

Containers

Grow strawberry varieties known to do well in your region and climate. Local nurseries, Master Gardening programs and agricultural extension offices can make recommendations. Plant young plants in deep pots with adequate drainage. There are pots made specifically for strawberries with drainage holes in the sides as well as the bottoms. Strawberries do not tolerate 'wet feet'. Add compost and other organic matter to potting soil before planting seedlings. Continue to feed with an organic fertilizer high in phosphorous. Place or hang pots where they will receive light. Do not allow pots to dry out, but avoid overwatering.

Prized in ancient Rome for their medicinal uses, strawberries are recognized as having more vitamin C than some citrus fruits. They are also high in fiber, folate, potassium and antioxidants, making them a natural means of reducing the chances of heart disease, high blood pressure and certain cancers.

Strawberries are a beautiful fruit, easy to grow, and luscious to eat. Now is the time to get some planted!

Normalee Martin Loudoun County Master Gardener

Light Up Your Seedlings

Starting your own seeds at home has to be the most life-affirming, hopeful activity a gardener can undertake. In the deep of winter, to take a tiny, hard dot of a seed, give it some water, oxygen, the proper temperature, and watch nature create life is magical. Nature has equipped seeds with their very own package of nutrients. A lunch box, if you will, that provides enough nourishment for the seed to germinate, pushing out a tiny root, sending up a tiny shoot, unfurling seed leaves (cotyledon) and then true leaves. After that, the seedling can begin taking its food and oxygen from the environment and it is ready to grow. Now comes the tricky part for gardeners - providing enough light.



If you have ever tried to grow a tomato plant on your sunny window sill, you will know that Virginia light in March is just not sufficient to create the strong, sturdy plant that you had in mind. Seedlings will grow toward the light and when the light is deficient and too far away, the seedlings become tall and gangly and weak. But adding some artificial light to help the plants grow is surprisingly easy.

All you need is a fluorescent light fixture (the two-bulb kinds that are sold as shop lights), two fluorescent bulbs, some chains to hang the light on, and a table or shelf that you don't mind getting a little dirty or wet. The bulbs can be the inexpensive cool white bulbs, but it is better to combine one cool white with one daylight or warm light bulb to get a full light spectrum for your plants.

Suspend your light fixture on chains hooked from the ceiling or from the shelf above or from any structure that you can create to support it. One gardener hung lights from a curtain rod across two chairs with the plants on the floor. Whatever works! An example of chains hung from the exposed beams in an unfinished basement is on the right. Simple and inexpensive. You will have the best results if you keep your lights about 2 inches from the top of your plants at all times. Use





“S” hooks to move the light fixture up the chain to adjust the height of the lights as the plants grow. As your need for lighted space grows, you will find that three light fixtures, hung together, will provide enough light for four flats of plants, as in the example.

Connecting your lights to a timer will help you to regulate the exposure and save you time. Set your timers to turn on for 14-16 hours a day. Plants need at least 8 hours of dark to rest.

If you want to go upscale, you can purchase a shelving unit and stack your light farm. The shelving unit to the left is 72" high X 48" wide x 24" deep and can accommodate four flats on each of 5 shelves, with three light fixtures per shelf.

Using materials from a big box hardware store is significantly less expensive than buying a ready-made unit from a gardening catalog.

So if you are interested in starting seeds indoors in order to grow that unusual plant not found in the nurseries, to germinate those heirloom seeds handed down in your family, or simply to save some money on all those annual flowers you love, invest in some light fixtures and you will improve your success in growing strong, healthy plants. And enjoy the miracle!

Barbara Arnold, Loudoun County Master Gardener

Frost Warnings

Remember, on average, in Loudoun County, frost can occur up until May 11.

We Just Had a Really Cold, Frigid Winter ... Now What?

This article will try to hold your hand, guide you through the chore that is dealing with winterkill. But first, remember this welcome Rule of Thumb: Wait until April or May when new growth is visible. Hold off for now!

Unless, of course, you prefer to start over without attempting to save what could be saved, and just pull out what looks dead. Yes, that is very tempting because it means a 'necessary' early trip to the nursery or at least early window shopping at garden centers. But let us assume you have much-loved and prized shrubs you would rather not lose. You may have planned ahead and done preventative winter protection, especially for the more vulnerable broadleaf evergreens. Now those evergreens may be looking like they are deciduous, totally without leaves, or they are covered with unsightly brown leaves you worry about.

A good starting point now may be the process of elimination, because be aware, some shrubs have **visible protective mechanisms** that may look like irreversible winter damage or winterkill. Think about rhododendrons. You may know this already or are just learning this now, but rhoddies will roll or curl their leaves downward or inward as if they have suffered the winter and are about to give up. No! Once the temperature warms up, look at your rhoddie again, and its leaves are no longer curled.

Another worrisome image is that of wilted leaves; we tend to equate wilted with dead or dying. Nope, leaves of evergreen viburnums, for example, are really just hunkering down in a bad winter. Other evergreen shrubs like boxwood, euonymus, privets and nandinas will shed leaves, not because they are dying or are already dead, but to adapt and survive a harsh winter, no longer susceptible to transpiration.

Try to learn the characteristics of your evergreen shrubs and be assured their protective mechanisms are just taking over, not that they have been hit with winterkill. Think about this: Have you stopped worrying about your evergreens turning purplish or reddish in the winter because through experience you know that is normal?

OK, so now how about that beautiful cascading evergreen Glossy Abelia 'Confetti' you have in a large pot that, through the 20s, was still looking fine? (Disclosure: My real experience.) It dropped its leaves after much lower temperatures but like the privet, is that normal and would it be fine? This is where we will need to do investigative analysis. As gardeners, we worry that there are some negatives already working against it. For one, it is not in the ground and was left in its original exposed display spot. Did the pot get watered before freeze or during dry winter stretches? Thankfully, the investigation is really simple: **The scratch test**, as here illustrated.



http://forestry.about.com/od/arboriculture/ss/prune_tree_wounds_4.htm

Scratch a branch, and if it's green, good! But try to carefully scratch in different areas of the plant just to be sure. Even if some parts of the plant succumbed to winter kill, at least it is not dead. But what if the first scratch shows brown? Try another spot, and another spot. If finally green shows up, yes, the plant is alive although damage may be more extensive.

If only brown shows up, that is when we hold off, wait for signs of life in the spring. Let us give the plant more time, a chance to show that part of it may be able to make it.

So, while waiting for signs of life from plants we treasure (which may be all that we have in our garden), we may be thinking of more serious spring cleanup. After a long hibernation, gardeners are itching to putter in the garden and make it look pretty to welcome spring. The next task at hand then is **pruning**. Where to begin?

If a shrub is confirmed fine and alive, the next thing we would want to do is tidy it up. It may have proven itself still alive, but the reason we worried in the first place was the freeze damage to the tops or tips and brown leaves barely hanging on. Remember a basic rule of pruning: Go for the dead, diseased, and damaged. Go ahead and prune the branches that scratched brown. Prune the live but broken branches to a healthy node or bud. (Diseased branches may not be identifiable at this time.) That should be all, unless you choose to proceed to more advanced pruning, such as removing crossing branches, shaping, stimulating growth, or controlling size.

You may also want to remove the unsightly leaves still hanging onto the shrub with snipping or a simple shake. Most shrubs will produce new leaves close to where old leaves were. Usually, you can see the buds or growth nodes formed under the dislodged leaves, just waiting to push out.

One other possible damage is frost heaving, easily identified by exposed root systems or bad positioning of the shrub. The solution is simple **replanting** (digging up the plant, adjusting the planting hole and planting again), or pushing the plant back into place and filling in with soil the gaps around the exposed roots.

And then **wait for spring growth** to have a better inventory of what evergreen shrubs made it and did not.

A good pruning resource is the Virginia Tech publication, [A Guide to Successful Pruning, Pruning Shrubs](#).

Clean-Up Bonus: Persistent Perennials For Pollinators

Did you leave perennials stalks and stems standing in the garden throughout the winter? As many natural-gardening enthusiasts follow, putting the garden to bed in the fall is not always full fall clean-up where every perennial is cut to the ground out of sight. Grasses were left to rustle in the winter wind, coneflowers left for birds to scrounge on, and milkweed stems were left uncut so birds can strip them into threads for their nests.

So, do we just now cut and toss those stark stalks and stems to allow them to give way to those plump clumps underneath just waiting to push out? No, not so fast! Some perennials such as Joe-Pye weed, milkweed, salvia, daylily and bee balm have hollow stems that can be put to good use to benefit pollinators in the spring.

Gather those stems and cut into lengths. Tie a good bunch into bundles and place all over the garden (e.g., tied horizontally to fences), preferably in the shade, to provide a place for precious pollinators such as Mason bees to lay their eggs.



Maria Daniels, Master Gardener

A Stroll on the Wild Side

A walk through the woods is a special joy in the spring when the early wildflowers emerge. But we don't have to visit a park or nature preserve to enjoy these early bloomers; many of them adapt readily to our own gardens if we can provide them with a suitable environment. Some of the best and easiest are bloodroot, wild columbine, trout lily, and squirrel corn or its close relative, Dutchman's breeches. All of these plants are available commercially although you may have to shop at some specialty wildflower nurseries to find them.

Sanquinaria canadensis (bloodroot)

Bloodroot is named from the orange-red sap found in the roots, stems and leaves of the plant. Native Americans used the sap of bloodroot for dye, as war paint, and medicinally.



Bloodroot can begin blooming in late March although I've usually seen it in our area from early-to-mid April. Each flower lasts only a day or two (until pollinated) but the show continues as more flowers bloom over a two-week period. The 6-10 inch tall flower stem is totally enclosed by the separate leaf as they both emerge from the soil; then the flower stem rises above the leaf and the flower opens as the leaf unfurls. The 1-to-2 inch wide flowers have 8-12 white, slender petals with bright yellow stamens. At night and on cloudy days the flowers will close and look very much like small white tulips. After the flowers fade, the deeply lobed, gray-green leaves continue to grow until finally they are about the size of a man's hand and are from 8-12 inches tall. The leaves remain attractive until mid-to-late summer (or somewhat earlier in dry years).



Bloodroot prefer humus-rich, slightly moist but well-drained soil with a pH range of 6-7 and partial shade although they are rather forgiving of less than ideal situations. They are drought tolerant, going into early dormancy during dry years instead of dying.

Bloodroot grows slowly and seldom needs dividing although this is one method of propagating the plant. It self-sows readily if happy in its environment. It is a carefree plant with no serious insect or disease problems.

Aquilegia canadensis (wild columbine)

Wild columbine is perhaps one of the daintiest of the early wildflowers, with its red (sometimes pinkish red) and yellow, 1-to 1½-inch long, nodding, bell-like flowers dancing merrily above its light green, finely cut foliage at the slightest breeze. They are a favorite of ruby-throated hummingbirds.

Wild columbine grows from 12-30 inches tall and usually begins blooming in late April to early May in our area. Depending on the weather, the plant can bloom for as long as six weeks, although in my garden it usually blooms for a shorter period. Nevertheless, it's always a welcome sight at the back of my small wildflower bed.



Aquilegia canadensis naturally grows in partial shade in well-drained sites, even dry rocky areas such as cliffs and ledges. It prefers a soil pH between 6-7.2, but grows in virtually any soil provided it is not too rich, is well-drained, and the site is partially shaded. (Very rich soil promotes lush foliage but weak-stemmed flowers and shortens the life of the plants.) Generally, these columbines are short-lived plants, but they self-sow readily if seed pods are left on the plant and allowed to ripen. Once seedlings are large enough to handle, they can easily be transplanted elsewhere.

The basal foliage of wild columbine is large, growing up to a foot long; on the flower stems, however, the leaves are considerably smaller. Like all other columbines, the light-green, finely-divided foliage of wild columbine is attractive to leafminers. If the foliage is cut to the ground after blooming, it will grow back and be attractive for the rest of the season after the leafminers have completed their life cycle. If you cut the seed-pod-bearing stems off at the same time, obviously, they won't reseed. My solution is to cut the foliage of all but one of the plants in my garden back almost to the ground, allowing this one plant to self-sow, then cutting it back too. This seems to work well, providing both fresh foliage for the summer garden and seedlings for transplanting. Warning: *Aquilegia canadensis* will cross-pollinate with other aquilegias in the garden. To prevent hybridizing, keep it separated from other columbines.

'Corbett' has yellow flowers and was found near Corbett, Maryland in the late 1960's. 'Corbett' is 12-24 inches tall, and requires the same care as the species.

Erythronium americanum (trout lily, fawn lily, adder's tongue, dog-foot violet)

The flowers of *Erythronium americanum* are a special delight in the spring, blooming with some of the earliest of the spring ephemerals. Unlike with many of the other ephemerals, however, to enjoy trout lilies, you may have to get your knees wet – it grows naturally in the shade along streams and in damp places which may even be boggy in the spring just as they're blooming.



The lily-like yellow flowers are 1-2 inches wide, nodding, and face downward, with their petals sweeping dramatically backward. The flower stems are 5-12 inches long and hold the golden flowers nicely above the foliage where they are quite showy.

Trout lilies tend to grow in large colonies. However, only a few individuals in a colony will bloom, with some being too young and others being too crowded. Still, a large colony with its glossy green leaves, mottled with purple splotches and yellow flowers dancing above the leaves is a sight to behold. Unfortunately, soon after blooming the plants go dormant and the leaves die back, leaving a bare spot in the garden. Ferns or wild ginger can be used to fill in the gap nicely.

Erythronium americanum is definitely not the plant for a dry garden, but if you have a shady, damp area, stream, or boggy sink in your yard, this may be the plant for you. Its roots work their way down deeply in the soil; thus, if you are planting them in a damp garden situation, it is necessary to add plenty of humus made from finely-chopped leaves deeply into the soil to a depth of as much as 12 inches. It prefers acid soil with a pH of 5-6.

Propagating this plant is not for those lacking patience. From seed to flower takes a minimum of three years, usually more, and possibly as long as seven years. From purchased plants, it may take two years to flower. Plants are available, although they are harder than most wild flowers to find.

Mertensia virginica (Virginia bluebells, Virginia cowslip)

Is there anyone who isn't familiar with Virginia bluebells? One of the most beloved of spring flowering plants, bluebells naturalize to create large carpets of blue in bottomlands and moist gardens before going dormant in mid-summer and disappearing for another year. Every April there are numerous bluebells walks in our region, and if you haven't taken the walk at one of our local parks, you owe it to yourself to do so. It's an experience not soon forgotten.

The flowers of Virginia bluebells start out as tight pink buds in terminal clusters of 5-20. They open to become 1-inch long, azure blue, funnel-shaped flowers nodding at the end of 12-24 inches long stalks and remain in flower for a number of days before fading. Shortly after blooming the flower stalks begin to sag, eventually almost touching the ground as the seed pods grow and the seeds ripen.



The blue-green leaves go dormant about two months after flowering, leaving a hole in the garden in early summer which can easily be filled by interplanting bluebells with hosta or transplanting shade-loving annuals into the gap.

Virginia bluebells naturally grow in moist meadows and along streams in partial to heavy shade in humus-rich soil. They are very forgiving and will grow well in dryer soils or in clay, but will not bloom as well. They will not, however, do well in extremely dry soil although they will survive an occasional drought. If planting in the garden, add peat moss, leaf mold or compost to the soil before planting.

Virginia bluebells are easy to propagate either from seed sown immediately after it ripens in early summer or by division. They are readily available at nurseries specializing in wild flowers. If you have one plant which is happy, it will self-sow nicely and eventually spread to form a large colony in your

woodland garden, along pathways through the woods, or in shady creek bottom meadows.

Dicentra canadensis (squirrel corn) and *D. cucullaria* (Dutchman's breeches)

These two delightfully dainty plants are among the earliest of the spring ephemerals to bloom. They are close relatives of bleeding heart, and their flowers show that relationship.

Both squirrel corn and Dutchman's breeches grow naturally in deciduous woods in humus-rich, slightly damp soil with a pH of 6-7. If given these conditions in the garden, they will self-sow and naturalize readily. They are usually found growing in close proximity to each other in the wild.

Squirrel corn blooms about a week before Dutchman's breeches on 4-6 inch stems arching above the low-growing foliage. The pure white, heart-shaped flowers are longer and more narrow than Dutchman's breeches and lack the pantaloons-like spurs of Dutchman's breeches. The fragrant flowers are about ½ inch long, but the plant itself is slightly shorter than Dutchman's breeches and less common.

The flowering stalks of Dutchman's breeches are about 6-10 inches high, with 4-10 nodding creamy-white twin-spurred flowers at the ends looking very much like pantaloons - thus the name. The flowers are ½ to ¾ inches long and fragrant.

The leaves of both squirrel corn and Dutchman's breeches are gray-green, with those of squirrel corn being just a shade more on the gray side. They are both finely cut and ferny, 3-6 inches long. The entire plant goes dormant soon after blooming and by early June the leaves have disappeared.



Like most spring ephemerals, the plants are virtually maintenance free.

Lina Burton, Master Gardener

Places to See Wildflowers

Spring is a great time to visit local parks to see wildflowers. To guide you on viewing dates, the Smithsonian Institute publishes a wonderful list of expected bloom dates for our most common 100 wildflowers at <http://botany.si.edu/dcflora/springflowers/100springwildflowers.htm>. If you click on the link to each flower, you can see the date range within which you should look for the flowers.

Here are a few parks you may want to explore.

Close to home:

Balls Bluff Regional Battlefield Park (Northern Virginia Regional Park Authority)
Balls Bluff Road, Leesburg
http://www.nvrpa.org/park/balls_bluff

C&O Canal National Historic Park (Maryland side of the Potomac) including the Towpath, especially from Great Falls Park downstream to the Bear Island area. Home page: <http://www.nps.gov/choh/index.htm>

Great Falls Park (Maryland side of the Potomac) (part of C&O Canal National Historic Park)
11710 MacArthur Blvd, Potomac, Maryland
For a list of trails, see <http://www.nps.gov/choh/planyourvisit/upload/GF-Map-Page-1.pdf>

Billy Goat Trail, (Maryland) Reportedly, the best wildflowers are in Section C; it's a moderate hike. If you are tempted to try Section A of the Billy Goat Trail, first see <http://www.nps.gov/choh/upload/Are-you-prepared-for-Billy-Goat-Trail-A-edit.pdf>

Great Falls Park (Virginia side of the Potomac) (National Park Service)
9200 Old Dominion Dr., McLean
Home page: <http://www.nps.gov/grfa/index.htm>

A list of the hiking trails, almost all of which are wildflower-rich, is at <http://www.nps.gov/grfa/planyourvisit/hiking.htm>. Areas particularly recommended for wildflower viewing are the Swamp Trail and Swamp-Ridge Connector, the Mine Run Trail, and the North Trail to Riverbend Park (all in Virginia).

Turkey Run Park (National Park Service)
George Washington Memorial Parkway, McLean
<http://www.nps.gov/gwmp/planyourvisit/turkeyrun.htm>

Fairfax County Park Authority trail system

Fairfax County has an extensive system of trails, many of them suitable for viewing wildflowers. For a list and links to the trails, go to <http://www.fairfaxcounty.gov/parks/trailsframe.htm>. They include:

Riverbend Park (Fairfax County Park Authority)
8700 Potomac Hills Street, Great Falls
For more information see home page at <http://www.fairfaxcounty.gov/parks/riverbend-park/>
Saturday, April 12, 2014, Riverbend Park will hold its second annual Bluebells at the Bend Festival from 10 a.m. until 2 p.m. Admission is \$5 per person.

Scott's Run Nature Preserve (Fairfax County Park Authority)
7400 Georgetown Park, McLean
For information about the park see <http://www.fairfaxcounty.gov/parks/scottsrn/>.

Currently scheduled: Spring Wildflowers at Scott's Run, April 24, 10:00 a.m. To register, go to http://parktakes.fairfaxcounty.gov/rev1_coursedetail.asp?facility2=M357&view_records=GO&category2=9999&age=9999&day=9999&desckey=hiking&LOC=M357&TRM=14SP&CDE=3572841501

Bull Run Regional Park (Northern Virginia Park Authority)

7700 Bull Run Drive, Centreville, VA

The largest display of Virginia bluebells on the east coast is in this park – 300 acres!

See https://www.nvrpa.org/park/bull_run/content/hiking_equestrian_trails

Manassas National Battlefield Park (National Park Service)

Stone Bridge Loop Trail should be good. See <http://www.nps.gov/mana/naturescience/upload/Battlefield-Biodiversity-Brochure.pdf>

Further afield

Merrimac Farm Wildlife Management Area (Prince William Conservation Alliance)

<http://www.pwconserve.org/merrimacfarm/index.htm>

14712 Deepwood Lane, Nokesville, VA

Bluebell Festival at Merrimac Farm

April 13, 2014

10:00 a.m. to 4:00 p.m.

<http://www.pwconserve.org/merrimacfarm/bluebellfestival/index.html>

Thompson Wildlife Management Area, Linden (Virginia Department of Game and Inland Fisheries)

<http://www.dgif.virginia.gov/wmas/detail.asp?pid=31>

The trilliums here are wonderful.

Upcoming annual trillium field trip led by Marion Lobstein: May 2, 9:00-12:30

Meet at the Blandy library (by 8:45 AM). Carpool, and wear comfortable shoes. Blandy will have a group permit for the site. FOSA members \$10, nonmembers \$12. Reservations required. Register at

https://www.google.com/calendar/event?eid=azZazJwZ2hzNDNib2FqNDg2dnAwZXFnc2sgcjBjYmpxdTE0OW5qdDYwM2FhYmdpcml4amdAZw&ctz=America/New_York

For questions, call 540-837-1758 ext 224

Shenandoah National Park, (National Park Service)

Well worth the trip. Hikes range in difficulty, length.

Park home page: <http://www.nps.gov/shen/index.htm>

For information on wildflowers in the Park: <http://www.nps.gov/shen/naturescience/wildflowers.htm>

Wildflower Weekend, May 3-4, 2014. For event schedule see

<http://www.nps.gov/shen/planyourvisit/upload/2014-WW-program-schedule-v3.pdf>

White Oak Canyon

Shenandoah National Park (Rated as difficult, 5.2 miles long, 3 ½ to 5 ½ hours)

Google White Oak Canyon for more information. The following sites provide useful

information about White Oak Canyon: <http://www.summitpost.org/whiteoak-canyon/229998>

and <http://www.midatlantichikes.com/id112.html>

Lina Burton, Master Gardener

Places to Buy Wildflowers

When buying wildflowers for your garden, be sure that any plants you buy are nursery grown, not dug from the wild. Many reputable environmentally-oriented organizations sponsor wildflower sales in the spring, although they are slow to post these events on their websites (most are not listed yet). Locally, there are four events currently listed where you can buy wildflowers:

- The Loudoun County Master Gardener Annual Gardening Symposium, March 29 and 30 at Ida Lee Park Recreation Center. At least one wildflower vendor will be at this event.
<http://loudouncountymastergardeners.org/events/annual-symposium/>
- The Loudoun Wildlife Conservancy Spring Native Plant Sale, April 5, at Morven Park in Leesburg. See http://www.loudounwildlife.org/Event_Native_Plant_Sale_Spring.html
- The popular Mother's Day Garden Fair at Blandy Experimental Farm and State Arboretum near Millwood on Route 50. This sale usually has at least one native plant vendor. It will be held May 10-11 from 9:00 to 4:30 both days.
- The Green Springs Gardens Big Plant Sale in Fairfax usually also has at least one wildflower vendor. It will be held this year on May 17 from 9:00-3:00.

In addition to the local sales, a number of nurseries specialize in or sell wildflowers. To find sources, check for nurseries on one of the following lists of approved vendors:

- The Virginia Native Plant Society Regional Native Plant Nurseries and Plant Sales at <http://vnps.org/conservation/plant-nurseries/> (Note: The entire VNPS website has just been revamped and as of March 6, still contained a few bugs. Hopefully they will have been worked out by now, but you may need to be patient with it until the Society gets the site up to speed.)
- The Audubon Society of Northern Virginia list of approved plant sources at <http://www.audubonva.org/index.php/audubon-at-home-v15-121/eco-friendly-landscaping/where-to-buy-native-plants>
- The Lady Bird Johnson Wildflower Center at the University of Texas at Austin extensive list of plant and seed suppliers, 1,325 of them, to be exact. The entire national list can be accessed at <http://www.wildflower.org/suppliers/search.php>. For just the Virginia portion of the list, see http://www.wildflower.org/suppliers/geo_search.php?passtr=-78.6568942000001,37.4315734,0#map

Lina Burton, Master Gardener

Spring dreams are made of these....

Looking for something different to set your outdoor spaces apart this gardening season? “Paint” your personal vistas employing a few European heritage styles that are easily incorporated into your spaces and places: sparse and formal through full and exuberant!

The topiary garden. Renaissance Tuscan Medici gardens focused on an integrated and thematic outer landscape, with fruited terraces, water features, and squarely ordered composition. Strongly sculpted lines of topiary, interspersed with potted citrus, and occasional flashes of color, often roses or geraniums, are trademarks of the style.



Villa Medici a Castello, Italy



Villa Medici Fiesole, Italy

How have we imported this style? One need look no further than our very own Oatlands. Boxwood-outlined beds populated with select herbs and interspersed with citrus pots are but one adaptation. If your gardening space is diminutive, try a miniature blood orange tree in a medium size pot. This tree is easy to grow in our humid summer heat, the flowers smell heavenly, and the few fruit that it will bear are delicious...worth the work of moving the tree indoors for the winter.



Oatlands, Loudoun County, VA

Potager, the kitchen garden. Trust the French to demand both beauty and utility from their supply gardens. Louis XIV imported a lawyer, La Quintinie, known for his horticultural skills, to produce out-of-season crops at Versailles to please the king and to increase the Sun King's mystique. For La Quintinie's labors, he was knighted. Squared beds outlined with tightly espaliered apples and pears and housing herbs, ornamentals, and successively planted vegetables mark the style.



Chateau de Villandry, France

You can skip the formality of the French *potager* (while emphasizing your Sun King roots and potential for knighthood), and simply mix vegetables and herbs in your flowerbeds. Strongly scented flowers and herbs will discourage many of our foraging animal friends while providing food sources for our beneficial insects. And who can argue with the impact of Swiss chard, bloody rue, or purple cabbage in a colorful floral combination?



Chicago Botanical Garden

The cottage garden. This is the English heritage garden most copied in our part of the New World, and with our heritage, who can be surprised? Marked by informality, dense planting, and mixed ornamentals and edibles, it is known for its romantic, layered “naturalness”.



Valley Gardens, Harrogate, England

This style has been adopted worldwide, for who can resist the blowsy fullness of texture and color? Go for multi-level, yearlong structure under layered with seasonal sweeps of color. The pallet is only as limited as your creativity and taste.



Ninfa Garden, Italy



The Butchart Gardens, Victoria, BC

Adapt, adopt, copy, create. Enjoy your garden, stamping it with your own personality! **Who am I to disagree?**

Dawn Meyerriecks, Loudoun County Master Gardener

The High Line. A West Side Story

Along New York City's West side there is a place where cowboys rode and wild prairies grow. Crossing over into West Chelsea, the Meatpacking District, and Hell's Kitchen, there exists a place dreamed up in children's story books. Climb an old stairway hidden in the shadows beneath a raised railroad track at Gansevoort and Washington Street, and step through the far reaches of the wardrobe and into a magical garden hidden above the streets of Manhattan. Above busy streets, adjacent to factories, office buildings, and apartments, where comically large adds can be seen on billboards, is the High Line. An abandoned train track running through the sky once used for transporting goods to factories long ago shuttered along the west side of Manhattan.



The subway rumbles below the city streets, where cars and trucks pass and locals and visitors alike turn their heads up to admire the beauty and strength of the tall, tall buildings. An artifact stands from a time in New York when trains rumbled through the city center. When factories populated this side of town and business was booming, trains were used to carry goods to and from. For a time, the trains ran right along with automobiles, trucks and pedestrians at street level. The frequent occurrence of accidents earned the area the title "Death Avenue" and prompted the railroad to take measures to protect public safety. Cowboys were employed to ride horses in front of trains waving red flags by day and red lanterns by night, alerting passersby. Increasing public pressure to further secure the safety of the public led to the development of The West Side Improvement Project. Included in the project was a plan to raise the tracks above street level and the High Line was born.

Trains ran along the High Line for more than 40 years. In 1980, with an increase in interstate trucking and the shuttering of some of the factories in the neighborhood, the last train rumbled down the track carrying 3 carloads of frozen turkeys and the track went quiet.

In 1999 the Friends of the High Line organized an effort to save the track from the threat of demolition. A group of residents wanted the tracks torn down to improve the aesthetics and property values of those living in its shadows. But a dream of a garden above and a romantic notion of restoring a piece of the past eventually won. Over the course of a year (2000 and 2001), photographer Joel Sternfeld documented life on the High Line. Hired by the Friends of the High Line to document the forgotten track, his photographs helped secure support for the project and said what only pictures could say, the rail line may have been abandoned by train cars and people, but nature did not abandon the aging viaduct, and in fact thrived in the most unusual places. What Sternfeld and the early pioneers of the effort to save the High Line found against the odds along the rusting tracks, pieces of broken glass, and trash, were delicate blooms of Queen Anne's Lace, smiling daisies, soft lambs ear,



purple heather, thistle tufted onion grass, grape hyacinth, and even a glade of ailanthus trees growing 10 and 12 feet high. A self-seeded, secret garden – a gem of nature in the middle of the largest metropolitan city in the United States.

Perhaps unintentionally, or maybe intentionally, the Friends of the High Line hired an architect by the name of Casey Jones to begin the lengthy process of developing a plan for the official restoration of the line. Eventually, the design firms of James Corner Field Operations and Diller Scofidio + Renfro were selected in 2004 to create the final design.



It's a garden like many others in many ways. Tall, sweeping drifts of grass, colorful blooms, shrubs and tree, places to sit and rest, and grass for picnics. Designers of the project describe it less like a park, and more like a "series of episodes", a natural "musical composition" coming to life as you move through the garden along the path of the tracks.

Planting designer, Piet Oudolf, created a wild, meadow like environment in the *footsteps* of the old track. following along the path once traveled by railcars full of frozen turkeys and other goods, like the Little Engine that Could, you will find, as envisioned by the original designers, a musical composition with

harmony, melody, form, rhythm and timbre expressed through the creative use and placement of over 100,000 plants. A collection of perennials, grasses, shrubs and trees line the trail. The design takes into consideration the wide variety of site specific needs and challenges that come with designing a garden on an elevated space winding through tall buildings, in and out of shadows. In most cases, the designers looked to the original wild garden that grew on the untouched tracks during the 25 years between the time the last train rumbled past and the restoration process began. Plants know where they want to grow. In shadowed areas, where soil naturally developed in greater depths holding moisture enough to grow and sustain small groves of trees, trees were planted, as in the Gansevoort Street section of the trail. In areas exposed to harsher, dryer, and many times, windy conditions, strong, drought resistant plants were chosen like in the Chelsea Grasslands section of the trail. 50% of the plants are native to North America. 30% of plants are native to the Northeast. Cultivars of native plants and some native to Europe and Asia have all been incorporated into the final design.



Managed through a public private partnership between the not-for-profit Friends of the High Line and the New York City Department of Parks & Recreation, the park has a goal of sourcing all plants within a 100 mile radius of the park. Often working with local nurseries and the New York City Parks & Recreation Department's Greenbelt Native Plant Center, to secure plants many are grown locally to better ensure their suitability and hardiness to the area they will be planted.



The garden can be accessed from several points along the tracks. At the south end entrance at Gansevoort Street, climb the stairs and the journey begins in a woodland. Where Whitespire grey birch and serviceberry trees tower above rooted in large planters to provide adequate soil depth for healthy growth. Below, Blue ice bluestar, and Rhapsody in Blue meadow sage bloom alongside the beckoning path. An appropriate beginning to a New York City stroll—a Gershwin soundtrack. Each unique area



playing their unique parts. In Chelsea, grasslands thrive. In Spring and Summer, the Chelsea Grasslands section of the trail shows visitors the beautiful blossoms of copper iris, Rubinzweg sneezeweed, Mars Midget pincushion plant, prairie blazing star, sweet black-eyed susan, and meadow sage, alongside a mix of meadow grasses one example of which is Shenandoah switch grass. Visit the 23rd street lawn for a picnic, or sit on the wooden steps for a perfect people watching spot.

The High Line garden developed under the guiding principle of sustainability and this idea expanded beyond the traditional gardening paradigm of

sustainability to encompass the entire structure of the viaduct and tracks and the new construction necessary to secure such an old structure and transform it into world's first elevated track garden and the world's longest green roof. Every garden needs water and the High Line garden is no exception. Using strategies employed in rooftop gardening, special water features were incorporated to direct water, save water, and provide access to water for gardeners. The green roof design effectively reduces storm water run-off by up to 80%. The path was specially designed to move water where it is needed. A multi-use area, the park was designed to function as an outdoor gathering space and plays host to art shows, music shows, and festivals. Structural elements incorporated into the design used sustainable building methods and materials such as the use of FSC certified lumber – a certified sustainable wood. LED lights are used to significantly reduce the amount of electricity used.



If cabin fever has settled in after a long winter, it may be a great time to make plans to head into the city for a unique, garden experience. Learn more about the garden at www.thehighline.org.

More Resources:

Books:

Walking the High Line, Joel Sternfeld, ISBN-13: 978-3865219824

On the High Line: Exploring America's Most Original Urban Park, Annik LaFarge and Rick Darke, ISBN-13: 978-0500290200

The Curious Garden, Peter Brown (children's book) ISBN-13: 978-0316015479

Kathleen Elder, Loudoun County Master Gardener

Shade Garden Shrubs

Spring brings the first flowers of the year everywhere in the garden. So it is in the shady garden as well that shrubs show off their flower power. There are the old reliables; rhododendrons, azaleas and camellias which now come in a huge variety of colors and forms. Other blooming shrubs, which don't get as much attention, bring their own surprises to the shady garden.



the back of the garden.

One familiar garden shrub, yellow forsythia, blooms enthusiastically in very early spring but its popularity has waned in recent years. Its cousin white forsythia (both from the olive family), a fragrant variety, is now available. Because both the yellow and white are somewhat leggy in their natural form, underplanting with early blue bulbs like muscari (grape hyacinth) and Virginia bluebells can create a beautiful early spring combination. After blooming, these plants are not notably decorative so they should be sited in

Witch hazels can bloom anywhere from October to March depending on type. Our woodland native can grow to more than 20 feet. Asian relatives are smaller and more compact. What they all have in common is delightful fragrance and some amazing colors. There is a witch hazel for almost any garden. Colors range from deep maroon, red, and brilliant yellow to pale colors and fragrance from mild to intoxicating.



average soil, with average moisture in part shade. "Mt. Airy" grows 3 feet to 4 feet tall. It is a root suckering plant, so to keep it looking good the suckers should be removed.

Fothergilla gardenii is another excellent native, multi-season shrub. In early spring it sports a multitude of fragrant, cream color bottle brush flowers 2" to 3" long that last on the plant up to two weeks. The flowers are soon joined by blue green leaves over the summer. In the fall the leaves turn brilliant colors of yellow, orange and scarlet. One of the best cultivars is "Mt. Airy" developed by acclaimed plantsman Michael Dirr. Fothergilla is easily grown in

Bright shade or dappled shade occurs when the canopy is loosely formed.

Loropetalum (fringe flower) is a good plant for these conditions. This shrub with deep purple leaves produces pinkish red flowers in mid-spring. The contrast of dark leaves and light flowers creates a dramatic element in the garden. Loropetalums range in height from over 12 feet to dwarf varieties of only 2 feet.



The classic spring shade blooming shrubs are rhododendrons. Each year new varieties can be found in garden centers and catalogues that fit every color scheme and form desired. New shrubs have shades in remarkable colors covering the spectrum except for blue. No other flowering shrub has the diversity of form and color. Flower forms come in single and double, flat and frilly, single and bi-colors. They are hardy and virtually pest and disease free.

All of these shrubs are hardy in our plant zone 7 and higher and will flourish in partial shade. With all these newcomers to the market, now is a great time to experiment in the shady garden.

Elizabeth Betts, Loudoun County Master Gardener

ABCs of Trees

Botanical Name: *Zelkova serrata*
Common Name: Japanese Zelkova Elm

- Zones:** 5 - 8, native to Japan, Korea and China
- Family:** *Ulmaceae*
- Habit:** deciduous
- Form:** medium to large; young tree vase-shaped, mature tree is rounded with broad crown
- Height:** 50 to 80 feet
- Spread:** equal to the height
- Growth rate:** medium
- Texture:** fine
- Leaf:** alternate, simple, ovate with an acuminate tip, 1 1/2 to 2 1/2 inches long, pinnately veined, serrate with rounded over teeth; leaves are dark green above and much paler below
- Flower:** species is monoecious; yellow-green, not showy, occur in tight clusters along new stems; appearing before the leaves
- Fruit:** small triangular drupe, 1/6 inch long, green and later turning brown, maturing in mid to late summer
- Bark:** smooth and red-brown to gray when young with numerous lenticels; remains smooth for many years but eventually exfoliates into small patches, reddish brown in color



Site Requirements: Easily grows in average, medium wet, well-drained soils in full sun. Established trees tolerate some drought. Prefers rich, moist loams but tolerates alkaline soil.

Diseases and Insects: No serious insect or disease problems. Highly resistant to Dutch elm disease. Phloem necrosis, wilts and cankers may occur. Insect visitors include leaf miner, beetles and scale. Spider mites can be a problem in hot, dry summers.

Landscape Uses: May be used as a lawn, shade or street tree.

Noteworthy: The Japanese Zelkova is a handsome tree with showy fall color, attractive exfoliating bark, and a symmetrical, vase-shaped growth habit. It makes a good street tree because of its dense shade, ability to grow in marginal soils and resistance to pests and pollution.

Cultivars:

- ⤴ **'Goshiki'** - This variegated form features leaves splashed or dusted with creamy white. The plant is sometimes offered by specialty nurseries and grows fairly well. **'Variegata'** features a white rim around the leaves, but it's a weak grower.
- ⤴ **'Green Vase'** - This popular form is a fast grower to 70' tall with a width of 35' to 40'. It maintains a vase-shape with upright arching branches. It is taller and less broad than 'Village Green' at maturity, plus it grows more quickly. The fall color is bronze-red. It is widely considered the best selection.
- ⤴ **'Halka'** - This is one of the more popular forms, but it lacks the merit of 'Village Green' or 'Green Vase'. It reaches 50' tall with a spread of 30', but the habit is more open and loose. It lacks the dense uniformity of the other two cultivars, plus the yellow fall color does not rival their display.
- ⤴ **'Spring Grove'** - A potential rival for 'Village Green', this selection is yet to see mass production. It exhibits a distinct vase shape with tight branching. It is also ornamentally superior for its dark green leaves, red fall color and attractive peeling bark. The plant has the potential to grow 80' tall with a spread of 60'.
- ⤴ **'Village Green'** - A common plant in commerce, this form develops a straight, clean trunk and reaches 50' to 60' tall. The canopy is quite wide and dense with dark green leaves, while the fall color is rusty red. It expresses good disease and insect resistance with excellent cold hardiness. It grows quickly and vigorously as a young plant.



Barb Bailey, Master Gardener, Tree Steward

Notes from the Help Desk:

Q: With so much talk about Monarch Butterflies not having enough milkweed plants to assist in their journey, can you tell me how to plant the seeds I got from a pod?

A: Securing the seeds from a milkweed pod can be quite an adventure! The seeds are attached to fluffy white material called *coma* and it floats around just like a butterfly. This material needs to be separated from the seed if you have not done so already.



Common milkweed seeds need to go through a process called vernalization or cold storage before they can begin their journey in the ground. It simulates winter! An easy way to do this is to place the seeds between moist paper towels in a plastic bag in the refrigerator for 3 to 6 weeks. Starting this process mid-March or the first of April is perfect to then plant directly into warmer soil - when it reaches 70° or after the threat of frost. Remember the seedlings will need moist soil to germinate so you will have to keep an eye on the soil outside.

Starting seeds indoors may assist in germination success rate so consider this approach as highlighted by monarchwatch.org. For planting purposes, count on 4-8 weeks growing time before transplanting outdoors after frost. Fill plastic flats with a soil mix suitable for seedlings and thoroughly soak the soil. Let the excess water drain. Sow the seeds by scattering them on the soil surface 1/4-1/2 inch apart, and then cover with about 1/4 inch of additional soil mix. Gently mist the soil surface with water to dampen the additional soil mix that has been added.

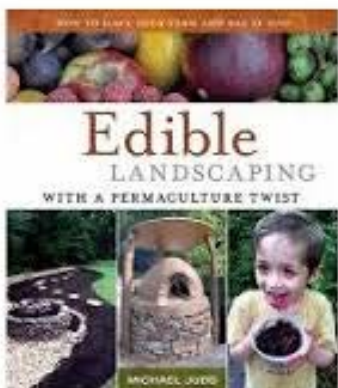
Cover each flat with a clear plastic cover or a plastic bag to keep the seeds from drying out while germinating. Then, place the flat under grow lights or in a warm sunny window. Most seeds will germinate in 7-10 days if the flats are maintained at 75° F. After the seeds have germinated, remove the plastic covering from the flats. Once the seedlings have emerged, the soil should be kept moist by watering the flat from the bottom (place in a sink or tub filled with 2 inches of water until moisture appears on the soil surface). The soil should be kept moist but some care is needed to keep the seedlings from getting too wet.

When plants are 4 to 6" tall and the threat of frost is past, you can *harden them off* for outdoors over 4-5 days (shady area during the day and in at night), and then plant in the ground.



Barb Bailey, LCMG

Edible Landscaping with a Permaculture Twist



Edible Landscaping with a Permaculture Twist by Michael Judd provides a fascinating glimpse into the mind of this multi-talented entrepreneur/speaker/urban farmer who lives and gardens nearby in Frederick, Maryland. Judd is the founder of Ecologica, LLC, which promotes edible and ecological landscape design, and of Project Bona Fide, an international non-profit supporting agro-ecology research. He specializes in urban/suburban edible landscapes, rain water harvesting, holistic farm design and anything to do with fungi.

“Edible Landscaping” is his first book but probably not his last, given his interest and unbridled enthusiasm for so many “green” topics. He begins the book with a disclaimer, stating that information presented comes from hands-on experience, not from formal horticulture

studies. His wide-ranging interests can be seen in the book’s Table of Contents which begins with a chapter on Herb Spirals and ends with Botany and Booze. There are chapters on growing specialty mushrooms, building earthen ovens, harvesting rain water and much more. Despite this eclectic approach, the book works, and provides detailed information and instructions.

Judd spent many years working in Nicaragua where he sought to remedy regional hunger through the creation of a grassroots non-profit organization aimed at diversifying food access. He bought 26 acres and began to build what he calls a “ food forest” of fruits, nuts, edible palms and perennial greens that could provide a community’s nutrition 12 months of the year.

This concept of a food forest is also central to his book. Judd describes a food forest as a low maintenance gardening technique that mimics a woodland ecosystem, but replaces woodland species with fruit, nut and berry trees, bushes and vines as well as perennials, vegetables, herbs, and annuals. Unusual plants and fruits are another passion, and he lays out compelling reasons to try planting juneberries, goumi, persimmons, currants and gooseberries. He describes this as being “eco-logical” and says that it can work even in a small yard.

Good soil is the key to growing a successful food forest, and Judd explains healthy soil creation by no-till sheet composting. He also provides interesting information on companion or biodynamic planting to help meet a plant’s need from the beginning. He says that combining four or more companion plants results in higher production, reduced pest and disease problems and increased soil fertility.

One of Judd’s clients is Top Chef finalist Bryan Voltaggio of the award winning Volt restaurant in Frederick. Voltaggio commissioned Judd to design and install an edible landscape around the restaurant which features an herb spiral and a courtyard including a mini-orchard of apple and pear trees, trellised gooseberries and other foods. The project is ongoing and Judd works with the chefs to plant other unusual ingredients used in the restaurant’s cooking.

Judd prefers to use natural and recycled materials wherever possible and he is currently building a circular straw bale home in Frederick. For more information and to purchase a signed copy of the book, visit Michael Judd’s website at <http://ecologiadesign.com/>

Jill Johnson, Loudoun County Master Gardener



2014 Spring Plant Sale

Order Form

PRE-PAID Due March 28 - Check made payable to **LCMGA**
Pick up your plants at the Extension Office on **Saturday, April 19 from 9-1.**

FOR OFFICE USE ONLY

Date Received _____
 Check/Cash _____

Name _____
 Email _____
 Phone _____

(please print)

Would you like to receive our
free online publication,
 "The Trumpet Vine"?
 Yes No

TOMATOES

Quantity	
	Ultimate Opener
	Big Beef
	Kellogg's Breakfast
	OTV Brandywine
	Uncle Joe's
	Cherokee Purple
	Mr. Stripey
	Patio
	Bush Beefsteak
	Sungold
	Supersweet 100
	Black Cherry
	San Marzano
	Juliet
	Purple Russian
	Total Tomatoes

PEPPERS

Quantity	
	Ace
	X3R Red Knight
	Giant Marconi
	Sweet Sunrise
	Sweet Banana
	Bell Boy
	Lunchbox Snack Red
	Lunchbox Snack Yellow
	Pizza Pepper
	Mucho Nacho
	Bangkok
	Total Peppers

VEGGIES

Quantity	
	Imperial Star Artichoke
	Total Veggies

HERBS

Quantity	
	Basil African Blue
	Basil Genovese
	Greek Columnar Basil
	Siam Queen Basil
	Parsley, Italian Flat
	Rosemary ARP
	Golden Variegated Sage
	Total Herbs

TOTAL

	Total Tomatoes
	Total Peppers
	Total Veggie
	Total Herbs
	Total Plants
	X \$3.50
	TOTAL DUE

Send order & payment to:
Loudoun County Master Gardeners
30 Catocin Circle SE, Suite B
Leesburg, VA 20175
Orders are filled on a first come,
first served basis.

QUESTIONS????

703-771-5150 or email: loudounmg@vt.edu

Thank you for supporting the Loudoun County Master Gardeners!

LCMGA assumes no responsibility or liability for planting of any plant and makes no warranties, expressed or implied, regarding the survival of any plant.



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

5th Annual Gardening Symposium March 29 and 30, 2014

Hosted by Loudoun County Master Gardeners



Ida Lee Recreation Center, Leesburg

Offering topics for every gardener and lover of the landscape.

Please join us and our outstanding line-up of speakers.

Saturday Speakers and Topics: 9:00 to 4:45

Nicole Hamilton, President of the Loudoun Wildlife Conservancy, a certified National Wildlife Federation Habitat Steward and a certified Virginia Master Naturalist: ***The Magic of Monarch Butterflies***

Peter Hatch, a professional gardener and historian with 38 years' experience in the restoration, care, and interpretation of historic landscapes. A celebrated author of four books on the gardens of Thomas Jefferson's Monticello, where he served as Director of Gardens and Grounds for 35 years; ***Thomas Jefferson's Revolutionary Garden at Monticello***

Cynthia Brown, the Manager of Horticulture Collections Management and Education at Smithsonian Gardens, lecturer and garden advisor; ***Designing a Potager Garden***

Paulette Royt, a PHD and former teacher of microbiology at George Mason University, now a Master Gardener at Green Spring Garden in Alexandria, horticulture lecturer and docent; ***The Underground View of Plant Communities***

Sunday Speakers and Topics: 9:30 to 3:00 (You choose lecture within each time slot)

Option 1

David Lohmann owner of Abernethy and Spencer, Greenhouse, Nursery & Garden Center in Purcellville, VA; ***Environmentally Safe Products for your Yard and Garden***

Robert McDuffie, a horticulture associate professor at Virginia Tech and a landscape architect whose primary focus is on small scale landscape design and contracting; ***Residential Landscape Design: The Basics!***

Robert McDuffie, second lecture ***Designing Landscapes for Low Maintenance***

Janet Davis, co-owner of Hill House Farm & Nursery, incorporating native plants into garden settings and "managed" areas while employing sustainable garden techniques; ***Covering Your Tracks: Excellent native plant ground "covers"***

Option 2

Debbie Dillion, Extension Agent, Agriculture & Natural Resources, Horticulture, serving Culpeper, Madison, & Orange Counties; ***Don't Waste Your Waste – Making & Using Compost***

Melanie Choukas-Bradley, author of three highly acclaimed natural history books, lecturer, teacher, member of the Board of the Maryland Native Plant Society and serves on many other committees; ***City of Trees***

Dr. Shawn Askew, a Virginia Cooperative Extension (VCE) Specialist and Associate Professor at Virginia Tech; ***Turfgrass: Non-chemical Weed Control and Water Issues.***

Peter Deahl, the co-founder and supervising arborist of The Pruning School, prunes ornamentals according to the natural requirements of each plant; ***Fine Pruning!***

More information at <http://loudouncountymastergardeners.org/events/annual-symposium/>

Trade show and Exhibitors will be available in the hall throughout the seminar.

Prices include the conference, lunch and trade show. Lunches include vegetarian options. Loudounmg@vt.edu
Saturday and Sunday, \$75, Saturday or Sunday, \$45. Registration open now.

*Virginia Cooperative Extension
Loudoun County Master Gardeners
Fifth Annual Gardening Symposium
March 29-30, 2014*

Ida Lee Recreation Center, Social Hall (Downstairs)
60 Ida Lee Drive, NW
Leesburg, VA 20176

One Day \$45.00

Two Days \$75.00

Registration fees are non-refundable. Fee includes lunch. Space is limited, please register early.

I am registering for:

- Saturday and Sunday, # of people _____, Total \$_____
- Saturday only, # of people _____, Total \$_____
- Sunday only, # of people _____, Total \$_____
- Vegetarian Lunch Option (if more than one, please indicate #_____)

Name: _____

Zip Code: _____

Phone: _____

Email: _____

Make check payable to LCMGA. Mail or drop off form and payment at the Loudoun County Extension Office, Attn: Symposium, 30 Catoctin Circle SE, Suite B, Leesburg, VA, 20175 from 9-5, weekdays.

OR

Register and pay online starting Feb. 5th at
<http://loudouncountymastergardeners.org/events/annual-symposium/>



If you are a person with a disability and desire any assistive devices, services or other accommodations to participate in this activity, please contact Jim Hilleary, Loudoun Extension Office, at (703-777-0373/TDD) during business hours of 8:00 a.m. and 5:00 p.m. to discuss accommodations 5 days prior to the event. *TDD number is (800) 828-1120.*