

The Grapevine

September 2024

New River Valley Master Gardener Association Newsletter

INSIDE THIS ISSUE

Art Camp	2
Useful Links.....	2
NRV Fair	3
School Veggies	4
Living History	5
Pizza!	6
Hydroponics	7
Plant Swap	7
The Prez Sez	8
French for Yummy ...	10
Lilacs & Memories....	11
Garden Poem.....	12
Pulaski Youth Garden	13
The Old Reynolds Farm	14
Tech Weeds.....	15
Be a Fair Judge	16
Garden Frogs.....	18
Pix	19
Giverny	20

From the MG Coordinator

by Wendy Silverman

Do you know that we have 69 different Master Gardener projects? Some of these are onetime activities like Eastmont Tomato Festival and others go year-round like the Pulaski Adult Day Care Therapy Garden. We do so much good in the New River Valley. But some Master Gardeners don't know where to put their volunteer efforts. I encourage you all to try a new project, just once. Experience something that you normally wouldn't volunteer in, try something new that may interest you, or volunteer in a onetime activity that you have never done before. It could be a plant clinic at a new festival, or volunteering as a shuttle driver for Master Gardener College.

Remember, the weekly updates that I send out are for plant clinics, other onetime events, and educational opportunities. It does not include ongoing, long-term projects. The project leaders have volunteer schedules that are communicated to the project teams. You need to contact the project leader to be involved in a projects.

If you are not sure of the projects we offer, go to Better Impact. Look under the tab Opportunities, and then click on Opportunity List. If you click on the "I" you will get a description of the project and the name and email of the person in charge of that project. Email that person for more details.

We do amazing work. But most importantly, I want to you enjoy your time volunteering for the Master Gardener Program. So get out there, try a new Master Gardener Volunteer experience, and have fun!



Wendy Silverman

Art Camp in Floyd

by Rona Vrooman

Kids attending Art Camp at the Floyd Center for the Arts learned about pollinators both outside and inside the classroom. They first visited the Pollinator Garden, maintained by Master Gardener Liz Mears, and marveled at the array of plants and level of insect activity going on.

After talking about the role of pollinators in the ecosystem, students selected materials for their respective art projects. The pollinator garden offered choices such as bee balm, coneflower, cosmos, lavender, and spiderwort. Additional flowers were available thanks to plantings by Floyd Flower Power, a branch of Partnership for Floyd, as well as the instructors, Master Gardener Volunteer Rona Vrooman, and Floyd Center for the Arts Board Member Judy MacPhail.

As class progressed, there was also an opportunity to dissect flowers and visually show the petals, sepals, stamens, and pistils.

The younger group made sun catchers for the window to preserve and display flowers and leaves. The older group used the pigments found in flowers and plants as dyes to design and create stunning designs.

As you can see, the Pollinator Garden at the Floyd Center for the Arts nurtures both nature and creativity.



Photo: Rona Vrooman



Photos: Ruth Ann & Olin Whitener

The NRV Fair, in Pictures

by Sue Perry



Elementary School Veggie Garden Project

by Erica Jones

Here in the western part of the state, Extension saw fit to combine 4.5 counties into one Master Gardener program. The .5 comes from the problems of physical proximity and ease of getting around in some of the counties. Craig County Master Gardeners can either volunteer with the Roanoke-Salem group or the New River Valley group (which has four counties combined).

Elementary schools vary pretty wildly in our four-county area when it comes to how interested they are in having Master Gardeners come into the school or schools in that county. Extension personnel come and go, particularly Extension 4-H leaders. One of the problem with having garden clubs is hosting/housing in individual schools. The county I live in has been blessed with a newly-hired but very experienced Extension 4-H leader, so having an elementary-level garden program was suddenly "a go" after years of "no-go".

McCleary Elementary School has an unused courtyard area with four good-sized enclosed beds. There is built-in seating and an outdoor water source if you bring your own "key." The hose did vanish though. The school administration was a little reluctant to let us meet inside ("it is a GARDEN club, right?") but eventually assigned us a spot. We kept our *dirt* outside, honest! Inside, we've given talks about plant parts, transplanting, and one particularly fun program the Extension agent organized on fruits and vegetables. Mind you, a fruit is anything that is the result of the flowering process, so squash and peppers are fruit. A vegetable is any other part of the plant, so rhubarb is a vegetable. Some of the kids caught on faster than some of the adults!

For that program, we cut up fruits and vegetables and gave out samples. The rule was if you do not at least TRY it, you do not get to snuggle with our 4-legged cohort Summer (who happens to be a Golden Retriever therapy dog). That worked like a charm! We cut up, sampled, and passed out pieces of *Hylocereus undatus* (aka dragon fruit) which no one in the room had ever eaten before. Luckily, dragon fruit tastes a lot better than it looks. The fruit is a smooth red, weighs less than a pound, has large bracteoles, and light pink flesh. I cooked rhubarb and learned that only 33% had tried it before.

Still in the food theme, I sneaked in before we started the meetings in April and planted snap peas, lettuce, and kale in the raised beds in March. I got lucky with the rain, and we got bumper crops of peas, leaf lettuce, and kale. The kids were very happy to go outside and help us weed (I supplied a set of hand tools) and water the beds with milk jugs IF we let them munch on the greens and peas. At least three of the children had never eaten snap peas before. Several had to be convinced that the whole thing was edible, not just the seeds within. The peas were so popular that, at the last meeting, I had to divvy them out. The last meeting was in May. By then, the lettuce tasted a little bitter and was not as popular.

We also planted pumpkins (from seed), gourds (again from seed), and two tomato plants. I was able to visit the beds a couple of times this summer. The tomatoes are mulched, and I hope the vines will overtake the weeds. I prayed for rain.

We managed to expand some palates in the under-14 population of Craig County. I call that success!

Matthews Living History Farm Museum by Rona Vrooman

On a recent road trip to Galax, Virginia, we took a brief detour and discovered the Matthews Living History Farm Museum. According to the self-guided tour brochure, the museum represents farm life in 1900 in Grayson County. You can see livestock including pigs, sheep, oxen, horses, chickens, and ducks, as well as several historic structures on site. The main house is currently being renovated.

We were the only visitors there when we heard a welcoming "hello" coming from the garden area. There we met Shirley, a Master Gardener intern. She told us the theme of the plot was gardening through the ages. She was tending the "Three Sisters" area. Another portion was dedicated to a Victory Garden and still another to medicinal plants.

Although our time was quiet, the Farm hosts a variety of events and activities including demonstrations, tours, and music. The Farm is located a little over one hour from the Montgomery County Government Center, and its website is <https://matthewsfarmmuseum.org/>



Photos: Rona Vrooman

Pizza with Stan & Gabby

NRVMGA PIZZA PARTY

THURSDAY,
SEPT. 12TH
6PM

RAIN OR SHINE

BRING A SIDE OR DESSERT TO SHARE.
ALSO, BYOB (WINE GLASSES AVAILABLE)
FAMILY & FRIENDS WELCOME.

RSVP REQUIRED BY SEPT. 4TH!





HYDROPONICS
 presented by:
 Challen Waller & Aurora Wood
 Innovative Agriculture Club of Virginia Tech

Learn about hydroponic growing and leave the workshop with your very own Kratky Hydroponic System.

Saturday, Sept. 14th
10:30am - noon

Blacksburg Community Center
 725 Patrick Henry Dr., Blacksburg

Register here:
<https://tinyurl.com/hydroworkshop2024>

Workshop Fee:
 \$10 per person (\$5 for students)
 Cash or Check (payable to: NRVMGGA)

FREE for Master Gardeners
 Thanks to the generosity of the
 New River Valley Master Gardener Association



Plant Swap

by Gwen Ewing

Blacksburg public library has a table of rooted or potted plants to swap with other library patrons. I think it's a good idea. Pass-along plants are always welcome. If you have any extras, take them to the Blacksburg public library.

Paper is available for marking the name of the plant, as well as notes on the light and water requirements.

Could you set one of these swap tables up in your local public library for Giles, Floyd, or Pulaski? Or are they already there?



Photo: Gwen Ewing

Note From the President

I hope everyone has enjoyed their summer.

Recalling how we started the year: The theme for 2024 is Making Big Ideas Bloom.

Last year, we responded to members' requests for improving opportunities for socializing within the Association's activities. This year, we wanted to build on that work and focus on teamwork opportunities.

As part of the teamwork goal, we established two priorities for this year: 1) pollinators, and 2) food security, by starting a Grow A Row project with targets of 50% of the Board and 50% of members participating.

What has happened since the last Grapevine:

- ⇒ Our first NRVMG Pollinator Week garden list effort was a success. Thanks to all of you who shared the flyer on social media and took flyers to hang up in key locations. I received a lot of positive feedback from places where I dropped off flyers, and I made a point to visit all of the gardens on the list. [A lot of impressive work is going on in our group. Please take photos and share the pics and stories with the Facebook team, so we can share this wonderful information with our communities to encourage the next generation of Master Gardeners!]
- ⇒ Book club meetings and educational opportunities led by Ashley Johnson.
- ⇒ Rain barrel making workshops led by Stan Stanley (and rain barrel cleaning efforts!)

There is still time to contribute to our Grow a Row team effort. My push behind this project was to provide an opportunity for as many NRVMGs as possible to contribute to one team effort. There are a lot of us with a lot of different demands for our time doing a lot of different (and important) projects. The annual Plant Sale is our biggest in-person team effort, but some people cannot attend or participate in person.

The Grow a Row project takes place over months; you could participate alone or with a gardening buddy(ies) (and MANY thanks to those of you who volunteered to be a buddy). You could use produce from a MG project (and still give a majority of that produce to Share the Spare if you wished). By November, we'd have the results of a truly NRVMG team effort that directly addressed food insecurity in our communities. And you would have earned MG hours!

It seems to be a winning combination of many suggestions I have heard from members. As I am writing this, Jim Bixby has informed me that we are up to 12 MG participants and over 1,000 lbs. of produce donated throughout our communities.

My own goal was to see if we could get to 50% member participation and 1,000 lbs. of produce. One part of that goal has been reached! Even if you just donated a pound or two (and update Jim), that would help make this team effort a real success.

Sometimes, a new activity helps a group to think in new ways, and every organization needs that type of exercise now and then to keep it flexible and enable it to thrive in the future.

And speaking of new ways of thinking: October will bring with it the open period for NRVMGGA grant applications. We have a lot of funds, thanks to the Plant Sale, so help us spread the word to our project partners to consider applying for a grant. Late October/early November will also bring nominations for candidates for election to the NRVMGGA Board at the annual end-of-year potluck and educational meeting in November.

Start thinking about whether you'd like to serve on the NRVMGGA Board. Most positions on the Board are for one year, although the President and Treasurer positions are traditionally two-year terms. I have enjoyed my time as President, and I greatly appreciate working with all of you in this role.

Given the depth of talent and experience in the NRVMGGA, revolving the Board roles is advisable so that everyone has an opportunity to contribute to the organization. Feel free to ask anyone on the Board, or previous office holders, about their experiences and roles and consider being nominated. Everyone helps each other, so even if you have no idea about organizational procedure, it doesn't matter. Jump on in; we'll figure it out together.

Many thanks,

Sarah Smiley, NRVMGGA President 2022-2024

Clafoutis

by Erica Jones

Clafoutis is a yummy French dessert. The proper French pronunciation is cla-foo-TEE, which might alleviate rolled eyes from your waiter if you order it in a restaurant in France. The waiters there haven't gotten the word yet about rolling eyes and the effect on tips. But here in the US, your waiter will hopefully not care how you say it! And in my opinion, this is a good way to dress up berry fruit and makes a fabulous breakfast in the summer. In the fall and winter, you can make it with apples and/or cranberries, but they require an additional step to prepare.

Fruit Clafoutis Recipe

Preheat your oven (honest) to 425 F. I bake this in a 12" cast iron skillet, also preheated.

Fruit:

- ⇒ 1 pint of blueberries, raspberries, or blackberries. Add 1 banana (or just use more fruit).
- ⇒ Grated peel one orange
- ⇒ Or, for the apple version, 3 very large apples (or 4 medium), approximately one pound. See below.

Pancake:

- ⇒ 3 large eggs
- ⇒ $\frac{3}{4}$ C milk
- ⇒ $\frac{3}{4}$ C white flour
- ⇒ $\frac{1}{2}$ t salt
- ⇒ 1 $\frac{1}{2}$ T butter, oil, or combination.

Beat these 5 together until smooth.

Dump berries in bottom of greased hot skillet; you can sprinkle 1 T sugar if you really want to. Pour pancake batter on top. Bake 15- 25 minutes. Might puff up; should brown a smidge. Don't overcook; once it is set up it is fair game to serve.

The apple version:

For the apple version you have to precook the apples in your greased skillet until almost soft. I semi-peel them and slice fairly thinly. Add 1 T sugar, cinnamon, lemon juice, and nuts. You can also add $\frac{1}{4}$ C raw, chopped cranberries, and/or 2 T toasted walnuts. When the apples are almost done, pour pancake on top and bake for 15-25 minutes.

My Lilacs

by Hugh Osmus

The lilacs in our garden were found in the woods along Glenkirk Road....

Dec. 2004

Many years ago, long before the building of Lake Manassas Reservoir, there was a shantytown of some 20 homes built along a dirt road a few miles from Haymarket, VA. Though I don't know the origin of it, I found evidence that there had been a large plantation in the area. We moved to our first Gainesville, VA house 17 years ago, which backed to Glenkirk Road. Back then my dog Baby and I explored the area, poking through the remains of the fallen down shacks and wandering through the woods and brambles that edge the lake and Broad Run. I found old stone fences in places where the land had been cleared for fields but had gone back to nature, and in one of the shacks, I found remnants of a WWI uniform. It was in tatters, but I saved the buttons. In the field near these old shacks, I found lily of the valley, fragrant burgundy roses, white and pink lilacs, daffodils, daylilies, periwinkle, and wisteria spreading out in all directions. Together with a few neighbor ladies, we dug plants from those old home sites for two years, rescuing them back to our new gardens in the Rocky Run subdivision.

I often wonder if someday, someone will come upon those gardens we planted and rescue them back to a new home, or if even now a car drives down Glenkirk, stops, and a voice says, "Kids, this is where I grew up. Right here! We had a little cabin and used to go play down the path there in grandma's garden. Sometimes she'd catch us tramping on her flowers and chase us all around with a switch, but it was just a game, you know. Then she'd call us over and tell us the names of all the plants, which ones were her favorites, and which you could eat, or make a poultice from. I guess some say it was hard times back then, but how I did love to listen to grandma's stories."

That is the origin of my lilacs and some of my daylilies and roses. The lily of the valley and white lilac remain at the old house, but I brought the other plants with me to this new home in Blacksburg. Those old shacks have been bulldozed and new homes now cover all traces that they were ever there, but the flowers and I know. And we share the memory of those days with every spring bloom, honoring the woman who brought them to life so many years ago, and loved them every day, forever.



Stock photo: Pixabay

How to Plant Your Garden

Author Unknown, submitted by Gwen Ewing

First, you come to the garden alone, while the dew is still on the roses...
FOR THE GARDEN OF YOUR DAILY LIVING,

PLANT THREE ROWS OF PEAS

Peace of mind
Peace of heart
Peace of soul

PLANT FOUR ROWS OF SQUASH

Squash gossip
Squash indifference
Squash grumbling
Squash selfishness

PLANT FIVE ROWS OF LETTUCE

Lettuce be faithful
Lettuce be kind
Lettuce be patient
Lettuce be thankful
Lettuce really love one another

NO GARDEN IS COMPLETE WITHOUT TURNIPS

Turnip for meetings
Turnip for service
Turnip to help one another

TO CONCLUDE OUR GARDEN WE MUST HAVE THYME

Thyme for each other
Thyme for family
Thyme for friends

WATER FREELY WITH PATIENCE AND CULTIVATE WITH LOVE. THERE IS MUCH FRUIT IN
YOUR GARDEN BECAUSE YOU REAP WHAT YOU SOW.

Pulaski County Youth Center Youth Garden

by Angela Scott

Sweet and wonderful things are happening at the Pulaski County Youth Center (PCYC) Youth Garden. Ask the hawks, vultures, bees, butterflies, and hummingbirds flying over the community center's courtyard; they know. And of course, you can ask the "Junior Gardeners" who attend the licensed preschool and the after school and special summer camp. They will enthusiastically share what they are learning. They work together, very hard, digging and filling wheelbarrows and beds with soil, mulch, and rocks! They have planted, composted, explored, and collected grubworms, earthworms, caterpillars, and cicada skins.

With joy and wonder, they will call out to one another, "Come see this!" Recently, it was a black swallowtail butterfly caterpillar munching on our parsley! They have discovered new shoots, leaves, vegetables, and fruits, including footlong beans on the tipi, cantaloupe on the vines, and squash and watermelon spilling over the beds.

Our Master Gardener project manager, Beth Kirby, has done an impressive job making her vision of a community garden ecology come to life. She has worked collaboratively with the community center to fence in the courtyard area for safety, protection from wildlife, and as a designed structure for the plantings. The courtyard has a water garden to address rain runoff. Project manager Beth, "Miss Beth", has been careful to include many Virginia native plants and offer education about invasives and pest management and composting.

The hummingbirds are finding their way to our feeder, and the children are learning to monitor rainfall in our rain gauge. Children are given ample opportunities to use gardeners' equipment like gloves, shovels, composters, and special handled carrying bags. All the hard work is paying off as we pick squash, cucumbers, beans, and herbs. Soon there will be pumpkins!

We have a taste test at the end of our work. This is a time for the children to learn about new foods that we are growing and to taste them! They have had so many interesting foods, like pesto, zucchini brownies, tzatziki, sundried tomatoes, and homemade pickles.

Master Gardeners Penny Tully and Angela Scott volunteer with Beth, helping to keep up with all the plants, plans, weeds, questions, and enthusiasm.

The Master Gardener Youth Garden at PCYC supports the center's vision of focusing on creativity, team-based problem solving, and the development of positive social skills. Our Master Gardeners guide the children through activities that reinforce the value of gardening, build resilience, teach life skills, and hopefully empower them to explore life's possibilities.

"May we raise children who love the unloved things - the dandelion, the worms & spiderlings. Children who sense the rose needs the thorn and run into rainswept days the same way they turn towards sun...And when they're grown & someone has to speak for those who have no voice may they draw upon that wilder bond, those days of tending tender things and be the ones" **Nicolette Sowder**

Come and enjoy our Garden Party Tour and Fundraiser Event:

September 20, 2024

5pm-7pm

6671 Riverlawn Court

Fairlawn, VA

Get your tickets [here](#)

Nestled on the banks of the New River, the PCYC is a 501(c)(3) non-profit organization located in the former Riverlawn Elementary School in Fairlawn, Virginia. The idea for PCYC was conceived in 2017 through a collaborative community effort to increase support for youth and families in Pulaski County.

Reynolds Homestead Tour - Master Gardener College

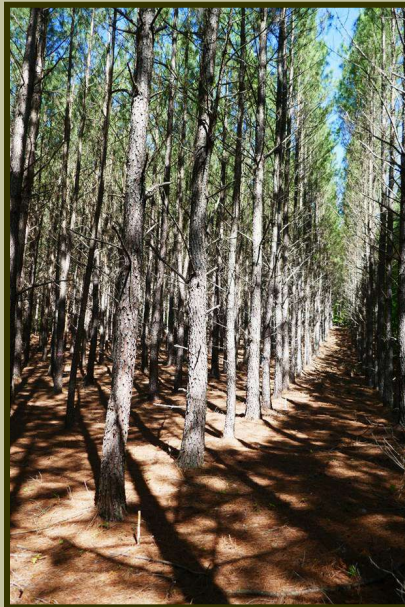
by Erica Jones

We had a very small group converge on the Reynolds Homestead for the Friday in-person tours for Master Gardener College. You all missed out!! There was me (from Craig County), two folks from Washington County, one from Patrick County, and Extension Agent Shawn Jadrnicek from Roanoke County.



In 1970, Virginia Tech was given about 700 acres and buildings from a Reynolds family member. Driving up to the Community Engagement Center (aka meeting rooms), it was impossible to miss the aging catalpa in the yard of the brick house. And no, the catalpa did not make the cut to get into "The Remarkable Trees of Virginia." The authors of that book found some other arguably better looking catalpas to include.

The catalpa is in what used to be the left side yard of the house. The front door is behind the tree, which is where the main thoroughfare was.



For the morning, we did a walk through the mostly loblolly pine plantings and walked along what used to be some of the tobacco fields. Virginia Tech planted some loblollies near the entrance. These are now about 50 years old. We walked through a loblolly plantation planted in 2009 and a short leaf pine plantation planted in 2011. Our tour guide talked about a study using genetic clones to look at the differences in growth between southern Virginia, North Carolina, and Brazil. He said the Brazil trees are doing the best; their needles seem to be more shade tolerant, and they don't drop lower limbs like the Virginia and NC pines do.

Virginia Tech is using most of the property (former tobacco fields) to do research on growing timber. Different techniques are used on different plots. The plot in the picture to the left was planted in four strains of genetically identical loblollies of the same age.

The center also did a study on three types of stream crossings: a wooden bridge, a metal culvert, and a very level ford. For the ford, they put down some variety of landscape fabric and put large rocks on top of that. The crossing was quickly covered in sand from the creek and resulted in the least sediment runoff of the three treatments. When we saw the ford, you never would have guessed what was underneath. The trick with this type of creek crossing is to find a relatively level place and make sure the crossing area is at the same level as the creek coming into it.

We brought our own lunches. In the afternoon, we had a talk from a Master Gardener on the weird things trees do to reproduce (can we say sex???) and then a docent-led tour of the house. We all were invited to stay for Saturday's beer tasting (our tour guide, the forestry manager Clay, was going to serve beer!). They were also having a Juneteenth celebration in the evening of the 19th.

Inside the meeting room were copies of local censuses from 1910 to 1950. Up to about 1940, the census used the term mulatto. The local population was declining during this period, probably due to less available plantation work.

References

- https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Reynolds_Homestead
- <https://reynoldshomestead.vt.edu>



The Virginia Tech Weed Competition

by Erica Jones

I helped at the Southern Weed Society contest (<https://www.swss.ws/collegiate-weeds-contest/>), which was held August 7th at Kentland Farm this year. I hadn't been to Kentland farm for years, so it was nice to see it again.

Students from southern colleges took part in about 5 contests. The one I thought would be easy, yet was totally not easy, was the ID part. Yeah, we should know our local weeds. What we do NOT know is what the cotyledons look like, and maybe what the seeds look like. I was directed to the very youthful kudzu plants. I never would have recognized them!

There were also four entries that were seeds only. The web site has a list of 100 possible weeds. Two that I've never heard of are Amazon and bearded sprangletop. Is there a market for these seeds? My copy of *Weeds of the Northeast* does include pictures of very young plants and some seeds, but not for all the plants in the book.

Another competition took place among long rows of 10 or so fairly young plants (both weeds and field crops) where different herbicides had been applied to them. The beds were labeled with when the pre-emergent and post-emergent herbicides had been applied, and the student had to name the herbicide(s) used. The website has a list of 28 possible herbicides.

A third competition involved reading a brief herbicide-related scenario and then discussing solutions in front of a panel of judges. The one involving "the neighbor's goat died after herbicide was applied" got a lot of grumbling. And a fourth competition involved calibrating sprayers.

By mid-afternoon, the students were looking a bit wilted, and I don't think the wilt was due to ambient temperatures but rather how tough the competition was (students from Florida praised us for the temperature!). Grad school winners: U. Arkansas. Undergrad school winners: U. Tennessee.

A Reason to Judge at Local Fairs

by Adam Burke

Young people today are challenged in ways their parents never were. They have experienced a pandemic that affected academic continuity, social media that creates unrealistic comparisons and a diminished sense of self-worth, global dependence on fossil fuels threatening the very fabric of our climate with devastating effects from fires to floods, AI and robotics creating a sense of uncertainty around future careers, toxic politics pitting neighbor against neighbor, and on it goes. Problems like these are negatively affecting the mental health of young people today, resulting in unprecedented levels of anxiety, depression, suicidal ideation, underperformance in school, and a diminished sense of direction and meaning. One study using data from the Healthy Minds Network annual student survey found a 50 percent increase in mental health issues from 2013 to 2021.

Making a difference in this trend is one important reason to judge at local fairs. When I signed up, this idea did not register as a reason to participate. I needed to complete hours for my Master Gardener internship, thought it might be fun, and figured it would give me a better sense of my new(ish) Appalachian home. So I agreed to judge horticulture at the New River Valley Fair in Dublin this summer.

I had gotten some judging materials from Wendy. They were instructions on how to judge flowers. I was not quite sure why I got that package as I had volunteered to judge horticulture, which I thought would be fruits and vegetables (as noted above: still intern level, did not know flowers also fell into that category). I read through the material and assimilated what I could, then headed off to Dublin.

When I arrived, I realized this was a smaller county fair. Dublin is located in Pulaski County, a rural, mountain community of about 34,000 people. According to the 2022 USDA County Profile, there are 390 farms in the county. Hay was the top crop with 18,000 acres cultivated. The livestock inventory noted 28,000 head of cattle, 214 goats, plenty of chickens, and all the rest. On a related note, a 2017 survey by the American Farm Bureau Federation noted that over half of farmers in the United States have been directly impacted in some way by the opioid crisis. Overdose deaths are significantly higher in rural communities compared to urban, and Virginia is in the top eight states in the country with this distinction according to the CDC.

So when I stepped into the judging pavilion, there were no 200 pound watermelons or 3 pound tomatoes waiting to be reviewed. No bluegrass stars singing on stage into the night. This was a smaller, local, homegrown, community-creating community event. I found the two experienced Master Gardeners I would be judging with, Wendy and Beth. There was a small group of people judging various categories, such as baked goods and canned items. A woman with the fair described the process to us and the new computer system they were using to record scores. Once that was complete, we headed to our areas.

We spent the next few hours looking at entries from two groups of contestants, youth and adult, and various categories within each group, including individual flowers, potted plants, and arrangements. As we worked through the adult entries, there were some standouts and some that were humbler (that last bunch gave me hope for my own garden aspirations). The prizes were small, maybe enough

money to buy ice cream for two at the fair. This reminded me of the Kaizen continual improvement philosophy (used by Toyota and others) that advocates giving rewards to employees if they recognize problems in production or offer solutions to those problems. In Kaizen, the prizes are small as the emphasis is not on the gift so much as it is on contributing to the success of the community, to making a meaningful contribution.

Using a similar process, we also judged the youth contributions. There were three groups: elementary, middle, and high school, with similar categories to the adult entries. Some of the entries were cute, like two little marigolds in a small juice bottle (elementary school, but hey, I could imagine myself entering something similar!). There were also some very thoughtful entries that all three of us found impressive. Similar to the adult entries, there were ribbons and a small cash prize for the top three contestants. What was different in the youth category was that every child who entered got a ribbon and a bit of money. Why the difference? I assume it was meant to be a statement to each of those children. It said, "We see you. We recognize your effort. You are an important member of this community. Thank you for contributing to it."

While we were judging the youth entries, I was struck by something the woman organizing the event had said to all of us before we started. I do not remember specifically if someone had asked about how much money we were giving away. For whatever reason, she told us that the amount of money we were spending on the kids entering this event was less than a year's worth of shampoo for an inmate at the county jail. Looking at those two little marigolds in the humble juice bottle, it was clear why I was there. Kids today are struggling. We need to rebuild community and provide safe and meaningful spaces where everyone can belong, participate, be seen, and know that they are important contributors to our common ground. If you have an opportunity to judge at a local fair, do not underestimate the difference it can make.

References

Lipson, Sarah Ketchen, et al. "Trends in college student mental health and help-seeking by race/ethnicity: Findings from the national healthy minds study, 2013–2021." *Journal of affective disorders*. 306 (2022): 138-147.

https://www.nass.usda.gov/Publications/AgCensus/2022/Online_Resources/County_Profiles/Virginia/cp51155.pdf

<https://www.usda.gov/topics/opioids>

<https://www.cdc.gov/nchs/products/databriefs/db440.htm>

Falling Branch Elementary Garden Frogs

by Toni Pitts



Project team members are: Martha Akers, Toni Pitts, Sharon Babineau, Ashley Johnson, & Saroja Chadalavada (not all pictured)

Summer Highlights

(more summer photos to be found throughout)



Hydrangea
Photo: Susan Perry



Casa de l'Ardiaca (Archdeacon's House), Barcelona
Photo: Bill Kealy



Oak Leaf Hydrangea
Photo: Rona Vrooman



Photo: Ruth Ann & Olin Whitener

Claude Monet, the Gardener

by Judith Rea

I had the pleasure of visiting France in the fall last year, and although, as a former French teacher, it was not my first trip to France, it was my first visit to Claude Monet's home and his famous gardens in Giverny. As a lover of Impressionism, I had always wanted to visit Giverny, but it wasn't until this last trip that I made it a priority to see his acclaimed gardens and the lovely pink house. That visit became one of the highlights of the trip. The beauty of the grounds and gardens was so much more than I expected; I was truly overwhelmed. It also became a respite for a day, as the very fast-paced and crowded city of Paris put me in overdrive and I needed a day of quiet, beauty, and relaxation.

Giverny is located approximately 50 miles outside of Paris, and it is where Monet lived for over 30 years. According to the Normandy tour guide Brigitte Mueller, Monet was traveling on a train from Normandy when "He looked out the window and saw this charming village. So he just got off the train." She said, "He walked until the first pub, sat down, had a big jug of cider, and talked to the local people." When he learned that a farm a couple of kilometers from the village was for rent, he decided to lease it for himself and his family, which included his partner and future wife Alice, his two children, and her six, in 1883. It was there he made their home, completely transforming the former farm into a tranquil and beautifully landscaped refuge. It was where he would live until his death in 1926 at age 86.



La Grande Alleé (the large pathway) to the house. Climbing white roses on the green arches, the pathway carpeted with nasturtiums, aster, heliopsis, and rudbeckia.

Monet is considered the leader of the Impressionist movement. In fact, it was his painting **Impression, Soleil Levant** (Impression, Sunrise) that gave the name to the movement. He and other Impressionists generally painted not in a studio but outside, where light played a crucial part in the creation of their art. He attempted to capture impressions of what he saw and felt at a particular moment in time. Flowers, gardens, bridges, water, the sea, haystacks, cathedrals, and the natural world became his inspiration. As I was walking through his gardens, it was literally like being in some of his paintings. Monet was constantly trying to perfect his painting "impressions." He wrote to his friend Gustave Geoffrey, a journalist and art critic, "I am again trying to capture what cannot be captured: Water with rippling grass in the background..." He never stopped trying to capture what nature provided him in his own landscapes.



Dahlias ... and more dahlias..... Dahlia vairabilis "Purple haze" (on R).

Many of us are familiar with Monet as a renowned Impressionist painter. In particular, his water lilies series are some of the most recognized paintings in the world. Many of the very large panels of the lilies can be viewed at the museum of L'Orangerie with a dedicated round room (designed by Monet). You can look at them here: <https://www.musee-orangerie.fr/en/node/197502>

What many may not know is that Monet was a very passionate, dedicated, and learned gardener. Monet was inspired by the English and Japanese styles of gardening as opposed to the very formal and structured French style. Instead of spacing beds apart, he covered every inch of his space with annuals, perennials, biennials, and paths. He created a palette of many colors but pointedly used white as well. The seasons were always considered in his garden planning; when some plants withered, others would bud, always providing a source of almost yearlong color. In total he had 3 acres of ornamental gardens and 2.5 acres of vegetable gardens.

Over the years, as Monet's fame rose and he was selling more paintings, he was able to purchase the house and the surrounding farm land. Monet immediately set to work transforming the property. He began with the gardens closest to the house. He removed an apple orchard, boxwoods, and spruce trees. He kept the path and installed metal arches. He painted the shutters and the grids of the windows green and used the same shade of green to later paint two bridges and other garden structures throughout. He enlisted the help of his children, his wife Alice, as well as several friends. One gardening friend who helped, Gustave Caillebotte, another Impressionist painter, also had an interest in gardening, and they swapped seeds and cuttings and exchanged advice and expertise on all things flowers and gardens. The Master Gardeners of Giverny!

As the years progressed, he purchased a strip of land and dug a basin on the plot and then had an arm of the Epte River diverted to feed the basin. This created his beloved pond, and that is where he created the Japanese water garden. He filled the pond with water lilies and bordered it with weeping willows, bamboo, and irises, his favorite flower. In particular he favored the Iris Germanica. He also built the bridge in the Japanese style. As many know, with any water feature, upkeep can be difficult. Monet hired a gardener who was solely in charge of the pond. His job consisted of fishing out the leaves and debris and keeping out the water rats that ate the water lilies.



This stream flows into the pond. A stand of bamboo.



Anemone, red maple, weeping willow, azalea, and lilies, not in bloom.

Monet later added another plot of land on which he built a garden modeled after a formal garden at the Luxembourg in Paris. With lines, squares, and rectangles, symmetry is a main component. In another of Monet's gardens around his home, the spaces are more irregular and asymmetrical and the shapes are more natural. This garden tripled the size of the pond. He also built another bridge at the end of the pond.

Monet began to work with a horticulturalist, Joseph Bory Latour-Marliac (noted for creating hardy hybrid water lilies), and eventually hired six gardeners to help maintain his botanical haven. Our guide told us there are now twelve gardeners working to maintain the property and gardens. Monet's dedication and work created a beautiful living canvas and extraordinary art. Famously, Monet once said, "Gardening and painting apart, I'm no good at anything."



Two sisters, a brother-in-law, and me on the bridge. Heavy wisteria hangs over it.

All photos: Judith Rea

For more information:

A list of the trees, plants, and flowers in Monet's garden: <https://giverny.org/gardens/fcm/fleurs/listflor.htm>

A map of the gardens: <https://giverny.org/gardens/fcm/planjard.htm>

A flowering calendar of his garden: <https://giverny.org/gardens/fcm/calendar.htm>

Other references:

Daily Art Magazine: <https://www.dailyartmagazine.com/claude-monets-garden-giverny/>

An article in Alethea Magazine that describes how the gardens and home were restored: <https://www.alethea-magazine.com/THE-HISTORY-OF-GIVERNY-Claude-Monets-house-and-garden>

Monet's Garden in Giverny: <https://www.mdig.fr/en/discover-the-museum/explore-impressionism/themes/monet-s-garden-in-giverny/>

Art and Object magazine: <https://www.artandobject.com/news/explore-claude-monets-iconic-garden-giverny>



Photo: Ruth Ann & Olin Whitener



Photo: Ruth Ann & Olin Whitener



Photo: Ruth Ann & Olin Whitener

NRVMGA Executive Board

President: Sarah Smiley

Vice President: Ashley Johnson

Secretary: Erica Jones

Treasurer: Beth Kirby

Members at Large

Luralee Cornwall

Gwen Ewing

Karen Parker

Morgan St. Laurent

MG Coordinator: Wendy Silverman, wss@vt.edu

Website: www.nrvmastergardeners.com

VCE Montgomery County Office: 540-382-5790



Comments, questions, and submissions can be sent to Susan Perry

Thank you to everyone who contributed to this issue of the newsletter.

A special thanks to Pat Norris!