

# The Garden Post

## Northern Neck Master Gardeners

Vol. 1 Issue 1



### President's Message

Hello NNMGs and welcome to the inaugural issue of our new newsletter, the Garden Post,

This last year has been a learning one – how to safely continue EMG programs in “the age of COVID.”

This year, monthly meetings will be via Zoom and emphasize **CE programs**. If you have any ideas for CE topics, contact Tami McCauley.

The **Teaching Gardens** are open and would welcome new volunteers. Contact Janice Mahoney.

The **Plant Sale** is at Dug In Farms April 30 to May 2 from 9 a.m. until 3 p.m. Contact Michelle Kramer know if you want to be part of it.

If we have a presence at the **Farmers Markets** – Sue Kosinski is our leader.

The **Help Desk** is still virtual. Contact Henry Riely if you'd like to help.

We have several committees set up to take a look at programs and generate ideas for new endeavors. They are:

- **Publicity/Communications** – Carolyn Gorman
- **Community Education** – Betty Mill
- **Children's Education** – Bethany Besold and Carmela Crawford
- **Speakers Bureau** – Bonnie Schaschek and Kathy Powell
- **Technology** – Cindy Dullea

The **Shoreline Evaluation Program** will have training programs and homeowner evaluations led by Mary Turville. So - lots of ways to be involved. I look forward to seeing you on Zoom.

**Marge Gibson**

### Inside this issue

Farm Museum As We Grow.....	2
Stratford Hall Garden .....	3
Plant Profile.....	4
Shoreline Evaluation Program ....	5
Springtime Garden Chores .....	7
Agriculture Updates .....	8
Garden Habitats.....	9
Monarch Butterflies .....	11
Virtual International Master Gardener Conference.....	12
Better Impact .....	13



## Farm Museum As We Grow

by Janice Mahoney, Teaching Gardens Chair

The NNMG vegetable garden at the Northern Neck Farm Museum will start the season in late March, early April. An organizing meeting was held via Zoom on February 23. The discussions included the rotation of the crops in the beds; what variety of vegetables will be planted and the timing.

Work projects for this year include rebuilding the three bin compost structure; cleaning up the area around the windmill; and securing weather resistant storage bins to store tools and materials.

This year's team leaders are Bonnie Schaschek and Susan Losapio. Both are very experienced vegetable gardeners

and have shared their expertise to the improvement of the bounty. In 2020, the EMGs harvested approximately 1,500 pounds of produce all of which was donated to the Warsaw Healthy Harvest Food Bank. Bountiful crops included blackberries, turnips, sweet potatoes, melons, sweet peppers, tomatoes, and cucumbers. New crops were introduced such as bok choy, kiwi vines, red onions, mustard greens, and garlic. The EMGs work at the garden every Tuesday morning.

***Work projects for this year include securing storage bins for tools and supplies.***



Jim is really watering the plants, not Deborah, in the renovated Pollinator Garden. Lynn, Kim, and Mary are keeping an eye on him.

## Historical Education Garden in the Northern Neck by Steve Mosier, NNMG

NNMGs are assisting with on-going maintenance of the historical vegetable garden at Stratford Hall. The work is part of Northern Neck Master Gardeners' continuous efforts to support historical gardens in the area. The gardens include George Washington Birthplace National Monument and Historic Christ Church and Museum.

Located in Westmoreland County, Stratford Hall is a National Historic Landmark that sits on nearly 2,000 acres along the Potomac River. It was home to four generations of the Lee family and birthplace of General Robert E. Lee. Today it is a showcase of 18th century plantation life and features interpretative displays of the social and cultural life of colonial times. In 2018, after three years of archaeological investigation and research by Stratford Hall and The Garden Club of Virginia, a mid-18th century plantation garden was added to the upper tier of the East Garden. The garden features ornamental flowering plants, evergreen hedges, vegetables, and espalier-trained fruit trees.

Although a gardener was hired to develop and tend this addition of plantation life, it was a significant undertaking. EMG Diane Smith, offered to help with the garden. Soon a group of Northern Neck Master Gardeners living in the area joined in the effort. The group rapidly became involved in the ongoing demands of maintaining the garden including working the soil, pruning, weeding, and attempting to keep the groundhogs at bay.

"Those of us who live in Westmoreland and Richmond counties welcome any additional projects closer to home such as the Stratford Hall vegetable garden," said Diane Smith, who spearheaded NNMG involvement. "We spend more time working & less time driving!"

The ornamental plants in the garden are types that were commonly available at the end of the 18th century. The vegetables are mostly chosen from Richard Henry Lee's memorandum of the same time period. According to the Stratford Hall website, the East Garden is now "...one of the most visually stunning and accurate displays of 18th century landscape in the country.

The East Garden showcases juxtaposed authentic 18th century and colonial revival garden designs." For more information on Stratford Hall, visit their website at [www.stratfordhall.org](http://www.stratfordhall.org).

Page, Jeff, Carla, and Steve prepare bed for planting in the Stratford Hall Garden.



## Plant Profile

by Anne Olsen

### ***From Deck to Dock: Plants for the Northern Neck Home—Wet, Dry, Sun, or Shade, we have a plant for YOU!***

Leave some space in your gardens for the plants the NNMGS will have for sale April 30 - May 2 at Dug In Farms, just south of Kilmarnock. Final selections have not been made as of the deadline for this publication because the organizers want to be sure they get the best plants they can from their suppliers.

It is hoped that selections for sunny areas will include butterfly weed (*Asclepias tuberosa*), false indigo (*Baptisia* sp.), coneflowers (*Echinacea* sp.), and Stokes' aster (*Stokesia laevis*). Shrubs for sun should include buttonbush (*Cephalanthus occidentalis*) and sweet pepperbush (*Clethra alnifolia*).

Plants for shade may include ostrich and Christmas ferns, spiderwort (*Trandescantia virginiana*), crested iris (*Iris cristata*), and the shrubs inkberry holly (*Ilex glabra*) and lowbush blueberry (*Vaccinium angustifolium*).

The sale will be held from 9 a.m. until 3 p.m. each day. Dug In Farms is located at 155 Fleets Bay Road, White Stone, VA 22578.



Sweet Pepperbush  
(*Clethra alnifolia*)



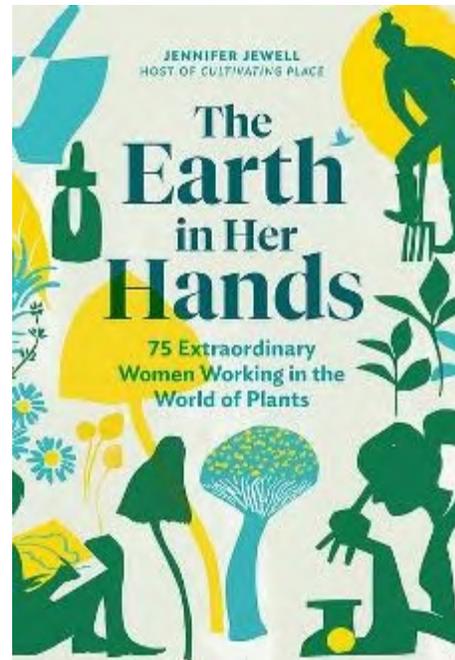
Inkberry Holly  
(*Ilex glabra*)

## ***The Earth in Her Hands***

by Jennifer Jewell

*The Earth in Her Hands*, by Jennifer Jewell, is presented in an easy-to-read way, featuring some familiar plantswomen along with many new names. In her book, Jewell introduces influential women working in wide-ranging fields including botany, floral design, landscape architecture, farming, herbalism, and food justice.

Excerpted from *In Season with MGPW*, written by Jamie Nick, Master Gardeners of Prince William



## **Shoreline Erosion Program Is Prepared for 2021**

by Ian Cheyne

The Shoreline Evaluation Program (SEP) is an educational outreach effort of the NNMG. Since 2012, the program has provided property owners with recommendations for improving upland stormwater management, controlling pollutant and sediment runoff, and addressing shoreline erosion.

“We start visiting properties in April and continue until the end of October,” said Mary Turville, chair of the SEP group. “We try to respond to all the applications we receive by the end of the season.”

“We took advantage of the forced downtime in 2020 to restructure our evaluation process to make it more comprehensive while reducing the turn-around time,” Turville

said. “We updated and expanded our *SEP Homeowners Shoreline Management Guide* and trained additional team members which will enable us to undertake more activities in the post-COVID-19 era.”

Climate change in eastern North America is bringing increased rainfall and severe storms making property stormwater management more important. Coupled with gradual sea-level rise, both effects add new challenges to waterfront property management.

When a request is received from a homeowner for an evaluation, a team of SEP members is assigned to visit the property and conduct a

*(Continued on page 6)*



Gail Cooper measures water depth

**SEP (continued from page 5)**

comprehensive assessment. The team develops a detailed report identifying concerns and recommending strategies to address identified vulnerabilities and issues.

The homeowner receives the report along with a copy of the “SEP Homeowner’s Guide to Shoreline Management.” The Homeowner’s Guide includes information about shoreline protection, creating and managing an effective

shoreline buffer, dealing with stormwater management, lists of native plants, and other useful information. The SEP team also follows up with the homeowner after the evaluation.

Mary recommended that “Homeowners looking for assistance with shoreline problems are encouraged to apply now for evaluations in 2021. Available slots go quickly.” To apply, go to [www.nnmg.org/sep](http://www.nnmg.org/sep).



SEP Evaluation Team members performing a site visit.

**In 2020, Northern Neck Master Gardeners drove 27,000 miles, made 1,300 educational contacts, and contributed a total of 6,320 volunteer hours valued at \$179,867\*.**

\*Based on a value of \$28.46/ hour from Independent Sector 2019 Value of Volunteer Hours by State

## Springtime Garden Projects

by Helen Johnson

Anxious to get out into your garden? Here are some tips on what you need to do in early spring.

Underneath all those dead leaves there's a lot going on. Now is the time to go outside and take a good look at your yard. I always look at my photographs from last year, and then recall which plants were healthy and happy needing relatively little care and which ones were barely surviving. Bottom line: Happy, healthy plants are well-worth keeping, but the ones that always struggle and never quite make it, they should go!

Gardening is supposed to be fun, and I don't waste my time and money on problem plants. Fill your garden with the plants that thrive in your growing conditions. Remember: "right plant in the right place."

Let's talk about shrubs. How did they do last year? Are they getting enough sun or maybe too much? Would some of them be better off in the shade? Remember, small flowering shrubs can be moved. Now is the time to plan for transplanting.

Overgrown shrubs are another problem and most of us have some of those. Do they need to be replaced or do they just need pruning? This is a good time of year to do that.

You may have noticed that the things you planted in the fall, pansies for example, seem to be heaving up from the ground. This is caused by winter temperature fluctuations that range from freezing to thawing. You can

help these plants by snuggling a layer of dried leaves or pine needles around them. That will give them some support and protect them from any late season freezing weather.

Also, now is the time to cut ornamental grasses all the way down to the ground. Small clumps can be cut by using a hand pruner, but big grass clumps are difficult and you're going to need some serious hedge trimmers for that. Regardless of the size of the grass clump, first encircle the clump with rope or twine and tie it off. Then when you cut the clump down, the grass will be in a bundle and the clean-up will be much easier.

Moving on to other sections of the garden, what is the right time to prune roses? Here is a good way to remember: when you see forsythia in bloom, that's when it is time to prune the roses.

This is also a good time to clean up Hellebores, which are also called Lenten Roses. Gently pull away last year's dead and damaged leaves to make way for the new ones. You can do the same thing with peonies, remove last year's dead leaves. Be careful not to damage the new red shoots coming up in the center of the plant. That's where the new growth is coming from.

### Happy Gardening!

[Editor's note: This article was used as the script for a WRAR radio interview by Carolyn Gorman, Communications Chair.]



Visit the  
**Northern Neck Master Gardeners at**  
**[www.nnmg.org](http://www.nnmg.org)**



Follow us on Facebook at  
**<https://www.facebook.com/NorthernNeckMasterGardeners>**

## Agriculture and Horticulture Update

by Trent Jones, Extension Agent Agriculture and Natural Resources and  
Stephanie Romelczyk, Extension Agent Crop and Soil Sciences

### From the Grain Bin

Though during the winter months, you may not have seen large farm equipment traveling the roads of the Northern Neck as frequently as you would during the warmer planting and harvest seasons, it doesn't mean that local grain farmers haven't been busy. This past season proved to be a challenge for Northern Neck grain producers who typically produce a rotation of corn, soybeans, wheat, barley, and canola.

Above average precipitation created wet field conditions that prolonged fall harvest and cover crop planting. As a result of the wet conditions, you may see fields with last years corn and soybean crops still standing.

Overwinter, farmers are faced with many decisions for the coming season. Decisions include crop variety selection and placement, soil fertility management, and

pest and disease control.

All of these decisions must be made prior to planting the first seed. The cooler months also provide farmers time for machine maintenance to ensure that all of their equipment is in good running order for the coming season. In February and March, producers carefully timed nitrogen application on their wheat crops as well as land applications of lime to avoid persistent rain events and wet field conditions.

Farmers begin planting their corn crop in early April followed closely with their soybeans. Agricultural activity in the fields will increase. Please be careful as you will see more ag equipment on the roads.



### Horticultural Happenings in the Northern Neck

Sometimes it seems that there isn't much down time for our horticultural producers in the Northern Neck! The four counties of the Northern Neck have a thriving horticultural industry made up of nurseries, vineyards, and fruit and vegetable farms. Our vegetable farmers have been starting transplants in greenhouses since February and have been planting cool-season crops out in the field since March. Pretty soon, we will be getting into strawberry harvest. Local vegetable

farmers are hopeful that this year's season will be as long as last year's (six weeks plus). Nurserymen are ramping up for their spring busy season, too.

Our agricultural workers are part of the essential food infrastructure, so Virginia Cooperative Extension along with Soil and Water Conservation Districts, USDA offices, trade organizations, VMRC, Farm Bureau and other organizations with ties to the industry are working on determining a headcount of those interested in a COVID vaccination clinic. Along with Richmond County Emergency Services and the Three Rivers Health District, we hope to get these agricultural workers vaccinated.

## Creating a Garden Habitat for Bees, Birds, and Butterflies

by Janice Mahoney, NNMG

### Upcoming NNMG Meeting CE Topics

**April 21** Guy Mussey, Stafford Co. Extension Agent, will present [Let's Talk Trees!](#)

**May 19** Bonnie Shaschek will educate and inform as she presents [Let's Talk Hydroponic Gardening](#)

**June 16** Dan Norton's topic will be [Let's Talk Bugs](#)

[The Zoom link for all meetings is: https://virginiatech.zoom.us/j/86074979549](https://virginiatech.zoom.us/j/86074979549)



To begin, you can transform your gardens into mini-sanctuaries for wildlife when you improve the habitat elements in your landscape, and when you concentrate your gardening efforts on creating these habitats. My garden habitats are designed to sustain birds, bees, and butterflies.

### Getting started

There are four essential ingredients to provide in your habitat: water, food, cover, and space. All wildlife species need **water** for drinking, and in particular, birds need water for bathing. If birds can't bathe, their feathers become dirty, making flight difficult. The best water source for birds and butterflies is a birdbath which should be no more than 3" deep. By adding pebbles or larger rocks to the basin, the birdbath also becomes a water source for butterflies.

**Food** sources vary for birds, bees, and butterflies. Birds eat nuts, berries, seeds, and insects. The insects provide essential proteins for birds. Food sources for the birds include Virginia creeper, coral honeysuckle,

American red holly, dogwood, and sunflower. Birds love the fruit of the blue berry bushes.

The main food sources for bees are the nectars from flowering plants. Common nectar plants in our area are sunflowers, coneflowers, bee balm, and zinnias. I would like to mention that honeybees are a domesticated species imported from Europe for agricultural pollination and honey production. They are not native.

Butterflies require two different food sources, host plants and nectar plants.

Butterflies lay their eggs on a host plant, which then provides the food for the caterpillar. Each butterfly species has specific host plants for its eggs and caterpillars. That information is too much to list right now. But in general, host plants for caterpillars include white clover, dill, fennel, parsley, and milkweed.

Keep in mind that *monarch caterpillars only eat milkweed. So, you must plant milkweed if you want monarchs in your yard.*

*(continued page 10)*

*Creating Habitats (continued from page 9)*

Once the caterpillar transforms into an adult butterfly, the food resources are the same flowering nectar plants that feed the bees. Some common butterflies in our area are: The Eastern Tiger swallowtail, which is the state insect, Buckeye, Monarch, Viceroy, Painted Lady, and Great Spangled Fritillary.

**Cover** provides wildlife with places where there is shelter from extreme hot and cold temperatures, high winds, and storms. As well, cover provides hiding places for wildlife to escape from predators. Trees, shrubs, grasses, and flowering plants provide this cover, as do rock piles, brush piles, cavities in trees and birdhouses.

Last of all, all wildlife need the **space** to find safe places to reproduce and to protect and nourish their young.

One last thought: Keep in mind that habitat gardeners manage the habitat, not the wildlife within it.

[Editor's note: This article was used as the script for a WRAR radio interview by Janice Mahoney, Teaching Gardens Chair.]



## Monarch Butterflies in the Garden

by Janice Mahoney

Primary cause of monarch decline is habitat loss due to the conversion of natural habitat into cropland, highways, and suburban landscapes dominated by lawns, non-native plants, and pesticides.

Ways to help monarchs:

- plant milkweed which is the only food source for monarch caterpillars;
- provide flower nectar;
- Do not use pesticides. Monarchs are insects and broad-spectrum insecticides will kill them, both as caterpillars as well as in their adult butterfly form. Herbicides will kill the monarchs' food sources; and
- reduce lawns that provide no habitat to monarchs and lawn care pesticides can kill them.

Common milkweed species which are good choices in most regions: common milkweed (*Asclepias syriaca*), swamp milkweed (*A. incarnata*), and butterfly weed (*A. tuberosa*). Tropical milkweed is not native to the U.S. It has naturalized in the Southeastern U.S. Science is discovering that its long bloom time may have some detrimental effects on monarch migration and possibly be a source to spread disease within monarch populations. If you do have tropical milkweed in your garden, it is recommended to cut the plant back in the winter months to encourage monarchs to move on to their natural overwintering sites.



### Monarch Butterfly on Milkweed plant

This and Habitat Photo from [pxHere.com](http://pxHere.com)

### Monarch Caterpillar

Photo from Janice Mahoney



## *International Master Gardener Conference 2021*

# View the program now!

2021

IMGC 2021 will be held virtually from Sunday, September 12, 2021 to Friday, September 17, 2021. Full registration for IMGC 2021 is \$150, with the option to add workshops and conference T-shirts for a small additional cost.

- Keynote and concurrent sessions will be recorded and available for viewing later. The session recording library will only be available to those registered for 6 months after the conference.
- Virtual sessions will be presented on EventMobi, our conference platform.
- In order to prevent webinar fatigue, each day will only feature a few hours of virtual sessions (instead of filling the entire day, as with our in person event).
- Registration cost is \$150, with the option to add workshops and conference T-shirts for additional cost.
- Registration opens April 5, 2021 and will be first-come-first-served, capped at 2,500. Workshops offered during IMGC have lower capacity limits.
- In advance of the conference, each participant will be mailed a welcome material “swag box.”
- Visit [www.internationalmastergardener.com](http://www.internationalmastergardener.com) for more information.



## Better Impact

By Barb Kauneckas, NNMG, Volunteer Management

Have you logged into Better Impact yet? If not, please do so by logging in directly at MyImpactPage.com or through nnmg.org. There are instructions on the nnmg.org website if you forget your username or password. Once in Better Impact, check the home page for information on updating your profile and contact information. Please go to the Qualifications section of your profile and complete the re-enrollment process by reading and accepting the re-enrollment forms and criminal conviction question. When you enter hours, enter the numerical hours and minutes – not hours and tenths. All entries require an entry under contacts including CE time. If you had no contacts, enter “0” in the contact boxes. Remember, you must provide some sort of educational information to record a contact. You no longer need to report demographic information for contacts. Face-to-face educational exchanges are direct contacts and exchanges made via phone or email are indirect contacts.

### From the Editor

**Thank you to all the Extension Master Gardeners and the Extension Agents who contributed to this, our first Newsletter. This publication will need the help of all you talented NNMGs to give us ideas, write articles, take photographs or participate in any way you can.**

**The Newsletter will be printed Quarterly with the deadline for article submission being the 15th of the month preceding publication.**

**The deadline for the July issue is June 15, 2021.**

#### The Garden Post Staff

Editor — Diane Kean

Managing Editor — Janice Mahoney

Editorial Review — Anne Olsen

VCE Review — Bill Bell, EMG Coordinator



Virginia Cooperative Extension programs and employment are open to all, regardless of age, color, disability, gender, gender identity, gender expression, national origin, political affiliation, race, religion, sexual orientation, genetic information, 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, Virginia Tech, Blacksburg, M. Ray McKinnie, Administrator, 1890 Extension Program, Virginia State University, Petersburg.