

Gardening on the Shore

Summer, 2020

Good News & Bad News

I have good news and bad news. First the bad news. The COVID-19 virus is still alive and well. The chaos and confusion in our daily lives continues. Many of our programs have been at a virtual standstill for months. Despite tremendous interest, our annual picnic had to be cancelled. To make matters worse, the high temps and lack of rain over the recent weeks have devastated many plants if not whole gardens.

Now the good news. As I write this letter, the heat index at my house is only 100 degrees. Diane and I had 12 raindrops this afternoon. The rain did not wet the street, but that was a start – be optimistic! Because of the virus, we all have had lots of time to work in our gardens – be positive. I do not know about your garden, but I think mine looks better than ever (or at least it did until the heat wave and drought arrived). Despite the weather, try to continue to work in your gardens. Set an example during the long Dog Days of summer.

More importantly, you will be satisfied knowing the you have not abandoned your garden – you have persevered. Go outside every day, talk to your plants and give them whatever they need to succeed – give them water, pull the weeds around them, and deadhead spent blooms. Your garden will thank you.

More good news. The Governor and VCE have relaxed some of the restrictions preventing us from working on many of our Master Gardener projects. In addition to the gardens, many other volunteer opportunities now exist - others will be coming available later this summer and fall. Please refer to the “2020 Catalog of Volunteer Opportunities” located in the VMS website under Newsletter/ Documents, and please contact the leads to volunteer your time. And now the best news. We are all still Master Gardeners and someday (sooner or later) we will return to normal. We will be able to meet together, to work together, to learn together and most importantly enjoy each other’s company and have fun together. Please do not lose the faith – hang in there knowing that yes this too will pass.

Phil Goetkin

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Feature Article

TREES AND GOOD – HOW THEY GIVE BACK

By Jane McKinley, ESVMG Master Gardener



There are no two ways about it – trees are good! They reduce air pollution, provide shade and cooling and slow down stormwater runoff. They support wildlife, provide health benefits, and add value to the individual homeowner and the community. In this article we will explore the beneficial life functions of trees and the many ways they add value to our lives.

After attending the Master Gardener College program on The Benefits of Urban Trees by Jim McGlone, Urban Forest Conservationist with the Virginia Department of Forestry, I was inspired to find out more and to share what I learned. Not only are trees beneficial in an urban environment, they are beneficial in all environments! As Master Gardeners we understand that trees provide a valuable canopy and understory for wildlife and have a good idea as to how to correctly plant and maintain trees. But there is always more to learn about these valuable beings growing among us!

Trees are Good for the Environment

Trees are good for the environment in many ways. One of the biggest ways that trees impact the environment is through the reduction of air pollution, a serious health threat that causes asthma, coughing, headaches, respiratory and heart disease, and cancer. This is done by removing harmful gases that contribute to smog, acid rain, and the greenhouse effect, a proven contributor to climate change. Trees “breathe in” these gases, through their leaf stomata, which are like little pores in the leaf, and “exhale” life-giving oxygen. Two

medium-sized, healthy trees can supply enough oxygen for a single person for a year, and an acre of forested land supplies four tons of oxygen, enough to meet the annual needs of 18 people.

They sequester ("lock up") carbon dioxide in their roots, trunks, stems and leaves while they grow, and in wood products after they are harvested. Although it varies by size and type of tree, on average a single tree sequesters about 48 pounds of CO₂ per year and, according to the US Department of Agriculture, one acre of forest

absorbs six tons of carbon dioxide. It was reported (*New York Times*, July 7, 2020) that, the fires currently raging in the Arctic released 59 million metric tons of planet-warming carbon dioxide in June, most of which came from releasing carbon sequestered in the trees. And the estimates of carbon released from the raging fires last year in the Amazon are around 140 million metric tons (*as reported by NPR*). Although a single tree does little to offset the annual carbon consumption of the average American (up to 21.8 tons), planting the right tree in a strategic location can be an important component of a multifaceted approach to reducing our individual carbon "footprints."

Trees block the solar radiation that produces heat, helping to reduce the "heat island effect." Trees near buildings can

reduce heating and air conditioning demands which, in turn, not only saves money but reduces emissions associated with power production. These benefits are evidenced by a 2017 NOAA study which measured the amount of heat in the Washington DC area. It was discovered that, on a hot summer day, temperatures were as high as 102° in the areas where there were primarily buildings and concrete surfaces, whereas, in Rock Creek Park, a

Trees near buildings can reduce heating and air conditioning demands which, in turn, not only saves money but reduces emissions associated with power production.

heavily treed area, temperatures were much cooler at 85°.

Trees help to slow down stormwater runoff and create a

natural filtration system that cleans the water, making it healthier for consumption and the overall environment. Runoff creates erosion, moves damaging chemicals from our streets into our bodies of water, and contains particulate matter from the burning of fossil fuels. Trees reduce this problem by intercepting and holding rain in their canopy, branches, and bark or lifting it out of the ground through their roots. In one day, a single large tree can lift up to 100 gallons of water out of the ground and discharge it into the air.



Trees are Good for Wildlife

Trees are good for wildlife, supporting it through all stages of a tree's life. When mature they are used for food, shelter, and sites for reproduction. Many animals also use trees for resting, nesting and for places from which to hunt or capture prey. During times of extreme heat or precipitation, animals can seek shade and shelter under the trees' canopy.

Standing dead and dying trees, called "snags," are just as important. Birds, small mammals, and other wildlife use them for nests, nurseries, storage areas, foraging, roosting, and perching. Live trees with snag-like features, such as crevices and dead branches can provide similar wildlife value. Snags occurring along streams and shorelines eventually fall into the water, adding important woody debris to aquatic habitat. Snags enhance local natural areas by attracting wildlife species that may not otherwise be found there.

And finally, decaying logs from dead trees store carbon, fix nitrogen in the soil, retain moisture and nutrients that aid in new plant growth and support wildlife and soil organisms such as earthworms, beetles, and other insects. I am reminded of a majestic pileated woodpecker that visited for weeks on end to feast from a fallen tree in my yard's natural area. What a delight it was to watch!

Trees are Good for Health

In addition to cleaning the air and water, trees are good for health in other ways. Research has shown that increased green space has been linked with decreased strain and improved health outcomes and immune responses. When given an opportunity to experience a tranquil forest scene, the stress of sustained concentration is lessened, resulting in higher student and employee performance levels. In research performed by *Dr. Roger Ulrich of Texas A&M University*, visual exposure to settings with trees produced significant recovery in high blood pressure and muscle tension within only a few minutes.

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Member Spotlight: Jane McKinley



Originally from Richmond, Jane moved to Cape Charles in 2016 and took on the solo project of restoring

an 1899 historic home in town. She fell in love with the Shore in 2014 when participating in her first 'Between the Waters' bike ride and saw the Virginia Eastern Shore from the up-close-and-personal perspective of a bicycle. She's ridden in this event every year since.

Jane earned her Master Gardener credentials shortly after retiring in 2013 and sought an active MG unit before making her final decision to move here. Paul Tiffany introduced her to ESVMG and he and his wife, Nikki, in true Eastern Shore spirit, invited her to stay in their home while hers was under renovation and they were on their annual summer trip to Rochester, NY.

Jane is in the process of transforming her small urban lot (a former renovation construction site) into an oasis of lush plantings. She is also certified in landscape design and has recently begun [Mck Designs](#), a design consulting service specializing in native plants and low maintenance. She is currently the ESVMG Publicity Chair, has coordinated the Cape Charles Plant Clinics, and volunteers in various other Master Gardener projects.

Articles of Interest

OUR VISION OF LAWN CARE

By Robin Swert, ESVMG Master Gardener Intern

There are methods to making a lush, green lawn, free of weeds and lovely to walk on, but you will not find any of this here.

We moved to the Shore five years ago. Focused on bigger yard tasks such as digging out dozens of mulberry trees, we didn't have the time or desire to mow grass. Neighbors would walk by as I dug, drenched in sweat, and dryly remark, "You ain't ever gonna get rid of 'em." I growled back, "You can if you dig out the roots!"

Several leafy bushes, the size of a school bus, took four of us half a day to cut down, followed by another 20 hours of me digging out their roots. After a few years, we had a vegetable garden, blackberries, rhubarb, currants, raspberries, and flowers that drew compliments from passersby - all the while fighting wire grass with shovels and trowels.



We hired a lawn care service to cut our grass who, unfortunately, knew nothing about plants; they just cut grass. After I pointed out to them the demise of the not-yet-blooming fruits of my labor, they began leaving huge swaths around perimeters, leaving me to manually trim them. Dry summers didn't need weekly mowing, so we contracted for every other week which was even too frequent where our towering pecan trees both shaded and sucked up water. I would look out back and see them speeding across the yard, kicking up a cloud of dust. I would run out

and explain "it doesn't want mowing" and "please trim instead." Even though at this point every bed was trenched, mulched, and weed free, they continued to leave unmowed swaths of grass. Finally, we asked them to fix the issues or they would not be paid. Either we were too much trouble, or they had too much business, because we didn't hear from them again.

We happily purchased a self-propelled mower and now mow our own grass. We find the back yard rarely needs mowing. A moveable fence with our chickens helps to keep things under control.

This spring, we discovered lots of "Star of Bethlehem" and delayed mowing until the blooms diminished. Then, the yard became ablaze with buttercups and violets and, other than a few mower mishaps, is now perfect.

I am pleased to watch two preschool children a few days a week, and it is magic watching them in the back yard picking wild flowers and blowing dandelion fluff. The almost two-year-old can't blow the seeds, so instead he holds the dandelion tight and thrashes his arm about. The entertainment is priceless and pure magic for the kids. We certainly won't win any medals for our lawn. The battle against wire grass is forever, but it's our vision of lawn care.

What's yours?

COMMUNITY GARDENING DURING COVID-19

Excerpt from VCE Recommended Guidelines for Community Gardening during COVID-19 (June 5 Revision)

On June 25, Dave Close sent an update on VCE's recommended guidelines for community gardening during COVID-19. These guidelines were updated from the earlier April release and follow directives outlined in Governor Northam's Executive Orders. We have also received notices from Theresa Pittman, Accomack County Extension Agent, who is available to answer any questions or hear any concerns that we as ESVMG Master Gardeners may have.

The earlier decision to waive the annual 20 volunteer hour requirement in order to maintain our certification in 2020 remains in effect. Volunteer opportunities available during this time are optional. It has been emphasized that we should only do what we are comfortable doing, and only if we are feeling well and haven't been exposed to the virus. VCE states that no volunteer "should feel pressured or obligated to volunteer if they are not comfortable doing so, even within what is currently allowed by Governor Northam's Executive Order."

After several months of "hands off," we now have direct approval from our local VCE Unit Office to work in our community gardens. Although an emphasis is still being placed on gardens that produce food which will meet the needs of the community (see sidebar on New Roots), we are now permitted to work in ornamental demonstration gardens, wildlife habitat gardens, pollinator gardens, botanical gardens, and arboreta. We are still not permitted to work on grounds located on school properties; however, garden planting and maintenance by adult volunteers at community-based youth gardens is permitted.

We continue to be encouraged to follow safe practices such as working specific and separate tasks, practicing social distancing, and hand washing before and after each activity. Volunteers should consider wearing a face covering for additional protection. Volunteers are still required to bring their

New Roots Youth Garden During the Pandemic



Although most projects shut down due to COVID-19, the New Roots Youth Garden in Cape Charles barely missed a beat. Based on VCE guidance, since it contributed to the community food supply, New Roots was allowed to continue operation. After the youth program ended in October, volunteers have worked in the garden every single week. And, when the virus struck, these dedicated people continued to come to the garden every Wednesday just in case the area food supply became impacted. During calendar year 2020, almost 20 Master Gardeners and Interns contributed around 400 volunteer hours in the garden. A big shout out goes to these wonderful people – especially the Interns and to those who made the trek all the way from Chincoteague!!

Since June 10, the garden has produced over 300 lbs of vegetables including peas, lettuce, collards, beans, potatoes, beets, eggplant, peppers, cucumbers, blackberries, carrots, squash and, of course, tomatoes!

Although the children haven't been able to participate, we have provided their families with vegetables. They have either come to the garden to pick them up or volunteers have delivered them. New Roots also provided vegetables to the Eastern Shore Food Bank and to the Capeville Baptist Church community outreach program.

own tools and gloves. Group size is limited to a maximum of 10 volunteers at a time. And precautions should be taken to minimize the number of touch points when harvesting and transferring produce.

VCE strongly encourages the continued use of virtual programming; however, face-to-face activities are allowed as long as social distancing guidelines are met.

Gardeners' Tips

EXCERPT FROM PROBLEM-FREE TREES FOR VIRGINIA LANDSCAPES

Virginia Cooperative Extension Publication 450-237

With the knowledge that "Trees are Good," it is important for the Master Gardener to know which trees are the hardiest in our area. This excerpt from a VCE publication which provides recommendations of the most problem-free trees will be helpful. It also includes a list of trees that may have problems and should be avoided.

Many of the tree species commonly planted in Virginia landscapes suffer from disease problems. Although some diseases can be cured, most must be controlled on a preventative basis. The best option for new plantings is to choose species that have a low risk of developing disease.

Problem-free Trees

Listed below, in alphabetical order, are some choices of problem-free trees for Virginia landscapes. These species are recommended both for their desirable horticultural characteristics, as well as their reduced susceptibility to diseases and insect pests. Although some of the trees listed may suffer sporadic damage from Japanese beetles or defoliating caterpillars, the trees generally recover from damage by these pests. No tree species is completely immune from disease or insect feeding, and the trees listed in this fact sheet are no exception. This excerpt lists the recommended trees that are native to Virginia.

***Chionanthus virginicus* (fringetree)** is a large shrub or a small tree. This native species is beautiful in flower (May).

Fringetree



***Fagus grandifolia* (American beech)** grows to a large size and should be given adequate space. It should not be planted in overly wet or compacted soils.

***Liquidambar styraciflua* (sweetgum)** is susceptible to a fungal disease called "bleeding canker," but is otherwise disease-free.

***Liriodendron tulipifera* (tulip poplar)** is relatively disease-free as long as it is grown in adequate space in moist, well-drained soil.



***Magnolia virginiana* (sweetbay magnolia)** tolerates shade and grows well in wet locations. Its blossoms appear from May to June and have a fragrant lemon scent.

***Nyssa sylvatica* (black gum)** is a large, native tree with beautiful, red fall foliage color. It will grow in a variety of soil types

***Oxydendrum arboreum* (sourwood)** is usually a small tree in home landscapes. It has showy, white flowers and nice, red, fall foliage color.



***Taxodium distichum* (baldcypress)** is a native, deciduous conifer that grows to a large, pyramidal tree. It grows well in wet or dry soils, but it should be grown in acid soil to avoid chlorosis.

***Tilia americana* (American linden)** produces wonderfully fragrant flowers in mid to late June.

Problem Trees

The following trees represent species frequently received in the Plant Disease Clinic for disease diagnosis. These species are fraught with problems in the landscape and are not recommended.

***Betula* spp. (white bark birches)** are prone to bronze birch borers, which eventually kill the tree.

***Cornus florida* (flowering dogwood)** is still being killed in many areas by Discula anthracnose, a fungal disease that causes leaf blight and canker and for

which control is very difficult. Many cultivars of flowering dogwood have also developed severe powdery mildew in the past few years.

***Fraxinus* spp. (ashes)** are susceptible to borers.

***Malus* spp. (crabapples)** can be completely denuded of leaves by midsummer as a result of the fungal disease, scab, or leaves may become white with powdery mildew, another fungal disease. Crabapple is also susceptible to fire blight.

***Populus* spp. and *Salix* spp. (poplars and willows, respectively)** are prone to trunk cankers and galls that may result in extensive dieback.

***Prunus* spp. (flowering cherries)** often develop trunk cankers that cause a gradual death of the tree. Flowering plums (*Prunus* spp.) suffer from black knot, an unsightly fungal disease that can cause serious dieback.

***Pyrus calleryana* 'Bradford' (Bradford pear)** is very susceptible to limb breakage.

Many *Quercus* species (especially northern red oak, ***Q. rubra***, and pin oak, ***Q. palustris***) are susceptible to bacterial leaf scorch, a disease that affects the vascular system and causes gradual decline of the tree.

***Ulmus americana* (American elm)** is very likely to die as a result of Dutch elm disease (DED).

Of the conifers, ***Thuja occidentalis* (arborvitae)** tends to look very straggly with age; ***xCupressocyparis leylandii* (Leyland cypress)** suffers from winter burn or Seiridium canker, an incurable disease of the trunk; and ***Tsuga canadensis* (hemlocks)** are prone to hemlock woolly adelgid, an unsightly and damaging insect. ***Pinus strobus* (white pine)**, although beautiful in the right setting, does poorly in overly wet or dry soils or in soils with little topsoil which is a common condition in Virginia.



TIPS FOR SUMMER WATERING

With the extreme heat and low rainfall that we have been experiencing, the main task for this time of year is to water, water, water! And, of course, keeping weeds at bay is a never-ending summer task. Below are some watering tips for keeping your gardens chugging along in spite of the adverse summer conditions.

1. **Test the soil** with your finger or a soil moisture meter. Poke down a few inches to check the root zone (there may still be moisture below). An exception is fruits and vegetables that need consistent water and should not be allowed to go completely dry – this can cause problems such as blossom end rot or cracked tomatoes.
2. **Watering in the morning is best.** This will allow the water to soak in before it evaporates from heat and dry wind, allows the leaves time to dry out if they get splashed, and plants will have the moisture to draw from during the heat of the day. Late afternoon is second best, just be sure the foliage will dry out before nighttime. Avoid watering in the heat of the day because water will evaporate much faster and any overspray on the leaves can cause them to burn.
3. **Water at the base of the plant** and avoid getting the leaves, fruits, or vegetables wet to help prevent diseases that thrive on moisture, like powdery mildew.
4. **Water containers more frequently,** especially if they are placed in full sun or exposed to wind, since they dry out much faster than when in the ground.
5. **Apply organic mulch,** such as bark, pine needles, or shredded leaves at a depth of 2- to 3-inches. This will help hold moisture in the soil.
6. **If water puddles,** apply a small amount to soften the surface. Come back later and add more to make sure it soaks in thoroughly.
7. **Watch for over-watering** indicated by brown leaf edges and/or yellow leaves.
8. **Water slow and deep** and less frequently. Make sure to water deep enough to reach the root ball. Also water a wide section around the plant, not just the roots. Otherwise, moisture will wick out from the root zone to moisten the dry soil nearby.
9. **Recycle plastic bottles** as a deep watering system. Cut holes in the bottom and bury or temporarily place on top. Add water through the top where it will absorb more slowly and deeper.
10. **Unglazed clay pots** are more porous than glazed or plastic pots and allow water to evaporate faster. This may be good during wetter times of the year by allowing the soil to drain better and not get soggy but keep an extra eye on them during drought or hotter weather.



A few years ago, Fran Kubick set up ESVMG as a “Bloomin Bucks” participating organization with Brent & Becky’s Bulbs in Gloucester, VA. Under this program, our organization receives 25% of all purchases made. Fran was recently reminded of this program when she made a \$10 purchase and ESVMG received \$2.50! Imagine the amounts that we would earn if all of us (and our friends) made our purchases under this program!

To participate, go to the [Bloomin Bucks](#) website and scroll down to Eastern Shore of VA Master Gardeners. Click *Go* to proceed to the catalog and make your purchases.

Thank you, Fran, for reminding us of this great fundraising opportunity for ESVMG!

PANDEMIC GARDENING

Contributed by Susan Weir, ESVMG Master Gardener

It's called Pandemic Gardening - the sudden increase of interest in home gardening. Many stay-at-home families are looking for ways to educate and entertain their children, and a garden seems like the ideal solution. Master Gardeners and others already understand the benefits and hurdles to gardening. And, chances are, someone in your neighborhood will be coming to you for advice.

We all have our favorite plants, favorite gardening techniques, and even some secret methods to bring about a lush, plentiful garden. We will share the things we swear work every time, and those that should be sworn off forever. We must also make newcomers aware of the importance of working in concert with the natural world, our special climate, and how to support our ecosystems so that they work with us and not "us versus them".

But getting started in a new venture can seem overwhelming. There is so much information out there about gardening. Remember when you started? How it seemed impossible to learn enough to be successful? How many plants were sacrificed in the process?

Hopefully after the restrictions are lifted, some garden newcomers will continue their new gardens. So, when a novice gardener asks for advice, let's remember to emphasize the basics:

1. Start small.
2. Choose plants that can grow well in this climate. MG motto: right plant, right place.
3. Read and follow directions on tags and packages. They're there for a reason. They work.
4. Use mulch to control weeds and keep the soil moist.
5. Get a soil test! It's worth the money and tells exactly what nutrients should be added to soil before you plant anything.
6. Use fertilizers correctly. See #3 above.
7. There will be weeds and pests. Learn to identify them and deal with them.
8. Plant native plants whenever possible.
9. Don't spend a fortune on fancy tools and gizmos. Basics are best.
10. Once you plant, you MUST water. Not too much, not too little, and not on the leaves. Water near the roots.

And on and on....depending on the person, the setting, and the temperament of the one giving the advice, there are other important things to consider. Let this list be a starting point. Our mission as Master Gardeners is to communicate our love of gardening to others, and give sound advice. When we don't know the answer, we can turn to "The Book" to find it.

Maybe think of the Pandemic Gardening movement as a big MG outreach project. Think we could earn hours for it?? :)

"If you can't enjoy weeding, you won't be a happy gardener,"

Timothy Tilghman, Head Gardener at Untermyer Park & Gardens, Yonkers, NY



Thanks to Julie Cardinale who sent us this picture of her carnivorous plant *Sarracenia rubra* (commonly called pitcher plant) in bloom!

(continued from p. 4)

Trees are Good for the Homeowner



In addition to being a beautiful addition, trees increase home values and help to save on heating and cooling costs. Healthy mature trees can raise overall property values by up to 10% and, when in the front of the house, by up to 15%. Dr. McGlone mentioned a beautiful shade tree that his neighbor removed. He noted that “this guy just spent \$2,000 to cut down a tree that added \$30,000 to his property value!”

Strategically placed trees can increase home energy efficiency. According to the USDA Forest Service, trees properly placed around homes can reduce air conditioning needs by 30% and can save 20–50% in heating costs. Planting a deciduous tree on the west or south side of a home provides shade in the summer and allows warming sun into the home in winter. An evergreen on the north protects it from winter winds.

Curious about the large pecan tree in my back yard, I went to the [Tree Benefit Calculator](#) recommended by Dr. McGlone. This site, sponsored by iTree, offers state-of-the-art analysis based on research from the USDA Forest Service. Although the site states that the benefits are estimated and are meant for guidance only, it helps to give an understanding of an individual tree’s impact. Among other information, the trunk diameter (determined by measuring the circumference and dividing by 3) must be entered. I learned that my tree provides annual benefits of approximately \$280. It will likely intercept 11,964 gallons of stormwater runoff this year, will conserve 257 kilowatt hours of electricity for cooling, and will reduce atmospheric carbon by 1,146 pounds. And, of course, it provides a plethora of delicious pecans in the fall!

Trees are good for the Community

A tree-filled community has increased income, jobs, worker productivity and customers. By controlling erosion and reducing urban runoff, trees help communities to save money on storm damage repair and on water storage costs. They help to reduce energy costs to the public by lowering temperatures in urban areas and attract businesses and tourism, thereby increasing tax revenue. Consumers have a 12% higher willingness to pay for goods and services in retail areas that have streetscape greening such as street trees and sidewalk gardens.

By creating safe, shaded open spaces which encourage people to exercise and interact, trees enrich our lives. They reduce stress, filtering and replacing unwanted noise with bird song. And, not surprisingly, domestic abuse, including child abuse, is lower in homes near trees.

Take a Walk

So, next time you are walking through your yard or neighborhood, take a moment to look up and thank all the lovely trees that improve our lives aesthetically, economically and spiritually. They give back so much and ask so little.

Thanks to Susan Weir for these "REALLY awful jokes" about gardening!

- Knowledge is knowing a tomato is a fruit. Wisdom is not putting it in a fruit salad.
- Why do potatoes make good detectives? Because they keep their eyes peeled.
- What gets bigger the more you take away? A hole!
- Have you heard of the garlic diet? You don't lose any weight but from a distance your friends think you look thinner!
- When weeding, the best way to make sure you are removing a weed and not a valuable plant is to pull on it. If it comes out of the ground easily, it is a valuable plant.
- Why did the Golden Delicious go to jail? Because he was a rotten apple.



Eastern Shore of Virginia Master Gardeners

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