

Gardening on the Shore

Spring, 2021

Message from the President

Spring is definitely here. Everywhere you look are daffodils and tulips in full bloom! It just begs for you to get out into your own gardens as well as into the ESVMG projects.

Even though there are still restrictions for gatherings due to COVID, we can still meet in the gardens to spruce them up, add plants, and provide support for the various programs. Many of the projects' meeting dates and times are shown on the Opportunity Calendar. We are also looking forward to having our annual picnic in June where we can all safely meet and enjoy the camaraderie of our fellow gardeners.

The challenge this quarter is to go visit one of the ESVMG projects that you have not seen before. I recently visited New Roots Youth Garden and was amazed at the work being done there. The enthusiasm of the volunteers was contagious. I loved the trellises they built using the old fencing and painted in colors.

We welcome our new interns! Congratulations on moving to the next step. 50 hours of volunteer time may seem overwhelming, but you will be surprised how quickly it all adds up. Remember your travel time to and from gardens/events should be included in your volunteer hours when you record your time.

Until then, "There are no gardening mistakes, only experiments
– *Janet Kilburn Phillips*

Joyce Falkinburg

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Feature Article

All About Daffodils

by Paul Tiffany, EMG

One of the first harbingers of spring is the emergence of daffodils - the bright yellow flower coming up from the dull grays and browns of winter, even poking through the last vestiges of snow. The “daff” has a history going back at least 2500 years as a cultivated flower.



The species can be traced back to late Oligocene or early Miocene age on the Iberian Peninsula and adjacent areas of southern Europe and northern Africa about 25 million years ago. Daffodils were introduced into gardens about 300 B.C. by the Romans. The Greek Botanist and Philosopher Theophrastus listed and described some of the earliest types of narcissus (daffodils). Roman legions were responsible for the spread of daffodils throughout Europe and then the British Isles, and ultimately North America. The Romans thought that the sap of daffodils had healing powers, but quite the opposite is true: the sap contains crystals that are irritating.

One of the claims to fame of daffodils is that they are deer-resistant. The entire plant is poisonous; the active ingredient is Alkaloid Lycorine. Deer and other mammals leave it alone, unlike tulips, that be devastated by deer and voles who find the foliage and bulbs delicious. The first record of daffodils in North America was in 1651 in Gloucester County as a soft reminder of their English Heritage. The weather and the soil of Gloucester County were perfect for daffodils, and they thrived. Bulbs were planted everywhere and passed around by neighbors. They even seemed to thrive on neglect. They were planted at home sites, in gardens, in burial grounds, and by the twentieth century, daffs were everywhere in tended and untended fields.

Around the 1890's entrepreneurs started to organize and grow daffodils as a commercial crop, sending cut daffodil flowers to the markets in Baltimore and Norfolk by steamship. The boom years for daffodil production were between the world wars until the early 1950's. A report from 1938 saw 120,000 daffodils shipped daily from Gloucester County, and even by 1962, 24 million daffodil bulbs were shipped annually from Mathews and Gloucester Counties. The industry



declined substantially through the 1960s, '70s and '80s. A couple of farms still raise daffodil, including Brent Heath of Brent & Becky's Bulbs. The flower is still celebrated with annual festivals, but production has moved to Washington State with a cooler climate that helps with better production. Producers contract to grow bulbs in Holland to be shipped back to the United States.

Driving around the Eastern Shore, we see yellow daffodils popping up everywhere. Why? They seem to appear without any rhyme nor reason. Old homesteads seem to be the reasonable answer. The history of the Eastern Shore parallels that of Gloucester County.

We see the escapees from former homes, farms, and burial grounds on the Shore. As land use has changed, bulb beds have been pushed out of the way and naturalized patches of daffodils have appeared in wood lots and hedgerows. Just think, some of their ancestors could be ancestors of bulbs brought to America in 1651!

Sources:

"Wild About Daffodils", a short history of the significance of the daffodil to Gloucester County

"Daffodil, a Biography of a Flower", by Helen O'Neill

"A Brief History of Daffodils", by Sarah Raven

Articles of Interest

The Path to Sustainable Landscaping

by Jane McKinley, EMG



It's an undisputed fact that most large consumers of carbon, a major contributor to global climate change, are industry, transportation, energy production and housing. So how can the lowly gardener really make a difference? Our efforts can feel futile when reading such reports as the one produced by the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) which states that the impacts of climate change will take "rapid, far-reaching and unprecedented

changes in all aspects of society" unless global temperature increases are kept below the

threshold of 1.5°C. And we are already experiencing the impacts of climate change from such events as destructive wildfires and flooding.

We must, however, keep in mind that every little bit helps. And that “help” starts at home with our daily habits and our individual consumption patterns. To accomplish this from a gardening perspective, can you envision your garden functioning in a way that completely mimics nature? What if there was no waste but only abundance with everything being reused or repurposed? What if

Help starts at home with our daily habits and our individual consumption patterns.

everything you did consumed only natural and organic resources, not fossil fuels or manmade chemicals? Actually, this might be easier than you think to accomplish. And you would be following the practices of sustainable landscaping which evaluates every aspect of gardening with the goal to reduce any negative environmental impact, while including features that are beneficial to the natural world and beautiful at the same time.

The following are some key practices of sustainable landscaping which you may find doable on your “little piece of paradise.”

Choose Hardscaping Materials Carefully

New and non-recyclable materials used in homes and landscapes are often not designed to be recycled. They can consume enormous amounts of resources to produce and distribute and create additional waste when disposed of. The conscientious gardener will seek sustainably sourced

and/or manufactured materials for such hardscaping projects as decking, seating, driveways and pathways, and fences. Homeowners can also specify local materials to support local economies and cut down on the energy use from the transportation of materials.

Look for building materials that use sustainably harvested woods, recycled woods, and recycled plastic or composite

lumber to preserve forests. Certified woods are harvested from responsibly managed forests, ensuring a stable source

of lumber while minimizing adverse environmental effects such as soil erosion, stream sedimentation, and water and air pollution. Recycled wood can be salvaged from places like old buildings (of which we have plenty here on the Eastern Shore!) and shipping materials or even from sources available on your own property!

Concrete alternatives should be considered when selecting materials for building patios, driveways, and sidewalks. Did you know that the manufacturing of cement accounts for around [7% of CO₂](#) emissions globally? Concrete that incorporates recycled materials, like crushed glass or wood chips, are more sustainable and use less cement than traditional pavers. Even better yet is decomposed granite (see picture insert) which is like gravel but finer and generally more stable.

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Meet the ESVMG Interns

The 2020-2021 Master Gardener class sessions were a big success in spite of the COVID restrictions. Many classes were taught via Zoom and others were held in the classroom with social distancing, masks, and other precautionary guidelines in place. The class had 8 trainees who are now well on their way to meeting their volunteer hour requirements.

Please take the opportunity to welcome the following interns:

Nancy Arnold



Nancy refers to herself as a “come here” from Massachusetts - two good friends moved to the Shore in 2014, and, when she came to visit them, the rest is history! She fell in love with the area and bought a home in Onancock during that very first visit. She moved here in 2016.

Having retired (mostly) from consulting when Covid hit and needing to figure out what to do with her time as well as her yard – gardening seemed like a good fit. Nancy is “very much a newbie to gardening but am fortunate to be friends with a Master Gardener who has given me guidance over the past few years and who suggested that I consider the Master Gardener training program.” Nancy notes how impressed she is with the amount and quality of information that has been provided to the trainees and is “now ... ready to put it to work.” Nancy is volunteering on the Ker Place garden and is waiting for the Chincoteague Garden on Assateague to open up for the volunteers. She has lots of plans for her yard also, but will “try not to get too crazy, too fast.” She hopes to be able to help on some of the other MG projects as well and is looking forward to getting to know the MG members better!

Sally Dick

Sally moved to Chincoteague from the mountains of Western PA. After spending several winters here after retirement, she and her husband decided to stay and live in the little house they had purchased many years ago. Sally is interested in gardening and habitats for wildlife which motivated her many years ago to plant gardens that attract butterflies, birds, and pollinators. “It's a lot different working in sandy soil than the clay that I was used to in PA; that combined with much different weather and growing conditions got me interested in taking a class.” She found the Master Gardener classes “full of information, new faces and ideas, and, though stressful because of COVID and Zoom classes, I learned and enjoyed the lectures and the course overall. It will be a perfect start for me to learn about ‘Southern living.’”

Shelly Hunt



Shelley J Hunt describes herself, first and foremost as “wife and mother of four grown humans.” She and her husband have been living on the Eastern shore fulltime since August 2020, however, they were married in Cape Charles in April, 2017. They came here from Jim Thorpe, PA and are “in love with our little red house affectionately named, ‘Ladybug.’” They live in Cape Charles, a.k.a. Townsend near the Magothy Bay Conservancy.

Shelly is a hands-on healer with three decades of experience with a “passion for most things natural and organic.” She enjoys making remedies, healing salves & creams, tinctures and “Reme” teas, both customized and readymade concoctions.

Driving by one day “I saw people at New Roots Garden, stopped in and left with a commitment to volunteer. This led me to enroll in the Master Gardener course.” Currently she is volunteering at New Roots both as a volunteer as well as the Programming Committee Chair, and looks forward to sharing her love of locally grown produce with her background as an elementary teacher. Tuesday morning will be shared with fellow herbal enthusiasts at Ker Place tending their garden.

Margaret Andrews



As a relative newcomer to the Eastern Shore, Margaret became interested in “the gardening challenges of its unique ecology.” Becoming a Master Gardener gave her the chance to gain general gardening knowledge and skills while acquainting herself with the area. “I am especially interested in native plants and plan to volunteer with related projects in Chincoteague, where I live.”

Paula Valentine



Paula grew up in Tennessee enjoying backyard gardening with her family. She studied Botany at the University of Tennessee, where she also met her husband, Wayne. After a career with the National Park Service, the couple retired to the Eastern Shore of Virginia, where they live on a wooded 2-acre property near Belle Haven. “I appreciate that we have a hillside of well-established azaleas and camellias, other evergreen shrubs, and dogwoods and magnolias. Over the past seven years, I’ve been embellishing the grounds with thousands of daffodils, day

lilies, sedums and other perennials, including a few flowers that my grandmother planted in the 1930s.” Paula’s goals as a Master Gardener are to learn more about best management practices for gardening in Virginia, and to contribute to others’ appreciation of plants.

Eric Feuillatte

Born in Paris, Eric moved to New York City in 1985 where he lived and worked until 2016. In 2010 he bought a house in Cape Charles where he is currently retiring.

His interest in gardening increased when he decided to remodel the front yard under the supervision of his friend, Phil Goetkin. At that time, Eric volunteered at the New Roots Youth Garden with other master gardeners. His interest in plants, vegetable and pollination gardens, peeked from this experience and his minimal education on these topics was the key motivation to take the Master Gardener's class. “I am grateful to all the professionals and volunteers who provided so many experiences and knowledge to illustrate each class.”

Kim Voss, another intern, was unavailable to provide us with her personal information, but we welcome her, anyway!!



What We’re Up to in the Gardens

2021 promises to get the ESVMG Master Gardeners back into our gardens with high hopes for the upcoming year. Most gardens are being cleaned up and prepared for the spring planting. For more information on the scheduled volunteer activities in the gardens, go to the VCE Better Impact site and click the “Opportunities” tab.

The following is a short summary of where our gardens are now and where they are headed this year.



Nancy Arnold, intern, Lisa Gurney and Victor Klein

Ker Place Herb and Kitchen Garden

Julie Cardinale, Ker Place garden coordinator, reports that they had a great turnout for their spring cleanup on March 23. And the Ker Place gardeners welcomed Nancy Arnold and Shelly Hunt, our newest interns, to the team. The garden was in wonderful shape and “we look forward to continuing our relationships after such a long time.”



Ron Allison with Shelley Hunt, intern, and Joyce Falkinburg



Mary Lou Waller and Doris Gebel

Virginia Tech Research Center (AREC) Garden

Laura Mays, AREC Garden coordinator, reports that cleanup is underway at the AREC Garden. The crocuses are naturalizing nicely and the Star of Bethlehem is spreading at will, with Laura’s



blessings, since “anything growing in that soil in competition with established tree roots is a welcome sight.” The Ajuga, on the other hand, is playing hard to get. Despite multiple attempts with their home stock transplants, it is not running rampant as it does with abandon at Laura’s house. “I must say it’s an excellent weed blocker when it likes an area and I will persist, hoping to win that battle.”

The plan for this year is to, again, try to establish ferns. The last crop was demolished by voles but this year, with Mr. Sears, a strong digging partner, they will be planted in pots.

Last but not least, the AREC gardeners are awaiting the arrival of Penelope, the resident duck. Penelope would sit in the birdbath and greet the gardeners with low mumbling and gentle vocalization.

The Chincoteague National Wildlife Refuge Songbird Garden & Wildflower Meadow



Ulli and her husband, Gary, are completing the Bug Hotel which attracts all kinds of insects.



Located right behind the Bateman Center at the Chincoteague Wildlife Refuge, the goal of this ESVMG sponsored garden is to show Refuge visitors how they can achieve an attractive garden with native plants that look beautiful, is environmentally friendly and attractive to birds and insects. Ulli Hollingsworth, coordinator of this garden, tells us that “in the past couple of years, we have planted native shrubs, grasses, and perennials. We’ve built a path from the parking lot to the garden, build a fence to keep wild ponies and deer out, erected trellises for climbers, added plant signs for identification, and our newest addition a Bug Hotel.” With areas in the garden that

are considered wetlands and other areas that are very dry and more prairie like, there are opportunities to plant a variety of native plants.

The wildflower meadow was the last expansion right before COVID struck; all volunteer work on the Refuge came to a standstill almost exactly a year ago. Before the shutdown they managed to prepare the grounds and put wildflower seed down some of which have been spotted as seedlings and others having been eaten by wild ponies and deer.

On March 21, Ulli shares that, unfortunately, at this point we have not been informed when volunteer work at the Refuge will resume. However, the volunteers continue to make plans which include a fence for the Wildflower Meadow, finishing the steppingstones in the garden and replenishing the plantings. They would also like to add a seating area and a sign guiding visitors from the parking lot to the garden.

Indiantown Garden

The Indiantown Garden, coordinated by Gerri Baldwin, is located in the Northampton County Indiantown Park on T631 East of Eastville.

Designed by the ESVMG Class of 2011, this Garden, occupying a strip of earth 6 feet wide and about 65 to 75 feet long, was intended to add color and texture in front of a stark white

building of the Parks and Recreation Dept. Plants were chosen able to tolerate the harsh afternoon sun and lack of easy irrigation-- Sedum, Yarrow, Blackeye Susan, Coreopsis as well as Juniper and Big Blue Stem Grasses. Mulch was used as ground cover between the plants.

Care has usually included a spring cleanup and then monthly maintenance: weeding, pruning & deadheading taking 2 to 4 people about 2 hours/month. Spring cleanup will be scheduled soon, so check the new VCE volunteer website for updates. Provided watering with a hose can be arranged, the plan is to add some edible plants under the perennials already present for a foodscape/edible landscape demonstration for the parents and children who will be using the park this coming summer and/or fall. For the initial plantings, seeds of root vegetables, herbs and leafy greens will be incorporated in place of the mulch.



New Roots Youth Garden



Intern, Shelley Hunt, planting turnip greens

Phil Goetkin, coordinator of the New Roots Youth Garden, reports that this garden is back in full swing. Volunteers are meeting every Monday morning from 9–11 am to prepare the garden for the children who will return in late April. Currently, work includes spring cleanup of all of the vegetable beds and the pollinator garden. Overwintering crops, including kale, cabbage, lettuce, spinach, turnip greens, arugula and collard greens are still being harvested. Recently, spring vegetables including onions, potatoes, beets, carrots, peas and lettuce were planted. Upcoming dates of interest include: April 21, Cape Charles Christian School visit to the garden; April 22, Blessing of the Worms; and April 29, Spring “In the Garden with the Children” begins.



Diane D'Amico is discussing plans for the Pollinator Garden with Dave and



Diana and Ray Schaney being guided by our fearless leader, Joyce Falkinburg.

Museum of Chincoteague Project

According to Bob Shendock, project coordinator, lingering pandemic concerns have impacted some activities at the Museum of Chincoteague Project. This season Master Gardeners will provide instruction via video and small hands-on events in the most interesting realm of maintaining Native Plant Gardens. Through our efforts and the Museum's Preserving Barrier Island Environments Initiative, a number of local property owners have developed native plant gardens. So now comes the time to demonstrate sound maintenance techniques. We'll be conducting Pre-Spring Cleanup activities from identification of native plant seedlings to proper pruning of last years growth. Plant design and population of the Rain Garden is also slated for this Spring.

Master Gardeners meet at the Museum on Wednesday's from 11:00 AM to 1:00 PM thru the Spring.

Community Service Board (CSB) Garden

The Eastern Shore Services Board Parksley Garden, coordinated by Robin Swert, is located at 19056 Greenbush Road in Parksley, Virginia. The garden was established 10 years ago with Janet Rochester as the Coordinator and has successfully provided vegetables for the Achiever's Clubhouse in Parksley.

The clients from the clubhouse are a delightful group of individuals who suffer from serious mental disabilities and benefit from working outside, eating fresh vegetables, healthy exercise and nutrition, trying new foods and interaction with the Master Gardeners. The program was designed for the clients to do the actual work in the garden; as in planting, weeding and harvesting. Supervision is the main function of the Master Gardeners as well as providing seeds, plants and infrastructure necessary for a successful year. The garden generally has produced 300 pounds of fresh produce and this year includes strawberries, kale, onions, scallions, peas, spinach, broccoli, endive, beets and radishes growing in the garden.

The work day for the CSB Garden is on Thursdays at 10:30 AM. Contact Robin Swert at robin.swert@yahoo.com or call 419-512-6652 with any questions. They would love for you to join them anytime!



Kiptopeake State Park Native Plant Garden



The Kiptopeake native plant garden is flourishing this spring. Thus far, there are 11 volunteers in the garden, including several friends from Chincoteague Island and three interns. Jennifer Alley, garden coordinator, says “Thank goodness we have enough weeds in the garden to keep everyone busy!” The group is happy to see that, so far, all of the natives introduced in Dec are popping up, as well as those transplanted from volunteers’ own gardens last fall. These include the Carolina petunia, cinnamon fern, Joe-Pye weed, cardinal flower and seashore

mallow among others. Also added were a sassafras seedling and shrubs such as silky dogwood and summersweet.

Besides keeping up with maintaining the existing plantings this summer, plans are to create markers for the garden and a basic diagram which will include information about each plant. An outdoor weatherproof box will be purchased to hold the garden information for visitors. Plans are also underway to “spruce up” the watering system that Phil Gotkin and David Boyd installed last summer.

Jennifer says that “we anticipate a wonderful spring and summer season, watching the garden bloom with old and newly introduced plants, and then the final glorious fall display. It is a native garden full of really beautiful plants enjoyed by all sorts of birds and other wildlife. And, not least of all, visitors to our beautiful Eastern Shore.”

You are welcome to come join in the work every Thursday from 9-11, weather permitting. No long term commitment is required - just come when it works for you. Hope to see you there soon!

Chincoteague Nature Trail

Coordinated by Claude Taylor, the Chincoteague Island Nature Trail offers nature trails located along both sides of Hallie Whealton Smith Drive. This area represents the last large tract of undeveloped land on the island accessible to the general public. One can see fine examples of Eastern Shore native plants and wildlife in its natural habitat on both trails. The group meets periodically during the spring and fall at the trail with some off-season events.

Eastville Garden



The Eastville garden, currently under the supervision of Paul Tiffany, is over ten years old. It was started as an Eagle Scout project with help from the Master Gardeners. The Scout moved on



and Master Gardeners continue to maintain the garden. The original garden was sunny, however, as the crepe myrtles have grown, they cast a lot of shade on the garden and need to be pruned every other year. The large pile of pruned branches is an attempt to open the garden to more sun.

This time of year, spring bulbs of daffodils and species tulips are in bloom along with Carolina jasmine, and flowering quince shrubs are showing color. Perennials are peeking through every week. The garden has something showy throughout the growing season. Like every other garden, it has a fair share of weeds to be pulled every Tuesday morning. Paul says “Come join the fun!”

Northampton Library Garden

The “pollinator garden,” located at the Northampton Library in Nassawadox and coordinated by Cindy Ray, is not a big garden but certainly demonstrates the abundance of wonderful things, encouraged by “a few of the right plants.” Once the garden starts to bloom, usually late spring thru late fall, it is populated with bumblebees, Monarch butterflies (in all stages), small birds and many insects.

Volunteers met three weeks ago to clean up the garden which had been let winter over for birds and insects. Once the plants start growing, volunteers will meet twice a month. Right now, meetings are scheduled as needed. Soon, hopefully, annuals, including zinnias and marigolds, will be planted. Cindy says that “we will send our meeting times to Joyce, so if any master

gardeners or trainees want to join us you are welcome. We look forward to having new faces in this gem.” Happy gardening!



The Path to Sustainable Landscaping

Continued from p. 4



It is formed from the natural weathering and erosion of solid granite, a tough, hard, igneous rock and can be combined with additives such as resin for driveways and binders for paths and patios. Decomposed granite has a natural look, is permeable, is free from harmful chemicals and additives, slows down evaporation, and promotes water conservation.

Pea gravel and oyster/clam shells are two other natural materials that make attractive, permeable surfaces and support the goal of sustainable landscaping.

Minimize the Lawn

Turf lawns require vast amounts of water to maintain and provide no habitat for native plant and animal species. Responsible homeowners are becoming less and less tolerant of “the perfect lawn” with its accompanying mower noise and pollution, grass allergies, proliferation of chemical fertilizers, obscene water consumption, and continual war with lawn intruders (otherwise known as “weeds”). Also, in providing little habitat for native plant and animal species, chances are slim that one will ever see the quintessential robin pulling an earthworm from the lawn (and, coincidentally, earthworms provide very little sustenance to birds!).



If you aren't ready to turn your front yard into a native plant meadow, there are turf grass alternatives that will give the low, green, and walkable coverage that you seek in a lawn. Plant a mix of clover varieties to attract pollinators and to naturally fix nitrogen in the soil (these go dormant in the winter, so mixing it with a mini fescue helps to keep the green all year long). Surprisingly nearly as rugged as ordinary grass, Blue Star Creeper ([*Isotoma fluviatillis*](#)) ground cover is fast growing and can take heavy foot traffic. It creates a floral meadow in the spring and summer. Green Carpet Rupturewort

([*Herniaria glabra*](#)) is so-called for its abundance of tiny leaves that grow in a very low flat manner to create a dense evergreen carpet. Plant drought tolerant, low-growing [creeping thyme \(*Thymus serpyllum*\)](#) which forms a tight solid mat of green foliage that blooms with light

pink flowers in summer. This sun-loving plant is a vigorous creeper that stands up to foot traffic. In less sunny and damp areas, Irish moss ([Sagina subulata](#)) makes a nice groundcover.

Plant Trees

Not only are they beautiful, increase a home's property value, and are a source of sustenance to wildlife, trees are one of the best tools a homeowner can use to combat the effects of climate change. Next to transportation, electric power is the second largest source of greenhouse gas emissions in the United States, and heating and cooling homes accounts for over 40% of residential electricity usage. Planting shade trees in strategic locations can reduce residential heating and cooling costs dramatically by shading buildings, providing evaporative cooling, and blocking winter winds.

In addition to lowering energy costs, shade trees provide the benefit of carbon sequestration, holding harmful carbon in the ground instead of releasing it into the atmosphere.

Use the Right Products

To avoid contaminating watersheds and damaging local ecosystems, gardeners should limit the use of chemicals in their gardens and around their homes. These products go into the ground and harm the wildlife, fish, and insects. Many chemical products are indiscriminate and kill the "good guys" along with the bad ones. An alternative to chemical based products is to use organic and homemade remedies to fertilize, kill weeds, cure plant ailments, deter undesirable insects, and improve soil. Natural remedies include using Epsom salts as fertilizer, coffee grounds as a bug repellent & soil boost, plain yogurt to combat powdery mildew, and white vinegar as a weed killer. To learn more about how to use these natural substances and to get recipes, go to Gardenista.com.



Seek products that can be kept out of the landfill. Plastics are the biggest culprit, posing a contamination threat to water and soil as it slowly breaks down in the landfill. And plastic recycling is only partially effective as indicated by a 2015 EPA report that the rate of plastic waste recycling, including those with recycling values other than #1 and #2, was only 9.1%. There are, however, sustainable options including biodegradable containers for plastic nursery pots. These containers can be either composted or planted directly into the garden. Seek these containers for use when germinating your own seeds and encourage your local nursery to offer their inventory in these containers. Also ask if you can return the empty plastic containers for them to reuse.

The Right Plant in the Right Place

A sustainable design focuses on proper plant selection and location. Although there are some amazingly hardy non-natives and cultivars, the sustainable gardener should start with a base of natives (70% is ideal). Natives provide greater assurance of adaptability to the local climate conditions of temperature and rainfall and are more resilient to insect damage. A sustainable design also incorporates deep rooted perennials and grasses which hold in the soil and are more tolerant of drought conditions. These plants can be combined in appealing combinations, including a few non-invasive non-natives, to provide beautiful blooms, textures and forms which serve functional purposes in the design.

The amount of sun, water and wind are critical to the correct placement of plants.

The amount of sun, water and wind exposure on a site are critical to the correct placement of plants. Knowing the amount of sun a spot receives determines whether you plant a sun-loving plant that thrives on at least 6 hours of sun per day such as Eastern prickly-pear (*Opuntia humifusa*) and Garden Phlox (*Phlox paniculate*) or one that does better with some shade such as Southern lady fern (*Athyrium asplenoides*) and Silky Camellia (*Stewartia malacodendron*). Shrubs and perennials with delicate leaves should not be located in a windy, unprotected spot. And an area of the garden that receives rainwater runoff or where standing water collects is best suited to “thirsty” plants such as Sweetbay Magnolia (*Magnolia virginiana*), Cardinal Flower (*Lobelia cardinalis*), and Common Rush (*Juncus effusus*).

Be Water Wise

One of the most eco-friendly things a gardener can do is decrease rainwater runoff. Consider a permeable surface if you’re doing a hardscape project and use captured rainwater or gray water in the garden. Permeable surfaces allow water to infiltrate instead of being sent to stormwater and sewer systems. Permeable surfaces also introduce the satisfying crunch of gravel underfoot and add a softer element to hard surfaces.



In designing the garden, seek plants that require little to no additional water. Native plant gardens need no supplemental irrigation in a normal rain year and only infrequent irrigation during periods of drought. When additional watering is necessary, drip irrigation is the best option. It is more environmentally friendly than sprinklers or sprayers and uses less water delivered more efficiently to the root system. Where rainwater naturally collects, build a rain garden or create collection points to capture the additional water. Capture rainwater with a rain barrel or slow it down by hanging rain chains from gutters.

In summary, think of your yard as a green infrastructure that capitalizes on its natural elements and welcomes wildlife. It includes trees, permeable surfaces, and swales and rain gardens that capture and infiltrate runoff. It is managed sustainably through the minimal use of chemicals and non-biodegradable products. And it thrives because it comprises native plants well adapted to the local growing conditions.

Sources:

[American Society of Landscape Architects](#)

[Sierra Club, "The Path to Carbon-Positive Landscaping"](#)

[Dyke Arboretum, "Principles of Sustainable Design"](#)

[Gardenista.com "Fields of Green: 5 Favorite Lawn Substitutes"](#)

Gardeners' Tips

Act Now to Control Garlic Mustard



NOW is the time to treat Garlic Mustard, *Alliaria petiolata*. Shortly it will begin to bolt, and at this point, its first flower buds will open. Over the next month, the inflorescence (flowering part) will extend upward, developing new flowers up and out from the main stem. From the bottom up, as flowers are fertilized, the petals will drop away, and the siliques (the seedpods carrying the developing seed) will grow and harden. The sooner this seed development is stopped, the less risk that any will mature to reseed and extend the infestation into next year and beyond. So, pull it out furiously!

This invasive non-native has taken over vast areas of the U.S., including all parts of Virginia. Threatened areas provide habitat for such native spring wildflowers as

spring beauty (*Claytonia virginica*), wild ginger (*Asarum canadense*), bloodroot (*Sanguinaria canadensis*), trilliums (*Trillium* species) and toothworts (*Cardamine*). Three native butterfly species, the West Virginia white (*Pieris virginiensis*), mustard white butterfly (*Pieris oleracea*), and the falcate orange-tip (*Anthocharis midea annicka*), are especially impacted when toxic garlic mustard displaces native toothworts, its host plants – contributing to the decline of these lovely butterflies.

Other chemicals have been found to affect mycorrhizal fungi associated with native trees, resulting in suppression of native tree seedling growth.

Sources:

[Blue Ridge Partnership for Regional Invasive Species Management](#)
[Invasive.org](#)

Know Your Natives

As interest in native plants and how to incorporate them into one's landscape grows, with each issue, this new series will introduce the reader to a select variety of native plant. The plant featured will be at its most attractive during the current season. For the winter, the Yaupon deserves recognition with its showy red berries that persist during our coldest months.

Virginia Bluebells, *Mertensia virginica*



One of the most beautiful of Virginia's native wildflowers, Virginia bluebells sprout and flower when the spring weather begins to warm up. They beckon us to come outdoors and give us a promise of warmer weather to come before going dormant in mid-summer. Plant Virginia bluebells in partial shade and in moist, cool soil which is high in organic matter. Plant them in a native garden, cottage garden or pollinator garden. They attract bees and other pollinators as well as hummingbirds.

Easily propagate this plant by sowing seeds or dividing mature plants. They are also available for purchase at [Southern Branch Nursery](#) located in Chesapeake, VA.

Spring “To Do” List

Spring brings with it a zillion things for the gardener’s To Do List and tickles the latent desire to make all things beautiful. So, go forth and conquer! But, in so doing, you might want to keep these tips in mind.

- **Prune trees and shrubs.** Remove dead, damaged, and diseased branches from woody plants. Thin and trim summer-blooming shrubs such as butterfly bush and hydrangea (unless they bloom on old growth). Prune your roses just as or before new growth emerges from the canes. Prune fruit trees, including apples, pears, cherries, and peaches before new growth develops. Prune spring flowering shrubs once they finish flowering for the season.
- **Divide overgrown perennials.** Give older perennials new life by dividing them. Dig up varieties (such as Siberian iris, aster, coreopsis, yarrow, and many hostas) that form dense clumps and split them apart. They’ll bloom better when they’re not crowding each other out -- and you end up with more plants to fill in your yard or to share with friends and neighbors. Cut back ornamental grasses.
- **Plant early vegetables.** Plant carrots, radishes, spinach, lettuces and other cool-season varieties while there’s still a bit of frost in the air. They’ll withstand light freezes easily but need to be covered if the temperature drops into the low 20s.
- **Revitalize the soil.** Because your soil is likely dried out and packed after winter, it’s time to add moisture. Add organic material like compost or manure and, if you haven’t done so in a couple of years, get a soil test and follow recommendations. Add 1-3” of mulch to flower beds and garden.
- **Clean out.** Remove all old plant debris (leaves, leftover snow, dead weeds, etc.). Make sure that you get the roots of weeds, so they won’t grow back.

Test Your Knowledge

Choose the correct answer for zip code 23310.

1. What is the hardiness zone?
 - a. 7b
 - b. 8a
 - c. 8b
2. What is the average number of days at 86° or higher?
 - a. 60-90 days
 - b. 45-60 days
 - c. 70-90 days
3. What is the number of frost free days?
 - a. 210
 - b. 178
 - c. 250
4. What is the average precipitation?
 - a. 46.1”
 - b. 40.9”
 - c. 45.7”
5. What is the yearly average temperature?
 - a. 56.7°F
 - b. 60.6°F
 - c. 58.8°F

Thanks to Paul Tiffany for this research. Hope you got at least one of the questions right!

Answers: 1.b, 2.a, 3.a, 4. a, 5. c



Mark Your Calendar for the Cape Charles Garden Tour

ESVMG will host a *free* garden tour for Master Gardeners and the public on Sunday, June 6, 12:00 – 5:00 pm. The tour will begin at New Roots Youth Garden, located at the corner of Randolph Ave and Fig Street as you come into Cape Charles and whose mission is to “cultivate healthy children, families and community through outdoor, experiential learning and the profound act of connecting people with food from seed to table.” From here, pick up a map of the town and head out to experience the five featured gardens, including three owned by Master Gardeners Phil Goetkin & Diane D’Amico, Kim Fehrer, and Jane McKinley.

See a garden with native plants and grasses that coexist with annuals and perennials which provide colorful bloom from early spring into late fall. See a lush garden that must contend with high wind and a sandy, dry micro-climate; a small in-town shade garden; a multi-purpose landscape that satisfies many functional and recreational purposes; and a garden with an eclectic mix of blooming and climbing plants that will dazzle one’s imagination!

True to the mission of the Extension Master Gardener program, homeowners will be available to answer questions and give information about the plants featured in their gardens. This is sure to be a “don’t miss” opportunity to learn, be inspired, and to just plain enjoy a lovely spring day in the garden.

UPCOMING 2021 EVENTS

April 24 & May 8 9:00 am - noon	Plant Clinic & Sale, Peach Street Books, Cape Charles
June 6, 12:00 – 5:00	Cape Charles Garden Tour
June 8, 11:30 – 1:30	ESVMG Annual Picnic 28035 Dock View St., Harborton
Sept 17-21	International Master Gardening Conference

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If you are a person with a disability and desire any assistive devices, services or other accommodations to participate in this activity, please contact Jill Wright at [757-385-4769](tel:757-385-4769) during the business hours of 8:00 a.m. and 5:00 p.m. to discuss accommodations 5 days prior to the event. TDD number [\(800\) 828-1120](tel:800-828-1120).

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