



# *The Grapevine*

October 2011

## New River Valley Master Gardeners Association

### ***New River Valley Master Gardeners***

The New River Valley Master Gardener Association is a nonprofit organization working in conjunction with the Montgomery County Cooperative Extension Service to bring horticultural education and enjoyment to people in the New River Valley.

*The Grapevine* welcomes news, articles, questions, editorials, and comments. *The Grapevine* is published monthly and provided to all active members of the NRV MGA. Non-members may subscribe for \$15/yr. Please submit all items to the Newsletter Editor by the **25th** in order to be included in next month's issue.

#### **Officers**

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Past president – Gwen Ewing – 382-9566 [ewinggr@vt.edu](mailto:ewinggr@vt.edu)  
Open Position, Trainee Member-at-Large

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#### **VCE Master Gardener Program**

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#### **Contact Us:**

##### **NRVMGA**

NRV MGA Website:

<http://civic.bev.net/nrvmga/>

(Membership Dues, Grants and General Correspondence) POB 747, Blacksburg, VA 24063

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##### **Montgomery County Office**

Website: [www.ext.vt.edu](http://www.ext.vt.edu)

(MG Coordinator and Timesheets)

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## Treasurer's Report by Erica Jones

"Grants" Account:

Balance \$3874.46 (no change)

Grants status – Done – Pulaski Co Library, Pulaski Co 4-H, East Mont Garden Club, Harding Elementary, Belview Elementary

No activity to date (that I know of) – Montgomery Museum

Just started - East Mont Elementary School

Finished but not spent all of grant \$ – Heritage Hall, Christiansburg Library

Club checking:

7/14 Balance \$3526.63

USPO - \$96 (annual rental POB)

10/1 Balance \$3430.63

### MINUTES OF NEW RIVER VALLEY VIRGINIA MASTER GARDENER BOARD MEETING SEPTEMBER 12<sup>TH</sup>, 2011

Location: Government Building, Extension Office

In Attendance: Wendy Silverman, Connie Lawson, Gwen Ewing,  
Lynn Brammer, Ini Beckman, Helen Young,  
Keith Mileski, Jack Selcovitz, Rosemarie Sawdon

Connie called meeting to order 5:30pm.

Old Business:

Minutes from August 8<sup>th</sup>, 2011 Board meeting approved. **NEXT BOARD MEETING Monday, October 17<sup>th</sup>.**

Erica sent Treasurer's Report via email. Report was discussed and approved.



**Minutes of New River Valley  
Master Gardener Association  
General Monthly Meeting  
September 15<sup>th</sup>, 2011**

Location: Hahn Garden Pavilion - 6:30pm

Program: "Gardening in All Seasons"

Ini Beckman presented Dr. Alex Niemera, Professor, Dept. Of Horticulture

Dr. Niemera presented a delightful and informative slide show of Woody Species for year-round appeal. He also presented a handout of the various plants shown on the slides for each of the four seasons of the year.

Connie Lawson, President, held a brief business meeting.

Next Ex Com meeting to be held on October 17<sup>th</sup>, 5:30pm at the Extension Office, Government Center in Christiansburg. All members are invited.

She also explained that the minor changes to the By-Laws have been completed.

Wendy Silverman is setting up a lending library at the Extension Office for future use.

Ini Beckman has completed the design of the bookmark to be used as a giveaway at future functions.

Denis Gracanin was welcomed and has been reinstated as an active member. He recently returned from Ireland after a one year absence.

**Next Monthly Meeting - Thursday, October 20<sup>th</sup>, 6:30pm.** Note: since this meeting there has been a change of program which will be announced shortly.

At Wendy's suggestion, members brought flowers, plants and vegetables/fruit from their gardens. Wendy judged the entries during our meeting and prizes were awarded. Pictures were taken of the entries to be used as "examples" for future fairs.

Meeting concluded.

Submitted by: Rosemarie G. Sawdon, Secretary

## What's Blooming Now?

What's blooming around here as of 10/3

Tall fall sedums

Pansies!!

Cyclamen (hardy)

Hibiscus Japanese knotweed (wickedly invasive)

Garden (hardy) mum (this one has had flowers for 6 weeks)

Perennial Phlox

Helianthus

Butterfly Bushes

Marigolds

Four O'Clocks

Asters-wild and domestic

Still hanging in – annuals

## Grasshoppers by Gwen Ewing

My home and garden is surrounded by open spaces and fields. I have no close neighbors. I have 1000's of grasshoppers. Any ideas on how to control them would be appreciated.

## Drainage, Beauty, or Just Extra Time

Do you have an area in your yard that has a drainage problem? Or do you like the look of a stream, but do not want to go to the expense or time to put in a water feature? Do you have extra time on your hands with nothing to do (probably not)? If so, then you might want to think about putting a dry creek bed into your landscape. There are all kinds of options that you can incorporate into your landscape using a dry bed as a focal point. If it is a drainage problem, then this could be a possible solution that is relatively easy to improve.

In my case it was something to do as a project for this year. Since we moved to Pulaski seven years ago, I have tried to do at least one project per year either to the house or my landscape. Some of these include a new workshop, a carport, building new kitchen cabinets, a covered patio, a wood fired pizza oven, several new flower beds, a vegetable garden, and this year a dry creek bed.

With a tendency to get cabin fever ever year, all these projects usually start in the winter when I am going crazy inside the house. So, my small brain starts to think about what I will be doing when warmer weather finally arrives. Well, this year I got visions of a dry creek bed. It was around January or February this past winter when I Googled "dry creek beds." There was a wealth of information with articles, photos, and ideas. So, thus was born my new dry creek bed.

I learned that there are several things to consider when putting in a dry creek bed. First, planning is essential. Lay out the course of your dry stream. Depending on the purpose of your dry creek bed,

this may be pre-determined. Think about the headwaters and how you want your stream to begin. It could be a bend, a large boulder, or some natural plant material. Make it so that the viewer has to use their imagination to determine where the source starts. A meandering stream will look better than a straight course. Like a natural stream it needs to be various widths and depths. There are no rules one has to follow when it comes to dry creek beds. However, natural creek beds tend to be wider than they are deep. Of course, this is good since it will be less digging. A 2:1 ratio is adequate, making it on average 3' wide and 1 ½' deep.

Now the physical works begin. To make it a little easier, take the soil that you dig out and use it to mound up the sides. This will save the amount that you have to dig. However, make sure that you tamp down this loose soil. Once you get the excavating done you will need to put some type of barrier down to prevent weed from taking over all of your hard work. Several layers of wet newspaper will work just fine.

At this point it is time to start putting down the stone. You should start with the smallest and end up with the largest stone. A layer of the smallest pea gravel will make a nice base to start. Don't forget to put this down in different widths so that it will look more natural. Next comes the river rock. Try to visualize how the water would run through your stream. Use the river rock to make a visual path for your creek. Finally, the larger rock should be put in place. Scatter the larger stone. Place some close together and others far apart. It will help if you can take a look at a creek bed before you start putting the stone down. This will give you a better visual of how nature does it.

Next comes the fun part of plantings along the edges and sides of your new dry creek bed. In this endeavor, it is best to start with the larger plants or trees and finish with the smallest. Just keep in mind what it will look like when everything is fully grown. It should be a personal choice of what you plant. Try to use various shapes and colors to enhance the look of your stream.

So, as summer comes to an end, fall is on the horizon, and winter lurks in the dark, you too may find yourself with a dose of cabin fever. If you do, you may want to consider planning a dry creek bed for your landscape. It may make the winter seem a little shorter.



I used a boulder to disguise the “headwater”



Various plants and stones scattered



Finished project

## **Recipe of the Month**

### **Guacamole by Phyllis Eschenmann**

This is the WONDERFUL Guacamole recipe Jack Selcovitz was kind enough to share with me after the MG meeting and potluck in May. I made this recipe numerous times over the summer and everyone just raved. I'll give Jack and Alton Brown from the Food Network all the credit, although I do add an avocado seed in the middle of my dip to make it look "homemade," and to keep the guacamole from turning dark.

#### **Ingredients**

- 4 Haas avocados, halved, seeded and peeled
- 3 limes, juiced (some pulp included)
- 3 Roma tomatoes, seeded and diced
- 2 cloves of garlic, finely minced
- 3 tablespoons chopped cilantro
- 1/2 teaspoon kosher salt
- 1/2 teaspoon ground cumin
- 1/2 teaspoon cayenne or habanero pepper
- 1/2 medium onion, diced

#### **Directions**

In a large bowl place the avocado pulp and lime juice; toss to coat. Use a potatoe masher or wooden spoon and mash. Add the salt, cumin, cumin, cayenne, garlic, and mash again. Add the onion, tomatoes, and cilantro and mash again.

Let sit at room temperature for 30 minutes and taste. Adjust spices to your liking. Mash again and let sit at room temperature again for 30 minutes and serve. (you may want to place saran wrap on top to prevent a film or darkening)

\*\*If you prefer the mixture to be thicker, substitute onion powder or onion flakes for the fresh onion. (I have always used fresh onion, so cannot tell you how much exactly to substitute....to taste, I suppose)

**\*\*When fresh tomatoes are not in season, substitute one can or Rotel diced tomatoes & green chiles (drain excess liquid)...this is what Jack did for the recipe he served at the potluck in May. I've done it both ways and it is still WONDERFUL  
ENJOY....Phyllis, Jack and Alton**

## **Raised Beds by Patti Hall**

I've been intrigued with four season gardening for years. I've purchased books that I've read several times and am awed that even in Maine, crops are grown year round. Certainly, in this more temperate environment, we should be able to do the same. I had a large pine removed last fall to create a sunny location and I used the smaller logs to create the "walls of the beds." Based on my research, I created 3x4 rectangles, but since I am short, I wish now they were 2.5x4 since I have to really stretch to get to the middle without stepping on the soil. I created three, but only had enough of my homemade compost to plant two, so the third collected grass clippings and some soil to be ready for the next spring. I planted green beans, herbs, tomatoes and cotton(!) just for fun. Knowing everything was an experiment, I really didn't worry too much about process. I planted the beans three times as thick as I normally would just to see what the yield. I did not thin. It was hard, so very hard, not to thin those seedlings, since it went against my years of growing up on a farm where we planted a huge garden the "right" way forever. I staggered the planting every two to three weeks. I planted 8 tomato plants, parsley, basil and oregano. I had a volunteer potato from the compost that had not gotten hot enough!! With the plants packed into the space, I had no weeds and the only pests I had were slugs, who for some reason ate most of my cotton, but nothing else. If I had been more diligent, I could have done a better job with my slug traps, but I had more pressing matters going on in my life and slugs eating my cotton plants were the least of my worries, but it did make me wonder what cotton farmers use to control these pests. Anyway, I gave to my neighbors tons of green beans and tomatoes. I think the yield was actually bigger than if I had gone the traditional route. I did not have to water. I did not have to weed. It was a complete and total joy and I couldn't find any downfalls at all. I would drive around and see the old fashioned tilled gardens and get a pit in my stomach. I don't think I will ever rotortil again! Then, I had the opportunity to visit Debra Graff's garden and was so inspired by her whole yard being a series of raised beds, I plan to take my horticulture teacher sister and my gardening friends to visit if she will allow. I needed to stake my tomatoes better because the traditional staking wouldn't hold up the small trees! I'm not kidding, I did not fertilize or water and those plants were deep green, without blemish and HUGE and bore so much fruit, I couldn't keep up with the harvesting. So, from Debra I learned better staking techniques. I plan to order some of the fiberglass hoops she uses instead of making ones from PVC pipe that was on my list to do. That will allow me to provide cover to winter crops. I'm going to try the four season garden this winter and see what happens. I don't think I have anything to lose and possibly will be enjoying some fresh greens! You don't have to buy the expensive kits to make a raised bed but you must be very careful not to use any wood that is treated. Research is required before starting. I did this on the cheap and was thrilled with my results. This is something I will definitely keep refining and experimenting with for years to come. Thanks Debra for being such a great influence, even back in 2006 when I took the MG classes and you planted this idea in my mind. I will use leaf mold to amend the soil this fall. The beds are full of earth worms! This has been one of

my biggest gardening joys and I would encourage others to give it a try. I think you will like the results.

## Local Happenings

### October

**10-14<sup>th</sup> International Master Gardener College-** Location: Charleston, WV . See

<http://imgc.ext.wvu.edu/> for information. Tours! Some eight "breakout" sessions concurrently!!

**20th Membership meeting 6:30 pm- Tour of PME** Floyd Not confirmed; stay tuned. 540-763-5688 (Office) 540-239-5728 (Mobile) [www.pme-compost.com](http://www.pme-compost.com)

## Deer, Etc.! by Carol Moates

We live out in Floyd County at the end of a dead end road and our other property line is the Little River. We have always had plenty of wildlife but in the last seven years or so the deer population has skyrocketed. It seems our dogs, deer sprays, cayenne sprays, even the deer fencing didn't work for us anymore. At nearly the beginning of gardening season three years ago the deer ran completely through our deer fence (which had worked the two years before) in one side and out the other. At that point I quit, gave up, and was exasperated to no end. Well, the next year we put up 8+ feet of chicken wire. That worked until the corn came in and then the raccoons wiped that out in two nights. So now we have chicken wire with two strands of electric fence along the outside, one low and one medium to high. No more deer or raccoons. Our grape vines and some of my ornamental shrubs are in the yard in the open. I was complaining to that Mr. Aggie himself, Jon Vest, one day and he told me to use Irish Spring soap. I said, "oh sure, I just bet that will work-HA!" He continued on to tell me some pretty impressive stories about how well it worked and that he had experienced it firsthand. So, I got some Irish Spring, cut it into chunks, wrapped it in cheese cloth and hung it all around the grapes, the Viburnum, and the Pussy Willow. We got to harvest ALL our grapes and the two ornamentals are fine! I had to get used to the smell when we'd get near the plants, but I am ever so grateful! Last year it was so bad with the grapes we ended up harvesting early-too early- and the grape juice was worthless.

## October Garden Chores

### The Whole Garden

\*Have your lawn and garden soil tested at the local Cooperative Extension Service and make recommended improvements.

\*Visit garden centers for ideas on fall-blooming plants and bargains.

\*Rake up fallen leaves and add them to your compost heap.

\*Mulch areas intended for early spring planting.

### Trees and Shrubs

\*Plant bare-root, containerized, and balled-and-burlapped shrubs.

\*Transplant established trees and shrubs.

\*Water newly planted trees and shrubs.

\*After leaf fall, take hardwood cuttings

## Flowers and Grasses

- \*Mow the grass as needed until it stops growing.
- \*Reseed the lawn until the soil cools.
- \*Pot up less hardy ornamental grasses.
- \*Transplant or divide perennials.
- \*Mark late-to-emerge perennials.
- \*Cut hardy perennials to the base after fall flowering.
- \*Clean up your perennial beds.
- \*Rake up or pull out annuals once they are killed by frost.
- \*Continue planting hardy spring-flowering bulbs.
- \*Lift and store tender, summer-flowering bulbs, tubers, and corms.

## Fruits and Vegetables

- \*Plant garlic all month.
- \*Plant winter rye for a cover crop.
- \*Direct-seed lettuce, endive, and escarole.
- \*Harvest kale and collards all month long.
- \*Pick mature green tomatoes.
- \*Take cuttings of your favorite herbs to grow indoors over winter.
- \*Dig chopped up leaves into the soil.
- \*Dig, sever, and replant rooted suckers of raspberries.
- \*Remove stakes and other garden equipment from the vegetable garden.
- \*After a killing frost, clean up the vegetable garden.



I am so excited about the big response I have had from the MG group to help me fill our newsletter with very interesting and varied topics! If you haven't taken the time to contribute, please do. I am certain all of you have things we would love to hear about! Although the planting and harvesting time is drawing near, let's keep our interest alive with winter information as well as things to think about before spring.

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**New River Valley  
Master Gardener Association  
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