

Gardening on the Shore

Spring, 2019

Message from the President

A wonderful Spring has started. We should be enjoying the birds singing, the trees budding and some of our flowers poking their heads through the soil. Spring (Life) is amazing.

Most of our gardens have already had their spring cleanup and mulching and planting is planned or underway. The three school programs are in full swing. The radio segment is now being broadcast weekly with gardening tips. And several events are in the planning stage. The leads and chairs and volunteers that make these things happen are truly our advocate stars. Thank you!

The hard work, camaraderie and fun that we have in the gardens is revitalizing and truly binds us together as Eastern Shore Virginia Master Gardeners.

I only have one regret this spring, the cancellation of our presence at the Historic Onancock School for the House & Garden Tour. I consider this to be a lesson learned for future events. In our enthusiasm we forgot to consider other events during that time frame, especially Mothers' Day. In the end we could not get enough volunteer support and had to cancel.

We are planning the Jack Humphreys Tree dedication in the May/June time frame at Kiptopeke Native Plant Garden in Kiptopeke State Park. The Master Naturalists, which Jack was also a part, have been invited.

Don't forget our June 3 Picnic and General Membership Meeting at Sawmill Park in Accomac. See you there!

Jim Crunk

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Feature Article

FORAGING FOR HEALTH ON THE VIRGINIA EASTERN SHORE

by Hannah Denny, ESVMG Master Gardener



We all know the signs of spring. The wonderful warmth that creeps back into the air, the hazy 'green mist' of budding trees, the early flowering of fruit trees and magnolias, and of course, *dandelions*. And not just dandelions, but tons of dead nettle, onion and garlic grass, and plantains with roots like anchors. Spikey, thorny "bitter lettuce can also be a bit of a bother, as it isn't as spiky as milk thistles, but definitely has sharp edges. These are typically thought of as "weeds," meaning anything that planted itself that might choke out less virile flowers and plants. But the wonderful thing about all these plants and so many more is that they are all edible, each with their own unique flavor profile and nutritional composition. And, of course, they are free for the taking!

If you choose to go foraging on the Eastern Shore of Virginia, you are in luck because lots of edible plants thrive on our little coastal sandbar. But, like anything that involves uncultivated land, there are a few things you should keep in mind in order to be a responsible forager:

1. Don't ever take more than the remaining plant colony can easily regenerate. In order to do this, you will need to know what part of the plant you are harvesting to eat, and what type of plant it is. For example, when harvesting the rhizomes of cattails, be extra careful not to harvest too much from the same spot or plant; the plant might die. However, there are other plants that you can harvest multiple sections of the plant and it will just continue to grow, undaunted by losing a few leaves or roots or shoots. That is why it is tantamount to know what type of plant you are harvesting from and what you are harvesting from that plant: perennial? Biennial? Re-seeding annual? Tuber? Rhizome? Fruit? Nuts?
2. Harvest in a way that does the least damage to both the plant and its habitat. This is pretty straightforward. Try to think of the plant giving you a gift (because that's basically what it's doing!) and in return, approach harvesting with kindness and patience. Some things are easier to harvest than others, and if you aren't sure how to harvest something without significantly disturbing its surroundings, hold off and do some research. The Internet is a wonderful source of first-hand experience, and I personally recommend the book "The Forager's Harvest" by Samuel Thayer. This book gives wonderful, practical information on wild edible plants all over North America, with personal suggestions about how to harvest, prepare and cook different plants.
3. Be safe! Don't eat anything you are not 110% sure that you know what it is. According to "The Forager's Harvest", there are no such thing as plant "look-alikes;" there are only plants that resemble a key part of the edible plant you are looking for, like the leaves or flowers. Also, consider where you harvest: Old abandoned fields and roadsides are often overrun with tasty edible plants, but someone's front yard is probably not a good idea, unless it's your front yard.

(Duh). Also, there is always the risk of harvesting in a field that has been exposed to pesticides which you may not be aware of. Overall, just using common sense and erring on the side of caution is always the right choice when harvesting wild plants. You won't ever get sick by choosing to research a little more, but if you are reckless and do not carefully make sure you have what you think you have, you could experience everything from mild intestinal discomfort to life-threatening poisoning. SO BE SAFE and always check yourself before you wreck yourself!

So, what bounty do we have on the ESVA that is plentiful and tasty? Here is a list of my personal absolute favorite wild plants to harvest. They are also some of the most common (and easily accessible) wild edible plants in Northampton and Accomack Counties, based on my own research. Please keep in mind that not all of these are native, in fact, some of them are considered invasive. However, that doesn't change that these wild plants are edible and are often full of nutritional value, and/or taste delicious.

1. **Dead nettles** are a perfect example of the fact that, although non-native and invasive, they are tasty and nutritious. You can find the little turrets everywhere, carpeting the fields and yards during early-late spring. The little pink flowers are sweet, making them popular with kids, and you can use them as a salad green as well. The little leaves are lightly fuzzed and are often tinged with purple, making them eye-catching in a salad. They also make excellent tea.



2. Collect immature flower spikes of **Cattails** while the flower is still green. Some say the flavor of these is a little bit sweet corn, a little bit mushroom, but mostly distinctly cattail. You can boil these or eat them raw. You can also very carefully collect the pollen, which can be added to any baking project you can think of, due to its lightly sweet flavor.

Lateral shoots of the rhizome of the cattail (cattails are rhizomes, did you know?!) According to 'The Forager's Harvest', "Cattail laterals, the tips of which point sideways and do not terminate in a leafy bud, break very easily and have not yet differentiated into distinct layers of rind and core like mature rhizomes. This is part of the plant that is harvested late summer to early fall, after the plants have flowered but before they begin to die back. And these lateral rhizome shoots are really good to just eat raw, with a sweet flavor and soft texture, but they go well in salads, soups, boiled, steamed, and, maybe, fried (not sure about this). You can also harvest the "leaf heart" from the cattail which can be collected from spring until mid-summer.



3. First things first, unless you have hands of steel, invest in a good pair of gardening gloves before harvesting **Stinging Nettles!** You can try harvesting them barehanded since the sting only lasts between 5-10 minutes,



depending on how sensitive your skin is. Also, although stinging nettles do taste good and can be prepared in a lot of different ways (they really don't taste like asparagus in my opinion), they can be fibrous no

matter how new the shoots are. That said, they make one of my favorite types of herbal teas, and once cooked (even briefly), the sting goes away completely and can be used much in the same way you would use spinach, as the leaves have similar constructions. But I think the best way to enjoy them is tea. It's delicious and hearty and with a spoon of honey mixed in, it is surprisingly filling. Stinging nettles are one of the few wild plants that have been studied for nutritional facts, and they are often used to ease urinary track inflammation even today. Extremely high in vitamins C and A, calcium, potassium, magnesium, iron and protein, this is truly a green worth the sting.

4. Ok, I know this from extensive experience: kids love all kinds of sorrel, including **Sheep Sorrel**. They LOVE it, begging for "lemon leaves" and getting super excited when they find a sneaky garden sorrel plant by the compost bins or a patch of sheep sorrel in the yard. They call it "lemon leaves" for a reason; sheep sorrel has a lovely, tangy sour leaves due to oxalic acid (the same acid in rhubarb) and are shaped almost like Goldfish Crackers. The leaves often are shot through with little red veins, and if you see one that is mostly red, those will be more bitter than the leaves that are primarily green. The only part of the plant you want to eat are the leaves, as the stems can get tough and the flowering parts are bitter. As soon as the plant sets out flowers, the leaves can also turn a little bitter, so I prefer to harvest these tasty salad greens in spring. Along with punching up a salad, any dish that calls for vinegar or is a rather bland starch (like rice or pasta) can be jazzed up with some delicious fresh or blanched sheep sorrel leaves.



5. **Corn Speedwell** is a creeping annual that wildly self-seeds after flowering and dies back until the following winter. You have probably walked all over it or stopped to admire its tiny little bright blue flowers that welcome the morning and evening (anytime the sun isn't shining too brightly! Corn Speedwell, also called Speedwell, is one of the tastiest salad greens or 'potherbs' I have tasted, and it is everywhere on the Eastern Shore. It grows much like a slightly succulent ground cover and you can harvest a fair amount at a time. My father loves it so much that he will go outside to harvest some and come back after a long time empty handed, having forgot he was harvesting for the family and not just himself...A true early spring plant, it is one of the first glimpses of green during March, and its tiny little blue flowers make dreams of warmer days and more blossoms seem more tangible. A very sweet wild plant, amazing in smoothies or salads, and delicious when dried and used as an herbal tea or in an herbal tea mix.



6. **Wild Onion and Wild Garlic Grass** may be the most visible edible wild plant along the ESVA, as the long, graceful tubular 'leaves' stretch far above mown grass...and because they are bulbs, they just keep coming back, no matter how many times you mow them down. The only real way to ensure they don't pop back up is to harvest them! If the plant has experienced repeated mowing, or is relatively small, leave them to get bigger and taller to increase the bulb size.



People make a big deal about wild leeks or ‘ramps’, but I have yet to see sizable colonies of this fabled foraging plant...whereas tall onion and garlic grass is EVERYWHERE and, if you leave it to grow, it develops those adorable little bulbs that pack a nice, subtle onion or garlic flavor. You can eat every part of this plant; the grass is similar but not as strong as chives, but if fresh are almost indistinguishable from the common garden herb. The bulbs can be used in the same way as shallots, garlic and green onions. This is one of my favorite wild edible plants, not just because it’s so noticeable and available, but also because you can choose to just cut some of the grass for a chive-like flavor, or you can harvest the whole plant. And unlike regular onions and garlic, the flavor is much more subdued in wild onion and garlic grass, making it perfect for kids who have sensitive mouths or folks who experience digestive distress after eating regular onions or garlic.

Some other wild plants available for harvest in this area include:

Dandelions: leaves, flowers, roots. No part of the plant is poisonous, and dandelion wine is delicious!

Hen-Bit: Produces flowers similar to dead nettles, but with leaves that are round and frilly. Great herbal tea plant.

Chicory: Grows in awful, rocky soil, often right by the road. Produces sweet lavender flowers on gangly looking stalks. Take chicory root and dandelion root and you have yourself a popular coffee substitute!

Bull thistles and Milk thistles: you can peel the spikes off, a yummy potherb and a great “bragging rights” plant to try.

Chickweed: succulent, creeping rosettes of leaves, pretty much everywhere. A good salad green.

Wild Violets: Flowers are edible and slightly sweet. A beautiful salad garnish or another wonderful tea ingredient.

Plantains: (not the banana like fruit) specifically broad-leafed, but the breeds that have long, slender leaves are also non-toxic and young leaves can be eaten in the same way as broad leaf. One of the most nutritious wild plants.

Purslane: a succulent creeping ground cover that has no bitter flavor and is super high in Omega 3-Fatty Acids!

Wild Roses: delicious flower petals and then come back for rose hips that contain exponentially more vitamin C than oranges. A delicious tea plant!

Wild Mallow: the leaves are rich in vitamins and protein, and the sweet little white and pink flower is also edible. Use in salad or as lettuce.

Red Clover: the flower is very tasty and can be dried for tea. A great winter cover crop as well, if you need some more nitrogen in your soil!

Wild Bee Balm: Makes amazing tea, has a really tasty peppery sweet flavor, and is beloved by all pollinators and hummingbirds alike.

Resources:

- Thayer, Samuel. *The Forager’s Harvest: A Guide to Identifying, Harvesting and Preparing Edible Wild Plants*. Forager’s Harvest Press, Birchwood, WI. 2006.
- Website: <https://basisgear.com/edible-wild-plants/#tab-con-11> .

Articles of Interest

THE JOY OF SPRING WILDFLOWERS

by Victor Klein, ESVMG Master Gardener

Spring is a busy time for Master Gardeners - yard cleaning, garden planning, catalog searching, seed starting and the many other things that have occupied a Gardener's mind during the long winter months.

Try and take some time out to search and enjoy a unique group of spring Wildflowers known as Spring Ephemerals. They are one of the more interesting groups of wildflowers, growing in woodland edges and interior, and include some of the showiest and most interesting early wildflowers: Dutchman's-breeches, Bloodroot, Virginia Bluebells, Virginia spring beauty, Trout Lilies, Trillium, cut-leaved toothwort and wood anemone any many other of these short-lived species.

As implied by "ephemeral," they are of short duration in their above-ground forms. Growing quickly in rich deciduous woodlands, flowering and pollination occur before the tree canopies have expanded their leaves overhead. Fruits are ripened and distributed within weeks.

Not long after the leaf canopy closes overhead in late spring or very early summer, the ephemerals will have died back almost completely, leaving little or no trace that they were there.

You may wonder if it is possible and advisable to transplant these little beauties into your garden. Early in the fall when the soil is still warm would be the best time to do this. Plant them where they will get sun in the early spring and in soil rich in humus. The seeds of ephemerals are often dispersed for very short distances by ants. Because the dispersal of seeds is so localized (unlike those dispersed by birds or wind), habitat fragmentation is a threat to the survival of spring ephemerals. Once these plants disappear from a forest, they rarely return, so it would be best not to collect these plants in the wild. Seeds and plants (usually shipped as bare-root stock) are available by mail order from nurseries.

BLOODROOT, *Sanguinaria canadensis* emerges from the ground in woodlands before the trees leaf out. Plants display their beauty in two stages. Stunning white blossoms appear for a very short time early spring, emitting a wonderful fragrance that attracts many kinds of early pollinators.



JACK-IN-THE-PULPIT, *Arisaema triphyllum* thrives under a variety of conditions, but grows most vigorously in moist, shady, seasonally wet locations. Deer will not eat this plant! It has a spongy cylindrical structure, inside is a leaf-like structure that is rolled into a deep cup with an overhanging roof, the "pulpit." One master gardener shares her experience with this plant which was growing well in her woodland yard until she started landscaping – and, unfortunately, every one was lost! It was a hard lesson to learn that they don't like to be disturbed.



SPRING BEAUTY, *Claytonia virginica* is a small exquisite woodland plant flowering in mid to late spring from a small corm. The flower color is pale pink from a distance but a close look reveals five white petals striped with pink.

TROUT LILY or DOGTOOTH VOILET, *Erythronium americanum*, is recognized by its brown-mottled leaves, this is one of the more common spring ephemerals, and it is found in colonies that can be quite sizable.

The common name (Dogtooth Violet) refers to the toothlike shape of the white underground bulb. The name Trout Lily (a more suitable name since the flower is not a Violet) refers to the similarity between the leaf markings and those of the brown or brook trout.



VIRGINIA BLUEBELLS, *Mertensia virginica* are one of the most beautiful of the spring ephemerals. These plants are in the family Boraginaceae, relatives of other familiar species like Forget-me-not, Lungwort, and Comfrey. Bluebells do best in rich, well-drained soils where they can form large colonies over time. They grow fast and the flower shoots quickly give way to some of the loveliest flowers in the Eastern United States. The flowers start off pink and gradually turn over to their famous shade of blue as they mature. Bees, especially female Bumblebees that fly in early spring often will be seen visiting the flowers. Only the larger bees have the ability to make their way up the tube. Other champions of bluebell pollination are butterflies and moths.

LARGE-FLOWERED TRILLIUM, *Trillium grandiflorum* white flowers can reach 4" in diameter and will become a pink hue at the end of their bloom cycle. The common name Wake Robin is in less use today, but no doubt referred to the early April and May bloom time, corresponding with the arrival of the Robin. Trilliums are members of the Lily family.



WILD GERANIUM, *Geranium maculatum* is native to much of eastern North America. It has dissected leaves, beautiful pinkish-purple flowers, and it readily spreads, forming patches that bees and butterflies can't resist. They are mostly found in woodlands, but do well in full sun! Wild Geranium has a unique way of spreading its seeds. The seeds are packed into a pod and the pods are attached to a structure that resembles a cranes bill. As the bill dries, it catapults the seeds away from the parent plant.

DUTCHMAN'S BREECHES, *Dicentra cucullaria* flowers early in the spring when sunlight is available to the woodland floor before the canopy of the trees leaf in. This is an ideal time for the first emerging bumblebees to find nectar in the flowers. In the early summer, the green foliage (which



resemble fern-like leaves) will fade to a light yellow and will be totally dormant by early summer. The common name Dutchman's breeches comes from the pair of outer petals which form a swollen 'V' making the hanging flower look like a pair of white breeches/bloomers hung upside-down. Don't confuse this wildflower with the cultivated variety of *Dicentra* which has foliage and blooms that last much longer into the summer.

So, now it's time to get out into the woods in the search for these beautiful wildflowers. And, if you see a plant that isn't on this list or one that you want to learn more about, take a snapshot of it using your PlantSnap app (see sidebar). Happy hunting!

Keep the Conversation Going



PURPLE STEMMED ASTER
Autumn blooming
wildflower

Now that you're inspired to discover our lovely spring wildflowers and to identify wild plants that are edible, it's time to get outside and begin your search!

As you venture out, you may need a tool to help with your plant identification. There are several apps available, but Victor recommends PlantSnap which is available for Apple and Android users. To identify a plant you simply take a photo of the plant with your smart phone and the app will tell you what it is. Plant Snap claims it will recognize 50% of all known species of plants and trees in every country on Earth.

Equipped with your interest, curiosity and, if need be, your plant ID app, you are ready to discover the beautiful things that mother nature has in store for you. If you run across a plant that you find to be particularly interesting (doesn't have to be native), take a picture of it and share it with us on our [Facebook](#) page.

And let's keep the conversation going!

WELCOME TO OUR INTERNS

The Eastern Shore of Virginia Master Gardener Class of 2019 celebrated their graduation from trainee to intern status on February 27th at a luncheon at the Machipongo Clam Shack. The eleven members of the Class of 2019 completed an intensive twelve-week course presented by a variety of instructors who spoke on everything from soils and botany to insects and vegetables. Field trips included tours of a wildlife habitat garden, a local organic farm, and AREC research/demonstration gardens.

With the course completed, the new Master Gardeners interns have already begun their initial 50-hour commitment by volunteering in a variety of projects throughout the area, the first being the Heritage Festival held at the Eastern Shore Community College. They will remain under the supervision of master gardener volunteers until they have completed their volunteer hour commitment and become Certified Master Gardeners. Please welcome them to your MG gardens and projects. Applications for the 2019 class are now being accepted. The new class will start in October 2019, break from mid-November to mid-January and end in February.

Thanks go to Christine Williams, Education Committee Chair, along with class facilitators Paul Tiffany and John McCormick.



Pictured above are Christine Williams with Interns Larry Breech, Claude Taylor, Jocelyn Grover, Joyce Almond, Brenda Fitzsimmons, Julie Callahan, Cindy Ray, and David Boyd. Steve Rulison, Master Gardener, on the far right. Interns not pictured are Marianne Francavilla, Julie Fisher and Peg Blake.

The following is a short bio of each Intern:

Joyce Almond

After retiring to Accomack County in 2015, Joyce and her husband decided to volunteer at the Chincoteague National Wildlife Refuge. While volunteering at the Bateman Center, she became interested in the Pollinator and Song Bird Gardens and was also interested to learn what plants would work in her blank slate yard. "It was a natural transition to become involved in the Master Gardener Program."

Joyce is very excited to learn about what herbs work on the Eastern Shore, so volunteering in the Ker Place Garden is perfect. She's also learning about the importance of and which native plants will work in her yard, while volunteering in the gardens at the Chincoteague National Wildlife Refuge. She has "met so many informative and helpful Master Gardeners in the short time I have been involved with the Master Gardens and am excited to learn and work with this wonderful group of gardeners

who are more than willing to share their knowledge and expertise.”

Peg Blake

Peg and her husband came to the Eastern Shore of Virginia from the “western shore” of Maryland where they lived their last two years on a boat. After retirement from a 30+ year career as an educator, she and her husband put down permanent roots here, and she enrolled in the Master Gardener program at the recommendation of Joyce Falkinburg. Having always gardened, she wanted to meet people with similar interests and to “do things better than I had been doing.” She has been volunteering at Ker Place and other ESVMG gardens as well as at the Kegotank Elementary project.

David Boyd

David has always had an interest in nature and the importance of native habitats, such as wooded areas, for its value to the environment. More recently, he got more involved in planting natives and gardening when he planted a native garden at the UVA research facility in Oyster. He began doing a little gardening and beekeeping at his home on Kings Creek, outside Cape Charles. His interest in gardening is primarily in growing things to eat, as opposed to flowers. His very shady lot limits the garden’s productivity for things like tomatoes and peppers, but blueberries do well in the acid soil and partial shade. He also has a few peach trees in a sunnier portion of his property. David has volunteered for the garden at Eastville, the native plant garden at Kiptopeke and garden at the Parks facility at Indiantown. He also volunteered at the Plant Clinic at the grand opening of the new Garden Market on Rt 13.

Larry Breech

Larry grew up in a small Pennsylvania town located on the Susquehanna River enjoying the benefits of rural life by fishing, hunting, hiking and working on several farms. After obtaining a degree in business administration from Penn

State, Larry continued his formal education, graduating from a 2 ½ year Pennsylvania Rural Leadership Program as a RULE VI Fellow. He started his own farm and ag supply business with corn, soybeans and sunflowers as his main crops along with a several acres of vegetables raised for sale at several farmers’ markets.

Larry served as a president of a statewide farm organization and was a founding member of the Pennsylvania Sustainable Agriculture Association. He has served on the boards of numerous agricultural organizations including the Mid-Atlantic Soybean Association and Pennsylvania’s DEP Ag Advisory Board and their Chesapeake Bay Advisory Board. Most recently he played an integral role in an EPA Clean Water Project to demonstrate how to control pollution from manure with an advanced microbial composting system and was recognized as a leader in renewable farming techniques.

After serving on several school boards and as a longtime K-12 substitute teacher, he and his wife Debbie now reside in Melfa, VA. Larry is spending his time as an Intern working at the AREC and Kiptopeke gardens as well as volunteered for the Plant Clinic at the grand opening of the new Garden Market on Lankford Hwy.

Julie Callahan

A retired opera singer and voice teacher, Julie and her husband moved to the ES in October 2016 from the Philadelphia suburbs and has always enjoyed flower and vegetable gardening. Her other hobbies are quilting and embroidery which she continues to teach. “I’m blessed to have found the Master Gardeners program and the Woman’s Club of Accomack County where I’m currently President. I’ve made many friends here and there for which I’m truly thankful.” Julie hit the ground running as a member of the Radio Program team and volunteered to keep the VMS calendar updated.

Julie Fisher

Julie has always gardened and had “a wonderful garden” at her home in the Philadelphia suburbs. She moved to the Eastern Shore four years ago where she “loves it” after retiring as an Operating Room nurse. As a budding Master Gardener, she has gained a better understanding of “what I put into my garden.” Julie has volunteered at the Eastville and Ker gardens and at the Plant Clinic held at the grand opening of the new Garden Market on Rt. 13. She plans to continue her Plant Clinic volunteer work at the Cape Charles Farmers Market this summer.

Brenda Fitzsimmons

Brenda moved here from Pennsylvania after living in 11 states and 30 homes! She and her husband settled on a large lot along Nassawadox creek and are enjoying the rural life as she establishes garden beds around their new home. When living in PA, passersby would comment on her lovely gardens which is a very different experience from where she lives now in the country. Brenda volunteers at the Community Service Board in Parksley where “it has been very satisfying to help in the garden, being able to plan the garden, weed the gardens, plant, and pick the plants.” She and her husband don’t call themselves “come-heres” but, instead are “never-leave-heres!”

Marianne Francavilla

Marianne and her husband retired to the ESVA in October of 2017. They purchased a home on sea side with a large established vegetable garden and green house. Marianne got involved with the MG program “to gain the knowledge I needed to be successful with my vegetable garden and green house.”

She was born and raised in Pittsburgh, PA. Her husband, Sergio, is from Modena, Italy and, like Marianne, is a retired engineer. They moved from Phoenix, Arizona to enjoy all that the Eastern Shore and the Chesapeake Bay have to offer. Thus far Marianne has participated in the

plant clinic held in Cheriton, which she found to be great fun and very informative.

Jocelyn Grover

Jocelyn has lived on both coasts of the United States and enjoyed a variety of careers but, when it came time to settle down in retirement, the natural choice was her favorite place, Chincoteague. Permanently moving to the island three years ago from Philadelphia, Jocelyn is very active in local non-profit groups as well as several civic organizations. She provides IT support to the Museum of Chincoteague Island, chairs several committees for the Chincoteague Cultural Alliance and serves on the boards for the Chamber of Commerce and CCA. When not volunteering, Jocelyn works as a guide for island boat cruises and at the YMCA.

Jocelyn loves kayaking, photography and mostly anything beach related, but her best moments are spent in the garden. Her love of gardening is inherited from her mother and grandmother, both passionate gardeners. “There is never a bad day spent in the yard.”

Having participated in the installation of a native plant garden by the Road Scholars under the guidance of the MG program has been her favorite project so far. She is looking forward to many equally rewarding MG projects in the future, both as an intern and Master Gardener.

Cindy Ray

Retired residential and commercial contractor, Cindy and her husband have been coming to the Shore for many years. They bought their house on two acres a year and a half ago. Cindy has always wanted to know more about developing a more diverse habitat, and the Master Gardener program was a way to provide the knowledge, experience and ability to work with other gardeners to help her achieve this. She looks forward to working “on the different projects and with all the wonderful people I have met and will meet. I can’t wait to see the

transformation take place on our little slice heaven.”

Claude Taylor

Claude was born in Baltimore, Maryland and first became interested in gardening while volunteering at Irvine Nature Center in the early 1980s. In 1983, he started with A&A Tree Experts studying to become an arborist. In 1988 he became a Maryland licensed tree expert and Arborist. In 1990, he obtained his ISA (International Society of Arboriculture) Arborist certification. In addition, he spent six years volunteering with Maryland Save Our Streams, assisting to conduct stream water quality surveys. His love of the outdoors continued, and he sustained his career at A&A for 23 years until 2006. From 2006 until 2010 he continued working as an Arborist at Mead Tree. In 2010, he continued caring for trees and plants at a small private school in Baltimore County. Finally, from 2011 until 2018, he

returned to A&A Tree Experts, and became a certified crane operator until retiring in August of last year.

After moving to Chincoteague to retire with his wife, Cheryl, he became interested in sharing his knowledge and giving back to the community while becoming a Master Gardner.



Gardeners' Tips

EXCERPT FROM MASTER GARDENER HANDBOOK

As you read in the articles included in this issue, wildflowers and natives are a valuable asset to a healthy environment. As master gardeners, we have learned how to plant a garden with lots of structure and diversity, but we must also understand the importance of selecting native plants for wildlife whenever possible. The following excerpt from our Handbook gives a good starting point.

What's a native plant? According to the Plant Conservation Alliance, a native plant is "...one that occurs naturally in a particular habitat, ecosystem, or region of the U.S. and its territories or possessions, without direct or indirect human actions."

Mounting scientific evidence indicates a strong correlation between the use of native plants in the landscape and insect biodiversity. Dr. Doug Tallamy of the University of Delaware has conducted research that illustrates this correlation. In his landmark book Bringing Nature Home: How You Can Sustain Wildlife with Native Plants, Tallamy cites the following research results:

"In a survey of insect herbivores found eating woody native and alien species in Oxford, Pennsylvania, native plants produced over four times more insect biomass than alien plants produced. This difference resulted entirely from the inability of insects with chewing mouthparts to eat alien plants." (p. 328)

"In a comparison of the diversity of herbivorous insects on native and alien woody plants ... more than three times as many insect species were associated with native plants as with alien plants." (p. 329)

Tallamy also explains that because 96% of songbirds feed their young insects and 37% of all animals on earth are herbivorous insects (pp. 21 – 24), the choice of plants we make in our landscape not only impacts the biodiversity of insect populations but also multiple bird populations as well.

Further, Tallamy and other scientists have found that not all native plants are equally productive. Some plant species support far greater biomass or numbers of organisms than others. For example, native plants in the Lobelia genus (such as cardinal flower) only support four species of Lepidoptera (butterflies, moths and skippers), while plants in the Carex genus (the sedges) support 36 species of Lepidoptera [http://udel.edu/~dtallamy/host/index.html]. As gardeners, then, we have a wide range of choices before us when selecting plants for habitat improvement. The initial decisions we make for habitat gardening will likely be the same as for any other project, based on three primary factors: 1) how we plan to use the site; 2) the current site conditions; and 3) what plant species are most appropriate for those site conditions and the geographic region we live in. (Budget is typically a fourth factor but will not be addressed here.) Although it's true that the more native plant species we use, the better the wildlife diversity will be, it's important to our specific site, which is depend on our own find the right balance to suit an individual choice that will particular needs. Ultimately, the degree to which one is able to improve habitat and sustain wildlife will be unique to each situation and dependent on individual preference.

Although it's true that the more native plant species we use, the better the wildlife diversity will be, it's important to find the right balance to suit our specific site.

In addition, there are many other reasons to use native plants besides the benefit of providing food and cover for wildlife. Whenever we choose “the right plant for the right place,” we ensure a more successful outcome, especially if we select those best adapted for drought- or water-tolerance. And although native plants are not maintenance free – contrary to popular opinion – they can substantially decrease long-term maintenance requirements over time, once established.

From Master Gardener Handbook
Chapter 20, “Habitat Gardening for Wildlife”

Spring Pruning Calendar

April

Lightly prune azaleas (12” or less) after flowering but not after July 10. And prune spring flowering trees only as needed after blooming.
Cut out winter damaged branches.

May

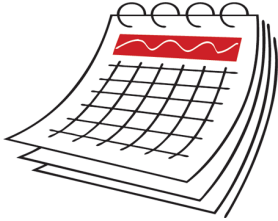
Prune hedges, making sure that the top of the hedge is narrower than the bottom.

June

To shape to a desired size, prune narrowleaf evergreens (those with needles) and conifers through July trimming only into green growth.

For more information on when to prune shrubs, go to [Virginia Cooperative Extension, Publication 430-462](#).

Mark Your Calendar for the ESVMG Garden Symposium



Mark your calendar for the upcoming ESVMG Garden Symposium which will be held on Saturday, October 19, 8:00 am – 4:00 pm. The event will be held at the Cheriton Volunteer Fire Department on Sunnyside Road.

The program promises to be rich with gardening inspiration, including presentations by Brie Arthur, a recognized speaker and passionate leader in the foodscape movement, and Marie Butler, former Landscape Coordinator at the Virginia Zoo in Norfolk. Brie will talk to us about sustainable approaches to gardening, and Marie will speak on plant selection for design. A third speaker, Dan Benarcik, with Chanticleer Gardens, will speak on repurposing personal items to “Make Your Garden Your Own” and using foliage as the basis for designing your garden. These topics will be sure to keep you engaged all day.

ESVMG members will be offered a special discount price from June 3 through June 17. After that, through June 30, tickets will be available to the public at the regular price. Registration also includes lunch and break snacks and drinks.

Keep your eyes open for more information on this exciting program!

Save The Date

May 7, 9:30 – 11:30 Executive Board Meeting

May 18, 11:00 – 1:00 Speaker Presentation & Native Plants Sale at
Museum of Chincoteague

Helen Hamilton, author of the book *Wildflowers & Grasses of the VA Coastal Plain* and member of the VA Native Plant Society will be the speaker.

June 3, 11:00 – 3:00 General Membership Meeting & Picnic

Refer to the Volunteer Management System calendar for more details.

2018 ESVMG BOARD MEMBERS

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Eastern Shore of Virginia Master Gardeners

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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). 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, Interim Administrator, 1890 Extension Program, Virginia State University, Petersburg.

