

Gardening on the Shore

Winter, 2019

Message from the President

It is my great honor to have been elected the President of the ESVMG.

My goals during my term are to:

1. Improve Community Education, through symposiums, mini symposiums, garden demonstrations and other outreach events.
2. Enhance ESVMG Continuing Education and training by obtaining interesting speakers who are subject matter experts.
3. Ensure ESVMG Recognition of your dedicated contributions. During 2017 ESVMG contributed approximately 3,400 volunteer hours, valued at more than \$91,000, and drove almost 22,500 miles.
4. Improve recruitment, retention of members, and motivation, as well as ensuring a fun and rewarding environment.

I cannot accomplish this alone! It will take dedication and help from each of you to make this happen.

The year began with the January 8th Board meeting that had more than 25 agenda items. Thanks to Phil Goetkin, Bob Shendock and Lorna Gagneux for their pre-work! The initial priority was to standardize terminology in our documents and make charging time in VMS easier.

I want All ESV Master Gardeners to understand that there is a place for you! No matter what your limitations, we will find activities where you can participate. Please contact me, if I can help you find an activity.

We are lucky to be Eastern Shore of Virginia Master Gardeners! There has been much written that concludes being part of an organization such as ESVMG benefits our health and longevity. So, continue to stay active in the ESVMG, work diligently in the accomplishment of our shared goals, and enjoy better health & live longer.

Jim Crunk

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Feature Article

WINTER GARDENS ARE FOR THE BIRDS

by Lynn Wadja, ESVMG Master Gardener



Winter has arrived. For many gardeners it is the quiet season. We've put away the gardening tools and tidied up the flowerbeds and vegetable gardens. We spend time checking out garden websites and browsing through catalogs, becoming almost giddy perusing trees, shrubs and plants to add to existing landscaping or include in new gardening projects. But how many of us stop to consider how our selections impact the birds that visit our gardens, especially in the winter? Are we making choices that offer both migratory and overwintering birds the food, water and

protection they need to survive the long, cold winter months?

Winter is the harshest season for birds. Cold temperatures, storms, and scarcity of food make survival a challenge and lead to high mortality. Odds of avian survival improve by planning and creating a bird-friendly environment, providing a habitat that offers shelter, food and water in the winter. Plant native deciduous trees, shrubs and evergreens in layers or tiers; starting with a canopy of tall trees then add an under-story of smaller trees, shrubs, grasses, perennials, and groundcovers. Native varieties are best adapted to local climate, weather and soil conditions and are best suited for regional as well as migratory birds.

Using a tiered method of planting will attract a variety of birds to your yard by accommodating their food, shelter and nesting preferences, which may change depending on the time of year and location. An added benefit of planting in multi-tiers is that your landscape has a more natural look and may require less maintenance.

Trees and Shrubs

Adding a variety of evergreen, coniferous and deciduous trees and shrubs to your yard will turn it into a desirable winter sanctuary for birds. Evergreens are a reliable source of shelter and food. Coniferous trees and shrubs such as pines (*Pinus*), spruces (*Picea*) and firs (*Abies*) provide shelter as well as seeds from cones. While deciduous trees do not offer much in the way of shelter during the winter months, many varieties such as oaks (*Quercus*), hickories (*Carya*), walnuts (*Juglans regia*) and pecans (*Carya illinoensis*) produce nuts, which are valuable high-fat food choices for birds searching for fuel in the winter. Leaf litter from deciduous trees and shrubs also provide insulating nutrient rich layers of shelter; a protected environment to forage for food, such as insects, worms and seeds, as well as water during the cold winter months.

Critical sources of food for birds are fruit bearing trees and shrubs, especially those that produce berries that are high in fat. Birds require a high-fat, calorie dense diet to survive cold weather. Be sure to look for varieties that hold onto their berries throughout the winter months. Examples include cedars (*Cedrus*) junipers (*Juniperus*) american beautyberry (*Callicarpa Americana*), northern spicebush (*Lindera benzoin*), chokeberry (*Aronia arbutifolia*), american holly (*Ilex opaca*), wax myrtle (*Morella cerifera*), inkberry (*Ilex glabra*), winterberry holly (*Ilex verticillata*) *Viburnum* and dogwood (*Cornus*). During the cold months native roses such as *Rosa carolina* and *Rosa virginiana* produce fleshy orange or red fruit known as rose “hips”.

A word of caution: Non-native nandinas (*Nandina domestica*), a very popular landscaping plant, can be extremely toxic for cedar waxwings. These birds have a voracious appetite for berries in the winter, and unfortunately their gorging on the red berries of Nandina often leads to deadly consequences. It is best to choose native species such as the ones noted in the previous paragraph. For more in-depth information on this topic, go to www.mnn.com/your-home/organic-farming-gardening/stories/nandina-berries-cedar-waxwing.

Native Grasses/Perennials

Flower seeds of native grasses also provide birds with an excellent source of food and shelter during the winter. Switch grass (*Panicum*), big bluestem (*Andropogon gerardii*), little bluestem (*Schizachyrium coparium*) and Indian grass (*Sorghastrum nutans*) are native grass varieties to consider adding to your landscape.

Perennial flowers such as coneflowers (*Echinacea*), sunflowers (*Helianthus*) blackeyed

Susans (*Rudbeckia spp.*), false indigo (*Baptisia spp.*), globe thistle and upright sedums like ‘Autumn Joy’ produce seeds that are extremely popular with birds. The seeds provide essential nutrients birds need to survive the cold winter months. Planting sizable groups of flowers will help ensure there is enough seed to go around for the birds feeding in your garden.

To create a bird-friendly landscape, grasses and flower seed heads shouldn’t be cut back in the fall but left tall for the winter with the cut back in early spring. Leaf litter should also be left alone as a source of shelter and food. This may make for untidy, messy flowerbeds, but will encourage birds to spend the winter in your yard.

Water

As previously noted, birds require water as well as food and shelter to survive. Birds are capable of melting frozen water and ice to drink and will seek out natural water resources such as evergreens. Fresh water is a welcome supplement to natural water supplies. Adding a fully heated birdbath or a heater attachment to an existing one is a good option for providing fresh water. As in all seasons, it is important to keep the bath clean and the water fresh.

Supplemental Feeding with Bird Feeders

Bird feeders are especially important for providing supplemental food sources in the winter garden. Birds require lots of food to generate the energy they need to keep their body temperature up to survive the harsh, cold elements of winter.

A smorgasbord of seeds, nuts and suet, as well as different styles of feeders, will attract as well as accommodate a variety of birds’ needs and preferences. Check out the Virginia Cooperative Extension publication, Feeding Wild Birds

(Bromley & Geis, 2009) for detailed information on which birds prefer which food sources.

With thoughtful planning your yard can become a welcoming winter haven as well as a yearlong bird-friendly attraction. Even minor changes like including fruit bearing shrubs in your landscape or planting more perennials can have positive impacts. Not only will you be rewarded with the sight and sounds of birds in your enhanced winter garden, you will find pleasure in knowing you have helped your feathered friends through the long winter months. We all know that spring is right around the corner!

Resources

Bird-Friendly Winter Gardens

By Kris Wetherbee

The American Gardener, Winter 2018 Issue
American Horticultural Society

Habitat Gardening

By Diane Beyer

Virginia Gardener Magazine
October 2018 Issue

National Audubon Society

www.audubon.org/birds

National Wildlife Federation

A Field Guide to Feeder Birds

Eastern and Central North America

Peterson Field Guides Series

By Roger Tory Peterson

Houghton Mifflin Company, 2000

The National Gardening Association

Learning Library

Feeding Wild Birds

By Peter Bromley and Aelred D. Geis

[Virginia Cooperative Extension](#)

Member Spotlight:

Lynn Wadja



In 2015, Lynn and her husband, Michael, visited Cape Charles and fell in love with the town and surrounding

area. Lynn had found her 'happy place' and, after retirement, they took the leap and moved to Bay Creek in Cape Charles.

Lynn retired from a career as a community college instructor in Delaware. Since moving to Cape Charles, she has volunteered with the New Roots Youth Garden (where she is also a board member) and other organizations within Cape Charles. Lynn works part-time at Mason Ave Furniture Exchange and, soon, at the ESCC as a GED instructor.

Becoming a Master Gardener was at the top of Lynn's retirement "bucket list." Her passion has always been flower gardening, especially designing and planting containers where she now has an abundance gracing her patio, porch, and yard. She also enjoys growing vegetables and herbs. Like so many avid gardeners, Lynn must rein in her enthusiasm for wanting more and more of everything when visiting garden centers.

Lynn truly enjoyed going through the ESVMG program, not only for the knowledge gained, but because she has become friends with "so many great Master Gardeners." While earning her certification last year she enjoyed working in the New Roots, Eastville and Kiptopeke gardens, as well as volunteering for the plant sale and other events. Becoming a Master Gardener has increased her interest in habitat gardening for wildlife, landscaping, nutrient management and fertilizers, and water quality and conservation. She looks forward to many happy years of gardening here on the shore!

Articles of Interest

SPOTLIGHT ON 2018 ESVMG ACTIVITIES

Below is a sampling of some of the ESVMG activities from last year.

ESVMG Summer Picnic

The 2018 ESVMG summer picnic was held on June 5 at the Sawmill Park in Accomac. Sawmill was a brand-new Accomack County park that hadn't yet been officially opened. As the first event to take place in the new space, it was a close call as to whether the facility would be ready. This was evidenced by the late arrival of the picnic tables, made by Nandua High school students, around 10:30 that morning just as we were setting up! The meal was a pot luck and the highlight of the event was the presentation of the MG certificates to two of the Master Gardener Interns, Jim Crunk and Doris LaJoie, who were present. There was also a plant exchange.



Kegotank Elementary Activities

Following the lead of Diane Frey, ESVMG volunteers were busy developing and presenting second grade lessons at Kegotank Elementary on a variety of topics throughout 2018. Lessons included:

- Dissecting, identifying and naming parts of a flower
- Making anemometers (used for measuring wind speed)

- Dissecting owl scat and recreating bones from scat to determine what they ate
- 3 D diagrams of ocean floor
- 3 D diagrams of plant and animal cells
- Reviewing for state assessments
- Making 3 D diagrams of atoms
- Making butter
- Making series and parallel circuits



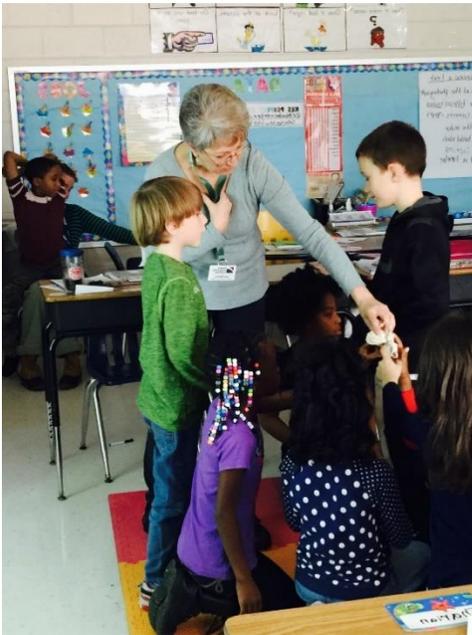
Volunteers also worked in the outdoor classroom garden with students, parents, and staff to prepare the garden beds for spring planting. This included garden clean-up and mulching. ESVMG gardeners Diane Frey, Carol Amorosi, and Pauline Milbourne maintained the garden over the summer.



Kiptopeake Elementary Activities

Water Cycle & Erosion

On Tuesday, February 20, ESVMG volunteers Lisa Benton and Connie Decker, along with help from Jane McKinley, presented the second-grade classes with a lesson on the water cycle and erosion. Connie reviewed the concepts of evaporation, condensation and precipitation along with other terms related to the water cycle. Students then pasted the terms on a picture where these events occur. Lisa covered the concept of erosion as it applies to soil types and the damage it can do to the shoreline and fields if not properly protected. The students got a kick out of feeling the difference between sand and clay and describing each. With many of the students' parents working in the industry, they especially enjoyed getting familiar with an oyster shell cluster as mother nature's natural barrier to beach erosion.



Pumpkin Day

October 18, several ESVMG master gardeners volunteered to work with the Kiptopeake Elementary second graders to present a program on pumpkins. The kids loved it!

This program fits into their SOLs on biology and math. The program started out with introducing a variety of pumpkin sizes and



types. The children were asked to vote on which pumpkin weighed the most followed by determining each one's weight on a scale. After getting the weight, the pumpkins were measured to see which one was the biggest in circumference.

A couple of pumpkins were opened up to see the seeds inside and the children were told how and when to plant them. Of course, the seeds can also be eaten, and each student was given a handful to sample. Most came back for seconds!



Animal Habitat

On November 8, ESVMG master gardeners volunteers including Doris LaJoie, Carol Amorosi, and Jim Crunk presented to the Kiptopeake Elementary second graders a program on animal habitats. Pictorial aids and some plant samples, including cactus, were used in the lesson. Students were totally

engaged and teachers were very appreciative, thanking the volunteers multiple times, especially since funding for the science curriculum had been reduced this year.



Accomack County Farm Tour

On September 25th, about 600 3rd Graders explored farming with Accomack County Cooperative Extension and local growers. Students came from Accomack County Public Schools, Northampton County Public Schools, private schools and home schooled. With interactive demonstrations, they learned the many facets of the farming community. The students discovered and studied the importance of the environment and farming on the Eastern Shore – while having a lot of fun! A full day with all visiting about 30 demonstration stops with a lunch break mid-day. Several stops hosted farm animals for the students to pet, hold or feed.



ESVMG supported this event with thirteen volunteers spending the full day providing logistical and staff support to several stops. Stop 11: “Compost, Soil and Fertilizer” was sponsored by ESVMG and our contribution helped ensure the success of the event again this year. The reward for helping with this event is seeing the enthusiasm and joy in the faces of the children.

Garden Design for Wildlife

At the October general membership meeting, our very own Bob Shendock spoke on garden design, low maintenance and the use of natives.

John began with an overview of the basics of garden design which begin with a site analysis. Drawing a basic site map of the garden area is the first step. This includes such factors as property lines, buildings, walks and drives. Overlay design considerations to include sustainability, conservation and maintenance are important inputs to the analysis process. This analysis also includes additional data such as water, soil and environmental factors. Environmental factors are light, moisture, wind and temperature.

When considering wildlife in the design, John advised that food sources, water and nesting materials are critical components. Food sources should be provided all throughout the year with seeds, berries, fruits and nectar available. Including a variety of plants is the goal for attracting wildlife year-round. A general rule of thumb is to provide no more than 10% of a species, 20% of a genus and 30% of a family.

The benefits of planting natives were discussed, and John offered ideas for small things that could be done to incorporate natives into the garden. These included planting an oak which supports over 450 species of moths and butterflies, including native fruit trees such as persimmons and black cherries, adding groves or thickets and planting a small meadow (5' x 10' ideal), keep a dead tree or brush pile, add a shallow water feature, and replace a non-native invasive plant with a native one. Alternatives to non-natives include common persimmon, spicebush, groundsel, inkberry, and native grasses and vines. References for more reading were provided:

Plant Eastern Shore Native Campaign:
www.plantvirginianatives.org

National Wildlife Federation
www.nwf.org/Gardenfor-Wildlife

Heritage Celebration

On Feb 24, the ESVMG tables at Heritage Celebration 2018 were well visited by the public throughout the day with about 150 adults and children stopping by. Phil's 'Pot Your Own Black-Eyed Susan' activity was very popular with both children and adults. Both extension offices provided visitor giveaways, including pencils, activity books, coffee mugs, VCE coolers and Farm Day Packets which excited a number of kids. The Plant Clinic serviced a variety of folks in need of solutions, and the book *Native Plants of Accomack and Northampton Counties* was a popular item. Many of the visitors were interested in ESVMG and its activities, some being introduced to the Master Gardener program for the first time. Thirteen adults requested additional information on ESVMG and becoming a Master Gardener.

Coordinated by Bob Shendock, eleven Master Gardeners supported the event, and all agree that it was an enjoyable experience. Thanks to Eastern Shore Community College for hosting this event annually in February.

Annual Meeting & Holiday Party

On December 4, the ESVMG master gardeners gathered to hold their last business meeting of the year and to share some holiday spirit. The 2018 Board members and committee chairpersons were recognized at the business meeting, all volunteers were personally thanked by our outgoing president, Phil Goetkin, and the gavel was passed to Jim Crunk who will assume the leadership role of 2019 - 2020 President. Lorna Gagneux was recognized as the incoming Treasurer and Julie Rogers, who will be leaving our group, was recognized for her many contributions including past president. Tammy Holloway was recognized as a new Emeritus.



Here are some of the numbers from our years of service:

- Volunteer hours since 2003: 30,037.01
- Average annual hours: 1,877.31

- Value of 2018 volunteer hours at \$26.75/hr: \$96,921.40
- Hours volunteered in 2018:
 - ✓ 50+ hours - 23 members
 - ✓ 100+ hours - 9 members
 - ✓ 200+ hours - 5 members
 - ✓ 300+ hours - 2 members
 - ✓ 400+ hours - 1 member

The delicious meal was catered by Kitchen Sync at the historic Eastville Inn.



A lively gift exchange, emceed by our very own personality, Diane D'Amico, kept us on our toes. Birdhouses and birdfeeders proved to be the most popular gifts,

with Ralph Lasher's handmade birdhouse stealing the show!

Thanks to Jennifer Alley and her committee for planning and executing a lovely afternoon.

Outdoor Exploration Day

On Sept. 29 a group of ESVMG master gardeners volunteered at the Kiptopeake Outdoor Exploration Day. The activity consisted of a display of native plants including Purple Passionflower, Wax Myrtle, American Beauty-berry and High-tide Bush. The children were challenged to identify a plant on the table referencing the "Native Plants of Accomack and Northampton" book. This book was also given out to educate the community on what plants are native to the VA Eastern shore.

Of course, every child found at least one plant with the help of a volunteer or parent and, when found, they were rewarded with a beauty-berry seedling to take home.



ESMG volunteers also helped in the butterfly tent where hundreds of butterflies were kept. They helped identify the types of butterflies and teach the children about their habits and needs. At the end of the day, the tent flaps were opened, and the butterflies were released.

We also used this day to sell the final inventory of plants left over from the Exmore plant sale which was held the prior weekend.

Reality Store

On Feb 13, several ESVMG volunteers participated in the "Reality Store" event for Northampton High School and Broadwater Academy ninth graders. Students, after classroom preparation to learn about the relationship between education and income, payroll deductions, prioritizing needs and wants in a household budget and checking and savings accounts, had the opportunity to experience the expenses of living in the "real world." The program was sponsored by 4-H and conducted by Virginia Cooperative Extension.

At the event, students assumed the role of a 25- or 26-year old, married with or

without children and working in one of 81 careers based their level of education. All were assigned credit card debt, and student loans if they attended college. Students visited tables where volunteers helped them decide how to spend their hard-earned money and provide for their household needs, recording each expenditure on the worksheet representing their “checkbook.” The checkbook balance also reflected net income after taxes, insurance and savings deduction. Students chose to buy or rent a home, purchase a new or used car and other essentials. If they had children, students had to include daycare or babysitter expenses



As part of the event, students were given the opportunity to obtain financial advice, manage their credit, and make charitable contributions. This is where the ESVMG

volunteers played a valuable role. Mike Knight, the ESVMG volunteer coordinator, shared comments from a couple of the student participants. One girl, after realizing that the cost of child care would be more than her rent, said “I just might put my kids up for adoption!” Another participant asserted that she just wouldn’t have any kids. “I’ll just get a dog.”

Tour of Hermitage Gardens



On Tuesday, May 23, ESVMG sponsored a trip to the Hermitage gardens and museum, located on N. Shore Road in Norfolk on the Lafayette River. The day couldn’t have been more delightful with warm sun and a gentle breeze. Having just recently been on the Virginia Historic Garden Tour, the gardens and house were looking their best as the garden tour guides shared stories of the history and garden design with the group.

The stately 42 room mansion built in 1908 is surrounded by 12 acres of semi-formal gardens, forest and wetlands. Highlights are the 105 millstones, many of which greet visitors in the entrance courtyard, wetlands restoration which features the area’s first Living Shoreline, the rose garden created on the spot where the family hosted many events for WWI soldiers and a collection of Oyster Reef Balls installed in 2010 and 2012 by the Chesapeake Bay Foundation to filter the water (one oyster can clean up to 50 gallons of water per day) and enhance the oyster population.

The house has become a public museum, with over 5,000 objects and spanning 5,000 years of art history representing over 30 countries. These objects are only a fraction of their collection which enabled them to become founders of the Norfolk Museum of Arts and

Sciences (later to become the Chrysler Museum of Art). The group enjoyed a self-guided tour of the museum.

Lunch, provided by Taste, was served buffet style under the high canopy of hardwoods overlooking the river.



white oak, several huge sycamores, a Kentucky coffee tree, a *Torreya taxifolia*, a Chinese scholar tree, a cork oak, a shagbark hickory, an American beech and a long leaf pine.

Thanks to Bill's extensive knowledge of Onancock's trees and history and his wonderful style of presentation, all the attending Master Gardeners had a memorable and educational experience.



Onancock Tree Walk

On October 24, 2018, Bill Burnham, son in law of Fran Kubick, led the Master Gardeners on a tree walk through the town of Onancock. Bill, a member of the Onancock Tree Board, did a wonderful job leading us through the streets of beautiful Onancock. A group of 15 Master Gardeners met at Ker Place and then walked through town to the Wharf along Market Street. We then returned to Ker Place along King Street. The tour covered about 1.5 miles and took two hours. During our tour, Bill pointed out many of Onancock's significant, unusual and historic trees. Bill also incorporated a number of historical aspects of the town as we passed from tree to tree. Some of the trees we saw on our walk included: a large historic



THE RUTHLESS GARDENER

by Diane D'Amico

I can't pass a nursery without stopping to buy. I can't say no to your kind offers to share plants with me. I've been known to stealthily dig up plants from abandoned houses. Little pieces of plants at the Norfolk Botanical Gardens find themselves in my pockets. Is it any wonder that last summer, the third year of our garden, it was totally over-planted and overgrown. It was beautiful in its parts but not so in its entirety.

I tried the piecemeal solutions. I divided, I pruned, I transplanted, I extended the beds (hard to do on the standard 40' X 140' lots in Cape Charles). The garden continued to resemble a jungle. Something bigger, more all-encompassing had to be done. But.....how does a plant lover reduce the number of plants they own. They are my children! It can't be done.

I sit on my porch steps overlooking my garden, and I gradually come to a conclusion. What I think I can't do must be done. I must reduce the number of plants and I must do it ruthlessly. I must be without pity, without sorrow, without grief, and without compassion. I must be ruthless!

I do the easiest first. With orange plastic landscape tape I mark **duplicate plants**. When there's limited space why do I need two Annabelle Hydrangeas, four different types of goldenrod, two massive clumps of Salvia farinacea, three different hibiscus, three of the exact same OSO Easy roses, black eyed Susan everywhere, three Buddleias in different colors but still three? and daylilies too numerous to count!!! When I was done, I was pleasantly surprised. That wasn't so hard. Really. When multiples made sense, I left them. When they didn't, they went to new homes or to the dump. I was really getting into this ruthless thing.

Then with green plastic landscape tape I stride into the garden to tackle the **wrong**

plant, wrong placement problem. This is where I realize how optimistic I had been with the ease of the duplicate plant solution. There I was just reducing numbers but now I had to begin the task of actually removing plants. I must admit I was paralyzed. I put the green plastic landscape tape away and accepted defeat.

Not too many days later however, I once again donned my ruthless persona and stepped back out into the garden with my green tape. I consoled myself that some plants just needed to be moved to another location. Those plants got a piece of green tape. Again, that was not so difficult. I'm not removing, just....moving. Not so hard. This ruthless thing was really working.

But sometimes it truly is the wrong plant and nothing but removing it completely is the only answer. I walked around and around the garden but no green tape left my hands. I went over the reasons why a particular plant would not work in the garden: too much sun, too dry, too wet, doesn't like this soil, doesn't like it this far south or this far north, doesn't like wind, needs a colder winter, not fond of humidity, subject to insects or viruses or mildew..... I could go on but you know them all. No need to repeat.

Gradually, one plant receives a piece of the tape. Alright this can go. Another piece of green tape. This went on for several days since these were obviously difficult decisions to make, and I felt each condemned plant deserved time to make its case.

Still, there came a day when I was finished. Once again I sat on my porch steps surveying the garden. I basked in my satisfaction of a job well done. I anticipated the beauty of my garden next summer.

This lasted for maybe, 4 minutes and then I began to think. I've always wished that garden shed was painted an eggplant color instead of green. And really, it would look a lot better just

three feet to the right. What about a pergola off the left side of the shed. It would provide another place to sit and a view of the garden from a different perspective. I love my big arch but if I move the shed to the right then the arch would be so much more dramatic moved back, closer to the shed. I notice the grass pathways leading around the garden. Wouldn't they look nice if they were made of old brick instead of grass? And, perhaps it's time to re-decorate with new ceramic pots and pillows for the garden furniture and statues and whatever.

As I tell Phil about all my ideas I see his eyes roll back in his head but he says, as I taught him to say so many years ago, "Yes, dear. You are right. When would you like me to start?" Oh yes, I am ruthless!!!!

Pictures of the 2018 garden are provided on our Facebook page. Further pictures of my progress will appear in subsequent editions of this newsletter.

Oh look, some garden catalogs just arrived in the mail. Gotta go!

Gardeners' Tips

HOW TO CARE FOR AND REFLOWER YOUR CHRISTMAS CACTUS

Excerpt from Michigan State University Extension



Christmas cactus or *Schlumbergera bridgesii* is a hybrid cactus originally from Southeast Brazil growing in tropical rainforests and has been part of the houseplant community for over 150 years. It lived in tree tops and branch hollows filled with mosses and decayed leaves. Because of this, repotting Christmas cactus in organic, humus-rich soil is important. They also grow better when "pot bound," which means that the container and root system are about the same size.

Christmas cactus require bright, indirect light or filtered light and enough moisture that the potting material doesn't dry out. To prevent mineral or soluble salt buildup, it is best to water with rainwater or melted snow at room temperature. If this is not possible, repotting annually is advised.

To get a Christmas cactus to rebloom requires favorable temperature and lighting conditions. Cool nighttime temperatures of 50° – 55° and daytime temperatures of around 65° are ideal. Providing these temperatures in October and November will initiate the development of flower buds by December. The amount of light also plays a big part in encouraging blooms. The plant needs continuous uninterrupted darkness for 14 hours and a bright to medium window exposure for the remaining 10 hours. If the plant is in a room when the lights are even turned on for a short period of time, the flower party is over.

One technique to force darkness is to cover the plant with an upended cardboard box or place in a closet for the 14 dark hours. A simpler method is to place the plant in an unused room where the light is not going to be turned on for the darkness period. Some cacti are not as sensitive about the temperature as the light requirements. Monitor the amount of light and the floral display can be yours!

EXCERPT FROM MASTER GARDENER HANDBOOK

As you learned in our feature article, there are many components critical to providing a healthy habitat for birds. The following excerpt provides an introduction into why detrimental habitat contributes to the decline of wildlife and the role of Master Gardeners in reversing this trend.

The decline of wildlife species is occurring at an alarming, accelerated rate. In 2005, the Virginia Department of Game and Inland Fisheries published a Wildlife Action Plan which identified 925 species of greatest concern. Of these, 290 species or 31% are insects, which are an essential part of aquatic and terrestrial food webs.

Habitat loss is caused by many factors. The most obvious is development and fragmentation of forest, meadow and wetland habitats, as we continue to grow the economy by building commercial and residential sites. This development brings with it a host of factors that adversely impact the remaining or surrounding habitats, and these factors include but are not limited to a prevalence of impervious surfaces that contribute to increased erosion and runoff, which carries chemicals and sediments with it, and the extensive use of lawn and other non-native plants in the landscape for ornamentation. There are adverse impacts occurring in the more rural or agricultural areas, too, including the routine use of herbicides and pesticides and 'clean' farming practices that remove hedgerows and large expanses of vegetation, in order to maximize production.

At a local level, Master Gardeners are in a unique position to influence the trajectory of habitat loss by increasing public understanding of this issue. Oftentimes, homeowners and landowners are either completely unaware of

or only vaguely familiar with the connection between their landscape practices and the effects of those practices on habitat quality. Continued emphasis on our education outreach programs about good conservation landscaping practices is essential for raising awareness. If we provide consistent, clear messages and simple guidance about how to improve or restore habitat in our communities, then the resulting actions by the public should help to slow – and ultimately, one hopes, to reverse – the trend of declining wildlife species. Conservation begins at home and in the neighborhood, and habitat gardening is a good first step to restoring and sustaining biodiversity.

From Master Gardener Handbook
Chapter 20, "Habitat Loss and Declining Wildlife
Populations"



whyatt.com.au

© Tim Whyatt

Keep the Conversation Going

Have you visited the [ESVMG Facebook](#) page lately? If so, good for you! You will have seen lots of timely, entertaining and informative posts on this site.

If not, you will want to do so not only to stay informed but to also “Keep the Conversation Going.” In 2019, a new feature to engage our membership and visitors will be available. To supplement the newsletter’s Feature Article, a related question will be posted on Facebook with an invitation to comment with your own experiences, opinions and advice.

The following question related to “Winter Gardens are for the Birds” is now available on our Facebook page. Please visit and share your feedback.

What has been your experience with plantings that have provided the best winter habitat for the birds?

“My backyard has four large pine trees that provide protection as well as pinecone seeds for food. There is a wonderful protected area under a tiered planting consisting of one of the pine trees and mature Fatsia japonica and azaleas where many ground birds seek protected shelter as well as food in the leaf litter. While Fatsia are not native to Virginia they seem to grow well in our area and are attractive to birds for both shelter and late fall/winter berries. And I try really hard not to tidy up my flowerbeds and containers during fall clean-up, at least not in the backyard!”

Lynn Wadja

Save The Date

Feb 5, 9:30 – 12:00	General Membership Meeting + Presentation: “The Monarchs’ Story & You”
Feb 6, 13, 20, 23 8:45 – 3:00	Training Classes
Feb 23, 8:45 – 3:00	Heritage Celebration
Feb 27, 8:45 – 3:00	Training Class & Graduation Day
March 5, 9:30 – 11:00	Executive Board Meeting

Refer to the Volunteer Management System calendar for more details.

ESVMG Selects a New Unit Logo

In an effort to enhance public recognition of ESVMG and its efforts, several proposed Unit Logos were developed for evaluation and subsequent use. The design incorporated artwork found on our banner and t-shirts. Several color designs were proposed. General membership voted on the options during November. The votes have been tallied and the winning design is:



Logo Uses

The logo can and should be used on approved ESVMG products made available to the public. Uses include website, Facebook, newsletter, event fliers, garden brochures, garden signs, garden Plant ID Markers, pot stake markers, and more.

Color specs and other attributes along with archived copies of the logo will soon be available on the VMS website under General Information > Newsletters/Documents > Publicity Guidelines. Two PNG versions of the new logo are currently available in this folder and more copies in a variety of resolutions and file formats to meet output needs will soon

be added. It should be noted that color variations may occur, dependent upon the output device selected by the user. The logo reproduces well in greyscale, making it useable for black & white output.

Support for Logo Development & Output

In preparing for this event, discussions were held with our Extension Agent, Theresa Pittman, who supports the effort. Theresa has acquired a computer configured with the necessary software applications (MS Office, MS VISIO, Adobe Illustrator, etc.) through VCE and has it installed on the Accomack Office Extension network. This, along with ESVMG access to the high quality color copier, tri-fold machine and other resources for output provides an excellent infrastructure for logo development, maintenance, and output. Thus, ESVMG has access to high quality, low/no cost output at the Accomack Extension Office.

Process Forward

Lorna Gagneux will be producing the logo in professional grade software on the ESVMG computer. The software provides for electronic output in output formats suitable for all uses from professionally printed products to low-resolution uses. To provide sustainability of the logo, the electronic files will be built, maintained, distributed from, and archived on the ESVMG computer. Archived copied will also be placed on the VMS system for download. This work will occur during the first quarter of 2019. Contact Lorna with your usage needs.

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Vice-President – Bob Shendock

Secretary – Julie Cardinale

Past President – Phil Goetkin

Member at Large (Accomack) – Joyce Falkinburg

Member at Large (Northampton) - Paul Tiffany

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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.

