

# Gardening on the Shore

Winter, 2018

## Message from the President

Happy New Year! ...and Thank you! Thanks to every member of the Eastern Shore of Virginia Master Gardeners for all you did in 2017 to help ESVMG continue to reach toward its goals. We had a great year! Just look at the wonderful articles included in this newsletter about the many projects and events from last year.

Wow! Time really does fly when you are having a good time. It seems like just yesterday that Ralph Lasher and Julie Rogers talked me into running for President. "It only takes an hour or two a week!" Oh well. One year later and we are still in business – in spite of me. Thank goodness for the members of last year's Board without whom I could not have done it. Reflecting back, 2017 was a wonderful year, and we now have a new year to look forward to.

I am very excited about the Master Gardeners prospects for the coming twelve months and beyond! We have another great Executive Board in place. In addition to our three holdovers: Sue Telfer, Julie Rogers and myself, we have elected and installed Bob Shendock as Vice-President, Julie Cardinale as Secretary, and Joyce Falkinburg and Paul Tiffany as Members at Large. We had our first Board meeting on January 2, and these people have really gotten me excited! We also have a wonderful new class of interns who are about half way through their training. So, let's get started – let's get some Master Gardening done and have some fun!

I'm looking forward to serving you in the coming year. Please feel free to contact me at any time with your ideas and concerns.

Phil Goetkin

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## Recap of 2017 Events

### EXMORE PLANT SALE

It was early in the morning of September 16, and it was another beautiful Saturday morning in downtown Exmore! Perfect weather for the town-wide yard sale and ESVMG plant sale. The volunteer ESVMG crew unloaded and set up for this year's plant sale without a hitch under the watchful eye of our experienced coordinator, Rita Hilton. Our location on the corner was perfect for pedestrian traffic and the wonderful and colorful plants drew the passing crowd our way. We had a great assortment of roses, grasses, crepe myrtles, daylilies and more! Thanks to all of our donors for supporting us in our biggest fund raiser off the year. The volunteers did a wonderful job selling the variety of plants and answering questions from our customers. We may even have recruited a few gardeners for our upcoming Master Garden Class. I can't think of a more fun time than spending the morning with plants, fellow master gardeners and fellow garden enthusiasts



### EDUCATIONAL PROGRAM: MUSHROOMS OF THE EASTERN SHORE



At our general meeting on October 3, the Master Gardeners were treated to a presentation by Dr. Tony Picardi on "Mushrooms of the Eastern Shore." We learned that mushrooms are really spore producing bodies that emerge from the mycelium, the network of threadlike hyphae which spreads underground. The process of identifying a mushroom is very complex, requiring an understanding of the color, shape, stem, gills and other characteristics, sometimes requiring microscopic examination, which make the organism unique. We learned that there are

many kinds of mushrooms including some with jelly-like bodies, some dry and rough producing a shelf which protrudes from the bark of a tree, some that appear as large white globes and others that take on the more traditional look.

Following the presentation, the group was invited to Dr. Picardi's home where he has identified over 140 different types of mushrooms growing in his woods. Despite the dry conditions, we were able to find a number of mushrooms growing among the leaf litter and up the sides of dead trees. However, one had to have a sharp eye, since they easily blend in with the earth tones of the forest floor.

When asked if he ever eats any of the mushrooms that he finds, he asserted that his source of mushrooms is always the grocery store! Which is a good lesson for even the most well educated of mushroom connoisseurs.

## OUTDOORS EXPLORATION DAY



On Saturday, Oct 7, ESVMG volunteers participated in the Outdoors Exploration Day at Kiptopeke State Park with a display and activities based on native plants. Who would have thought there were so many lovely native specimens! Thanks to our president, Phil Goetkin, who spent most of the prior day collecting samples of beach grass, passion flower, American holly, goldenrod, high-tide bush (groundsel tree), sweet bay, coral honeysuckle, devil's walking stick and much more. The tables were alive with color and texture.

Festival goers were asked to find as many live samples as they could which were listed in "Native Plants of Northampton and Accomack Counties." This book was given out free, and, if matches were found, the "winner" was given an American beautyberry (*Callicarpa americana*) plant to take home.



## HOLIDAY PARTY

A good time was had by all at the 2017 Holiday Luncheon, held on Dec 5 at The Island House in Wachapreague. On a beautiful, sunny day, we were able once again to celebrate another successful and productive year of gardening. The setting for the lunch was very festive, with tables regaled in festive lights and sparkling tableware.

The occasion began with a short general meeting during which Phil Goetkin, ESVMG President, took the opportunity to personally thank every single master gardener. By the time he was finished, every person in the room, as well as those who had not been able to attend the luncheon, was mentioned and recognized for the work they had done in 2017. We are so grateful for Phil's very able leadership.



The lunch of crab cakes and chicken was delicious, and the view of Wachapreague marina and inlet enhanced the experience. After the tables were cleared, emcee Llewellyn Allison kicked off the traditional gift exchange. Lots of gifts were opened, and lots were “stolen” in good fun. The spirit of goodwill prevailed.

## GARDEN SYMPOSIUM



A highlight of the ESVMG 2017 calendar year, the Garden Symposium was held on October 21, at the Cheriton Fire Station. At 88 tickets sold, total sales exceeded the committee's expectations and assured us that this would be a profitable event.

The Symposium featured three accomplished speakers, whose presentations on garden design and ornamental grasses by Mary Stickley-Godinez, year-round perennial recommendations for Eastern Virginia by Les Parks, and how to add color to the garden with foliage plants and sizing the garden for time-pressed and maturing gardeners by Kerry Ann Mendez inspired all attendees. Participants were treated to morning coffee and pastries and a delicious lunch catered by Louise Oliver's Kitchen Sync, which provided a nice mid-day break. The raffle, which featured numerous baskets and individual items donated by Eastern Shore businesses, was a hit and provided an extra bonus to the lucky raffle winners. Books by Kerry Ann Mendez were a sell out and many are planning to attend her future webinars.

*Kerry Ann Mendez sharing her recommendations on right-sizing the garden.*



*Raffle table was full of generous donations*



Mary Stickley-Godinez (front right) and Les Parks (behind Mary) enjoy dinner with the Garden Symposium committee.

## “HOMETOWN HABITAT”



On Arbor Day, April 28, the Eastern Shore of Virginia Master Gardeners aired the film “Hometown Habitat” at the historic Palace Theater in Cape Charles. Free to the public, this 90 minute film featured renowned entomologist Dr. Douglas Tallamy, whose research, books and lectures on the use of non-native plants in landscaping, sound the alarm about habitat and species loss. Tallamy provided the film’s narrative thread that challenges the notion that humans are here, and nature is someplace else. Inspiring stories of community commitment to conservation landscaping served to illustrate Tallamy’s vision by showing how humans and nature can co-exist with mutual benefits. The goal of this event was to build a new army of habitat heroes who embrace the message that all of us have the power to support habitat for wildlife and bring natural beauty to our own patch of earth and beyond.

The viewing was followed by a distribution of native tree seedlings to all attendees. Donated by the Virginia Forestry Service, the trees included curly dogwood, oak and sycamore.

## Gardeners' Tips

### WINTER 'TO DO' LIST

*With chilly days upon us, it may appear that there's not much for a gardener to do. But there are plenty of activities that can – and should! - be done during these months. Of course, planning for the upcoming growing season is the most fun of all as we leisurely browse through the plethora of seed and plant catalogs. But don't forget the following cold weather tasks that help to insure a happy spring garden.*

- Clean up, plant and transplant trees and shrubs while dormant so they can get a good head start on root growth.
- Remove tree limbs broken from snow or ice as soon as possible. Clean edges promote better healing in the spring.
- Cut back dead stems and leaves of perennials and grasses before they begin to produce new growth in the spring.
- In mid-February, sow seeds of cool season vegetables such as carrots, snow peas, spinach, radish, and turnips directly in the garden.
- Move holiday plants to a cool, bright room which is free from drafts.
- Place seed catalog orders early to ensure that you get what you want and in time to start them indoors if this is your plan. For starters, refer to the list of sources on this page.
- Clean and sharpen your garden tools and oil all moving parts. Store them indoors to avoid rust.
- Plan your vegetable garden for the coming year, keeping in mind the need to rotate crops.
- Water as needed if month is dry.

### Seed & Plant Catalog Recommendations

[Seed Savers Exchange](#)

[R.H. Shumways](#)

[Seeds for the South](#)

[Edible Landscaping Nursery](#)

[Victory Seed Company](#)

[John Scheepers Kitchen Garden](#)

[Select Seeds](#)

[Southern Exposure Seed Exchange](#)

[Pinetree Garden Seeds](#)

[Johnny's Selected Seeds](#)

[Jelitto Perennial Seeds](#)

[The Natural Gardening Company](#)

[Territorial Seed Company](#)

And, if you are lucky enough to be a member of the [American Horticultural Society](#), they give out free seeds from members to members (and all of mine germinated last year!). Order early to get the ones you want.

## Gardeners' Tips

### EXCERPT FROM VIRGINIA MASTER GARDENER HANDBOOK

*In consideration of the last Winter 'To Do' List item, the following excerpt from the Master Gardener's Handbook helps to explain the effects of lack of water in the winter months.*

“Plants can be classified as either hardy or nonhardy (tender), depending on their ability to withstand cold temperatures. Winter injury can occur to nonhardy plants if temperatures are too low or if unseasonably low temperatures occur early in the fall or late in the spring. Winter injury may also occur because of desiccation (drying out) – plants need water during the winter. When the soil is frozen, the movement of water into the plant is severely restricted. On a windy winter day, broadleaved evergreens can become water-deficient in a few minutes; the leaves or needles then turn brown. Wide variations in winter temperatures can cause premature bud break in some plants and consequent bud-freezing damage.”

Chapter 2, Basic Botany

### 2018 WEBINAR SERIES

In 2018, the Virginia Cooperative Extension will be hosting monthly webinars on the second Thursday of each month at 10:00 AM. Topics will alternate between horticultural topics and program management topics, all from a variety of presenters.

The January EMG Webinar featured Holly Scoggins presenting “Flowers, Flowers, and More Flowers!” See the sidebar for a summary of this webinar.

To register for the February class (which has been moved to Feb 15), click [here](#). And don't forget that attendance at these webinars will earn you one CEU.

### My Webinar Takeaway

Holly focused on spring blooming perennials, primarily those that naturalize easily. Many of the plants were native to Virginia and, to identify a plant's native range, she directed us to the [USDA Plants Database](#).

Some of her favorites were [hellebores](#), [Virginia bluebells](#) (N), [columbine](#) (N), [bleeding heart](#) (N) and [Grecian windflower](#). She recommended [Brent & Becky's Bulbs](#) for perennial tulips and [Jellito Perennial Seeds](#) for hard-to-find varieties. And we were reminded that the [Missouri Botanical Garden](#) is a good source for plant information.

N=Native

## Kegotank Garden

By Diane Frey

*The following article was written last Spring by Diane Frey who provided leadership to the ESVMG Master Gardeners volunteers. The article was published in the Eastern Shore News in April.*

The students and staff at Kegotank Elementary School were anxiously awaiting spring of 2017 and the re-emergence of their courtyard school garden, known as the Outdoor Classroom. As the native plants, shrubs, and bulbs had begun to sprout from their winter dormancy and the planting season arrived, students were looking forward to having fun with their multiple learning activities designed to reinforce the Virginia Standards of Learning.

With the extra “pair of hands” provided to staff and students by members of the Eastern Shore of Virginia Master Gardeners, curriculum has been developed to utilize the new facilities. As the native plants, shrubs, and bulbs begin to sprout from their winter dormancy, students were able to engage in plant identification, watch for bees, butterflies and other pollinators, plant seeds in the greenhouse and chart their growth, learn how to test and amend the soil as needed, learn math by calculating the area of their classroom garden beds and determine how many seeds can be placed in a row and how many rows they can make. They were also able to plant their classroom gardens in beds raised to the level appropriate for their grade level, learn how to care for their plants, and harvest and eat the vegetables they have grown.



The Kegotank Outdoor Classroom was made possible through the vision, support and funding provided by many community sources. The concept for the outdoor classroom came from John Fitzroy, a park ranger whose children attended Kegotank Elementary School. The initial funds for the outdoor classroom came from a grant Ranger Fitzroy received as a result of being named the U.S. Fish and Wildlife's Visitor Services Professional of the Year in 2015.





The 7,280-square-foot learning space, designed with input from the staff, is an extension of classroom activities and used across the curriculum. It includes paved walkways, a greenhouse, a covered area for instruction and reading, a low-level obstacle course, raised beds for each grade level, a rain collection system, composting barrels, a weather station, raised outdoor tables, and a garden planted with native plants.

One third of the outdoor garden area has been designated as a pollinator garden that attracts bees, butterflies and other pollinators to the garden.

After a year of planning, design and construction, the nearly \$40,000 project was completed and officially opened on October 5, 2015, with the assistance of numerous community volunteers.

Volunteers included Lowes of Pocomoke, who donated most of the landscaping materials, members of the Chincoteague Bay Station, the U.S. Department of Agriculture, Virginia Cooperative Extension, Navy and Coast Guard personnel, and the Eastern Shore of Virginia Master Gardeners.

Bob Glennon, from the U.S. Department of Agriculture, planned the layout of the garden and selected the plants for it. Under Mr. Glennon's supervision, volunteers completed the planting and Master Gardeners planted over 100 bulbs donated by Brent and Becky's Bulbs of Gloucester, Virginia.

### Save The Date

- Feb 6, 9:30 – 11:30 General Membership Meeting
- Feb 8, 10:00 – 11:00 [VCE MG Webinar](#)
- Feb 10, 10:00 – 2:00 [Virginia Master Gardener Assoc Meeting](#)
- Feb 24, 10:00 – 3:00 2018 Heritage Celebration
- Mar 6, 9:30 – 11:00 Executive Board Meeting
- Mar 24, 8:00 – 3:00 [Gardening in the Northern Neck Seminar](#)

*Refer to the Volunteer System calendar for more details.*

Eastern Shore of Virginia Master Gardener volunteers also provide help to staff and students at Kiptopeke and Pungoteague Elementary schools with their Virginia Standards of Learning science and math curriculum. These lessons include subjects such as weather, water cycle, erosion, the parts of the seed, the parts of the plant, the life cycle of the plant, square foot gardening concepts (fractions) and the butterfly life cycle.

## From Design to Selection: Must Know Gardening Tips

By Jane McKinley

*The following article was written last September to generate interest in the Garden Symposium. It has a lot of useful information, including recommendations from our guest speakers, which I hope our readers will find useful.*



Just as the long, hot and dry days of summer seem to be endless, hints of fall begin to present themselves. The late season colors of red, orange and yellow begin to appear on trees and tired summer annuals get a boost of energy, putting out their last burst of bloom. These changes are a trigger for the gardener who is eager to move forward with enhancing existing garden beds and planting new ones.

One can take a casual approach by planting the things they love best with hopes that they will survive without too much intervention. Unfortunately, this can lead to long-term disappointments as the result of high maintenance neglect, poor performance or even loss of a plant that is unsuited to its location.

A better approach is to do a little homework beforehand so that you can make the right decision on your garden design and plant selection. Consistently throughout, consideration should be given to the “design triangle” as defined by Mary Stickley-Godinez, horticulturist, landscape designer and certified arborist at Countryside Farm and Nurseries. “In

order for a design to be successful, the human needs and desires must be met, the constraints of the site also must be factored in, and the plant must be the right one for the spot based on its size and cultural requirements.”

Find out which plants are adapted to our Virginia climate, especially the coastal conditions. Look for plants that can survive our hot and humid summers, including periods of drought, which are becoming more common. Show preference to plants which require minimal gardener intervention for disease and insect control and which are non-invasive. Kerry Ann Mendez, owner of Perennially Yours, author and lecturer, suggests that the gardener find “varieties that don’t need deadheading, consume less water and thrive in the shade.”

Les Parks, Director of Horticulture at Norfolk Botanical Garden, recommends that your plant selection “should either have a long bloom time (or be spectacular when it does bloom), have attractive foliage, or have multi-season interest.” For starters, he recommends hellebore (*Helleborus*) and barrenwort (*Epimedium*) species and hybrids for winter and spring interest; hardy begonia (*Begonia grandis*)

and purple coneflower (*Echinacea purpurea*) for summer interest; and goldenrod (*Solidago*) species for fall.

But the garden doesn't always require flowers for color and interest. Plants with variegated and unusually pigmented foliage can create an incredibly dramatic effect. Look for plants which offer a wide array of foliage textures, forms and colors. Candidates include hosta (*Hosta sieboldiana* 'Frances Williams'), foamy bells (*Heuchera* 'Brass Lantern') and Siberian bugloss (*Brunnera macrophylla* 'Jack Frost').

It is advisable to use native plants when available. "Not necessarily exclusively," Mendez says. "I believe in a mix of plants if the others (non-natives) are well behaved. But with natives, you don't need to water and there's no fertilizing. Little or no hand-holding is required, and they're important for bio needs, like attracting pollinators."

Keeping with the goal of low maintenance gardening, Mendez recommends using mulch, "especially multi-purposing, nutrient-rich mulches that can energize plants while reducing water evaporation from the soil. Ground covers also help by discouraging weeds and providing a tapestry of foliage and flowers." Low maintenance ground covers such as hostas (*Hosta*), stonecrops (*Sedum*) and bugleweeds (*Ajuga reptans*) reduce mowing and water consumption needs.

Other low maintenance considerations for the garden include creating hardscaping such as decks and patios but not so many as to create runoff and, possibly, erosion. Add shrubs and ornamental trees with understory plantings (shorter plants, such as native azaleas and dogwoods, beneath oaks or other larger trees), which create a more natural look. Natural areas also provide wildlife habitat and reduce the amount of space where leaf accumulation needs to be raked or blown off. For the lawn, a

## Member Spotlight: Phil Goetkin



Phil moved to Cape Charles with his wife, Diane D'Amico, in 2015 after living in Herndon, VA for almost 40 years.

Phil's career in horticulture began 35 years ago after leaving his Federal job to begin his own landscaping business. He retired in 2015 as the Chief of Grounds and Natural Resources for Wolf Trap National Park for the Performing Arts.

Phil has been a Master Gardener for two years, having always known that the program "was a wonderful organization with a great mission, and I thought it would give Diane and me a chance to learn about the plants and landscape of the Eastern Shore and to meet people with similar interests." His work with ESVMG has been as a regular volunteer at the Kiptopeke, Eastville and Indiantown Gardens and at New Roots where he is currently the project leader. Phil is also serving as the 2017-2018 ESVMG President.

Having worked in sustainable landscaping, natural resource preservation and restoration at Wolf Trap, he has become focused on the use of native plants and on the creation of habitat. He spends his free time gardening, jogging, biking, hiking and kayaking. And he loves VA Tech football - "Go Hokies!"

As current President, Phil thanks his predecessor, Julie Rogers, who "gave a lot of effort to the Master Gardeners Program and accomplished much. My goal is to leave the office of President with the program in the same great shape that Julie left it."

*Interviewed by Terry Ewell*

light layer of leaves can be shredded by a fall mowing and left to decompose and return nutrients to the soil during the winter.

From a design perspective, establish plants in groups large enough to form masses of color or texture. As a rule, five to seven plants will create the desired effect. A large delphinium or peony will be of sufficient size to be attractive, but a random collection of different small- to medium-sized plants will present a disorganized view so that the eye will not know where to fall. Each group of flowers should have an irregular shape. These masses of color and texture should blend into a pleasing pattern of color harmony. Small flowering annuals such as impatiens, perennials with interesting foliage such as coral bells (*Heuchera*) and ornamental grasses such as black mondo grass (*Ophiopogon planiscapus*) for the sun or Japanese forest grass (*Hakonechloa macra* 'All Gold') for the

shade may be used as continuous edging along the front of the bed.

Not only are ornamental grasses suitable for edging, they are also the “real workhorses of the garden, suitable for a wide range of functions such as erosion control and filtration for water quality” according to Stickley-Godinez. They require low maintenance, are quick growers, are disease and pest free, and have great curb appeal. “Most look best if backdropped with light. Some are perfect as a single specimen while others look better in mass” advises Stickley-Godinez.

Getting advice from your local extension agent, a Master Gardener, a reputable garden center or a visit to your local botanical garden are good ways to learn which plants are best suited for your region and design. And, if you are not already one, you just might consider becoming a Master Gardener!

### 2018 ESVMG BOARD MEMBERS

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Secretary – Julie Cardinale

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Member at Large (Accomack) – Joyce Falkinburg

Member at Large (Northampton) - Paul Tiffany

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