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# The Green Thumb

A Newsletter of Extension Horticultural Activities and Events

For York County Extension Volunteers

Nov 2009  
Vol.10, Issue 11  
Joe Ranalli  
Editor

## Future Calendar Events

- Dec 1 Municipal Commercial Pesticide Recertification, Va Beach  
Dec 4 Turn a New Leaf Conference, George Washington Univ., Washington DC  
[www.chesapeakelandscape.org](http://www.chesapeakelandscape.org)  
Dec 7 Charlottesville – Jim at Sr. Agent Selection  
Dec 8 10a-12p Strategic Meeting for Planning District 19, Brittingham-Midtown Community Center, Newport News  
Dec 8 9:30-11:30a Monthly Programming Meeting/Holiday Buffet Lunch @ St. Luke's Methodist Church  
Dec 11 9a-2p Private Pesticide Recertification, Hampton Public Library  
December 12 8a – 12p YCMG @ 3<sup>rd</sup> Annual Farmer's Market @ Riverwalk Landing, Contact Jean Thompson @ 890-0784 to volunteer assistance. Volunteers Needed.  
Dec 16 12 – 1p Gardening HearSay Radio Program, WHRV 89.5 FM, 1-800-940-2240  
Dec 24-25 OFFICE CLOSED  
Jan 1 OFFICE CLOSED  
Jan 28 8a -4p 6<sup>th</sup> Annual Home Gardener Education Day – Get Down Under: Gardening Starts Below Ground, sponsored by The Virginia Horticultural Foundation @ Founders Inn and Spa, VA Beach; 757 523-4734 or register online at [www.MAHSC.org](http://www.MAHSC.org)

For additions/corrections to the Calendar of Events, contact Joe Ranalli at 868-3429 or [pd422vt@aol.com](mailto:pd422vt@aol.com) (put **Green Thumb in the subject line**), or Becky Wells at 890-4940. The deadline for *The Green Thumb* is ALWAYS the 15<sup>th</sup> of the month.



**Help needed in the Learning Garden on Thursday mornings!**

### Master Gardener Mission Statement

Our mission, as trained volunteers in partnership with the York County, Virginia Cooperative Extension Agent, is to provide horticultural educational opportunities to the public through research-based horticultural programs and activities to enhance our environment, lives and community.

## Greetings from Jim

You have not received the 2010 Volunteer Commitment form yet because we are trying to post it to the web. Becky has been working with the webmaster to make this a simple process. I appreciate what you do daily. You might not think that responding to the phones is important, but it is amazing how important that task can be. Thank you to each one of you who helps this office to make it happen. When the form comes to you on the email, please respond. Have a great November!

Jim

### Unit Coordinator's Corner – Patsy Wells

Many thanks to all who made the social a success. The Learning Garden was lovely and well tended, the skies were fair and the winds blew a cool breeze, the decorations were artfully arranged. The Italian delicacies were wonderful and like the Billy Goats Gruff we ate until we could not eat any more. Looking forward, it is already that time to welcome the new Master Gardener interns at our November 24 meeting. They will be our guests for one of our famous potluck lunches. I went to the pruning training during a much needed rain and noticed that the new interns are a die-hard group, wanting every last drip-drop of pruning wisdom they can get. I bet there will be more clamoring for a spot in the Advanced Pruning Training on Nov. 4. See you there or at the next meeting.

### Learning Garden

A big thanks to the great crew who came out to help on the September workday, and who helped get the Learning Garden all spiffed up for the October social! Among other activities, we spread 20 yards of mulch and took a reasonable number of donut breaks. We even had fabulous door prizes, thanks to Jim. Although we can't promise donuts every week, we always welcome any folks who want to come out and help on Thursday mornings between 9:30 and 12:00\*. And as you divide plants in your own garden, please consider potting some up for the spring plant sale. \*Next LG programming meeting will be on November 5 at 9:30 a.m. in the Extension office conference room.  
(Carol Bartram, [bartram2@verizon.net](mailto:bartram2@verizon.net))

### Timekeeping

Thank you to those of you who are making an effort to get your hours caught up; for some, that means years! I would like to remind everyone that you can do your part in the effort to get us a replacement agent for Jim by turning in your hours. The total annual MG hours Jim turns in each year is a very persuasive argument as to why we need an agent and therefore maintain our MG programs. I'm willing to work with each of you to help you get caught up. Joe wrote some great instructions for using the website to download the time sheet and the computer is a great place to store your hours (knowing that you backup your files often!). This is one of the busiest times for MGs, so take advantage of the volunteering opportunities! Please call me if I can help you. (Terry Hanson 872-9639)

## Pruning Team News

The pruning team is gearing up for another busy pruning season. New Master Gardeners were introduced to proper pruning techniques on Oct 15 at New Quarter Park during typical COLD, WET pruning weather. Thanks to the experienced MGs who braved the elements to share their expertise with a very eager class of new MGs. The **Advanced Pruning Training** will take place on Wednesday, Nov 4 at the 4-H Center in Jamestown from 9 AM to 3 PM. This takes the place of the training that we used to have in January. It better be warmer than it was on Oct 15! This exciting new program features a demonstration by Bartlett Tree Services on how to prune a very large willow oak. Of course, no MGs will be climbing big trees, but it will give us many tips on maintaining the health of a large tree. The afternoon session will give specific info on pruning a variety of other smaller trees and shrubs. If you are on the Pruning Team and you are interested in attending, contact Mary Boxer (see contact info below). There are plans for several pruning clinics this winter, including one each at *True Value* and *Ken Matthews*, as well as several at homeowners' sites within the county. Of course, I am counting on my pruning team to fill all the volunteer slots for these clinics. More info soon. (Mary Boxer, Pruning Coordinator, 898-5647, email: [boxer143@msn.com](mailto:boxer143@msn.com))

### Jamestown 4-H Educational Center – 2010 Summer Staff

The Jamestown 4-H Educational Center is now accepting applications for 2010 Summer Staff. This is a wonderful opportunity for the young adults in your lives and communities. Minimum age is 18 years old. Please see this link for the application:

<http://sites.ext.vt.edu/4hcenter/jamestown/documents/2010SummerStaffApplication.pdf>

(POC: Marlie Smith, Program Director, Jamestown 4-H Educational Center, 757-253-4931, Cell: 757-604-2130, Fax: 757-253-7231)

### Home Horticulture Articles

As was announced at the State Master Gardener College, the Department of Horticulture at Virginia Tech is inviting you to submit home horticulture articles for publication on the VCE website. You know what resources are currently missing in your local programming. Many of you have already written material for your programs. If you think that your information or publications have statewide application and you are willing to share, please consider submitting them for VCE publication. We are primarily talking about the non-peer-reviewed publications for the VCE website. However, we will be reviewing all submissions and evaluating their potential as numbered pubs as well.

To keep things manageable, here are the guidelines:

1. The publication should provide research-based information applicable to home horticulture.
2. The manuscript must be properly researched with proper citations.
3. Prior to submission, it must be reviewed by two of your peers.
4. The revised manuscript must be submitted to your local ANR agent (or the VCE agent who assists with your MG unit) for review. If your agent does not feel qualified to review the manuscript or you do not have an agent, you may submit the revised manuscript directly to the POC below and copy it to your Unit Coordinator. The department will not consider a manuscript that has not been reviewed by or copied to an agent in the local unit.
5. The final manuscript must be submitted by email to [jlatime@vt.edu](mailto:jlatime@vt.edu) as a Word document. The illustrations must be submitted in a file(s) separate from the Word document. Please note in your manuscript where you would like to have the illustrations placed. The manuscript will be reviewed by an appropriate specialist, and the department office will do the formatting necessary for publishing to the web. In the event of major edits, we will correspond with the submitting author.
6. Please submit your manuscript with an email or cover page containing the following information:

Title

Author(s)

Author contact info (email and phone)

MG Unit Affiliation

Peer Reviewers  
Agent Reviewer

Thanks for sharing your expertise with your colleagues. We look forward to working with you to build the VCE publication base to meet the needs of our clientele. (POC: Joyce G. Latimer, Extension Project Leader, Department of Horticulture, Virginia Tech, 540-231-7906, FAX: 540-231-3083 email: [jlatime@vt.edu](mailto:jlatime@vt.edu))

## **Volatile Organic Compounds (VOCs) and Houseplants Revisited**

An open letter from a University of Georgia professor on their study on VOCs and Houseplants follows. Letter is to counter's the negative and out of context reports, particularly on the web, about their study. Since many of you may be aware of this research, we are publishing the clarification in full below. The research had concluded that the houseplants tested released certain volatile organic compounds (VOCs). While the research simply stated that they had detected various VOCs, the stories that proliferated on various online news sites offered headlines warning that houseplants are unhealthy. On September 22, Stanley Kays, co-author of the research, released an open letter of explanation to set the record straight.

*To Whom It May Concern,*

*There have been a number of recent discussions resulting from information taken out of context from an American Society of Horticultural Science press release concerning research conducted on plant volatiles in our laboratory at the University of Georgia.*

*The release indicated that indoor plants have been found to release volatile organic compounds (VOCs). Unfortunately the results were subsequently misrepresented on an internet site, giving the impression that it is undesirable to have plants in our homes and offices.*

*This could not be further from the truth. All living things give off VOCs; one of the simplest is CO<sub>2</sub> that we emit when breathing. Therefore, solely equating VOCs with "harmful" is totally inaccurate. The fragrance of a rose or the aroma of apple pie are each made up of volatile organic compounds.*

*The assumption that has incorrectly been made is that all VOCs are equal and are harmful. Mankind has evolved over hundreds of thousands of years breathing VOCs from plants, nearly all of which are harmless at the concentrations encountered in nature. Unfortunately over the last 150 years there has been a logarithmic increase in the number of synthetic chemicals from other sources to which we are now exposed. A number of these are extremely harmful and in some cases, lethal. These undesirable volatiles represent a serious health problem that is responsible for more than 1.6 million deaths per year and 2.7% of the global burden of disease (WHO, 2002).*

*Critical questions with regard to VOCs include: What chemicals and what are their concentrations? In the website account, much was made of a minute amount of volatiles derived from pesticides applied to the plants. In reality, these pesticide-derived volatiles emitted from the peace lily represented less than four hundredth of one percent (0.038%) of the volatiles given off by the plant. Finding minute amounts of chemicals indicates the extremely high level of sensitivity of the analytical techniques but does not imply a potentially harmful situation.*

*Our research has shown that while plants give off a small amount of harmless VOCs, they also remove significant amounts of toxic VOCs from the air. The net effect is overwhelmingly positive. Plants in homes and offices are not only aesthetically pleasing, they can also increase the quality of the air we breathe and thereby the health of the inhabitants. As we continue to research and learn more about the potential of plants to remove harmful volatile compounds, we should generate knowledge that will enhance our ability to create exceptionally healthy indoor environments.*

*- Stanley J. Kays, University of Georgia*

**Special Note: for November only, the Horticultural Therapy class at York Convalescent and Rehab Center will be the *third* Tuesday, 17 Nov 2009.**

# November 2009

S	M	T	W	T	F	S
1	2 Extension Agent District Conf Meeting in Petersburg (Jim attends)	3 Election Day No PMG Training 	4 9a-3p Advance Pruning Training, Jamestown 4-H Center (Register with Mary Boxer)	5 9a-12p Peninsula MG Training (Container Gardens, Indoor Plants, Herbs)  9:30a Learning Garden Meeting @ Extension Office Conference Room	6	7
8	9	10 9a-12p Peninsula MG Training (Fruits in the Home Garden/Vegetable Gardens)	11 Veterans Day 	12 9a-12p Peninsula MG Training (Risk Mgmt, Safety, Garden Hand Tools)  9:30a Learning Garden	13	14 3 <sup>rd</sup> Annual Farmers' Market @ Riverwalk Landing, Contact Jean Thompson, 890-0784 to assist
15 <a href="#">Green Thumb Deadline to Joe Ranalli</a>	16	17 9a-12p Peninsula MG Training (Bulbs in the Landscape – Brent & Becky's Bulbs - Gloucester)  <b>Note Date Change:</b> 10a-12p Horticultural Therapy @ York County Convalescent & Rehab Center	18 12 – 1pm Gardening HearSay Radio Program, WHRV 89.5 1-800-940- 2240	19 9a-12p Peninsula MG Training (Graduation)  9:30 am Learning Garden	20 7 pm Horticultural Society Meeting @ Women's Club, NN, VA	21
22	23	24 9:30 – 11:30 Monthly Programming Meeting/Buffer Lunch, St. Luke's Methodist Church – Come and welcome the recently graduated MG Trainees	25 Extension Office Closed at 1pm	26 Extension Office Closed 	27 Extension Office Closed	28
29	30					