

February 2024

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Into the Garden

Co-Presidents' Letter

Jan Smith and Vicki Hall

Can't believe another month has passed. We went from being worried with how warm and dry it was to worrying about flooding and complaining about the cold. And now snow. Such is winter in Virginia.

Winter is the perfect time to educate ourselves. Faith has sent out lots of information in her Tuesday e-blasts about online and in-person opportunities. Lost track? Go to <https://www.ramga.org/what-s-happening> and skim through our January community newsletter for upcoming opportunities or scroll to the very button for recorded webinars. It is a VCE requirement that we record 8 hours of Continuing Education. And its low-calorie fun.

January is all about seeds! Karen Lyons and Ginger Reed, with help from an enthusiastic Seed Savers group, pulled together another fantastic event on January 20th. 90-100 people attended, enjoyed Faith's presentation on indoor sowing, and were educated by the Seed Savers on the merits of hundreds of different seed species. We

were fortunate that many local stores and national seed



companies donated to our efforts. Karen and Ginger will have more details. Kudos to all those who helped collect, research plants, process and package seeds, and of course all the administrative details in setting up this event!

No excuses about not having seeds so can we challenge ourselves to at least try to grow something from seed! Either direct sow outdoors in spring or indoors under lights? Both our Arbor Day Free Native Tree Event and the May 11th Plant sale can use contributions. If you can contribute half a dozen plants in small 4x4 inch pots, that would be terrific! If you are a veggie growing type, plant some extra and give your excess to a local food pantry. And give yourself a pat on the back.

As we long for longer days and warmer temps, there are still

many things we can do garden-related now.

If you need pots, contact leadershipteamramga@gmail.com

Jan & Vicki

Master Gardeners: Have you paid your 2024 RAMGA dues? Click on the Member tab on the RAMGA website. PayPal and debit or credit cards accepted.

RAMGA CLASS OF 2024

The Class of 2024 Meets for Brunch

By Tamara Teaff

Saturday, January 27, marked the Q&A Brunch for the 2024 trainees. Held at the Lexington Presbyterian Church Dunlop Hall, the trainees were given an opportunity to touch base with the Class Training team regarding questions about the online training and quizzes.



Trainee Vieve Moeckel (right) visits with veteran EMG Heather Marion and fellow trainee Cathy Brabandt

Prior to the event, trainees were assigned three online modules to study as well as the companion chapters in the Master Gardner Handbook. They also took two quizzes.

Kaila Holmes and Bob Kovach were available to field questions the trainees may have about the use of Better Impact for logging volunteer hours. The highlight of the event was meeting RAMGA project leaders. Against a background of slides of projects, the PLs gave an “elevator speech” describing their specific project. Time was allowed for the trainees to visit with the project leaders if further information was needed.

Of course, the highlight of the morning was the food. The creative RAMGA cooks did not disappoint. The Class Training teams thanks the PLs for their time to meet the new trainees.

Bob also applied his photography talents by photographing each trainee. This will be used to compile a class composite which has proven to be a valuable tool for creating a community of learners. At the completion of their training in June, these trainees will be equipped to share horticultural knowledge with the Rockbridge Area community.

The next scheduled meeting for the trainees will be training in the use of Better Impact on February 9 and February 11. Included in this meeting will be a project overview to acquaint the trainees with the volunteer activities from which to explore while acquiring their 50 volunteer hours.



Peggy Agnor greets the trainees



Brunch goodies ready to feed trainees and project leaders.

Trainee Pam Lightfoot (left) learns about the Plant Sale from Project leader Anne Riffey-Buckner



PROJECT NEWS

Seed Savers Meet a Community Need

By Tamara Teaff

"Neither snow, nor rain, nor heat, nor gloom of night stays these couriers from the swift completion of their appointed rounds." This motto appears on the main New York City Post Office as a tribute to postal workers. I do not know if the RAMGA Seed Savers have such a motto, but the Seed Event on January 20 testifies to their hard work and dedication. On one of the coldest days of January 2024, the team showed up to launch the annual Seed Event.



Under the leadership of Karen Lyons and Ginger Reed, twenty-two Master Gardener volunteers have been meeting and preparing for months. Throughout the spring and summer, they met monthly to educate each other on the fine points of seed saving. In the fall, the Seed Savers met every other week to clean, package, and label the seeds. It is important to note that most of the seeds were collected on an individual basis from Master Gardeners' home gardens. There were a few whole group seed gatherings.

The Seed Event was held at RARA (Piovano Building) where over 90 varieties (including annuals, perennials, vegetable, herbs, and shrubs) were available at no cost. In preparing for the event, the Seed Savers conducted research of which the results are recorded in the RAMGA website Seed Library (<https://www.ramga.org/seed-home>). Such information includes the plant's description, cultural requirements, and planting instructions along with a photo of each plant. Each seed package, prepared by the team, has a QR code directing to the RAMGA Seed Library.

To kick-off the event, RAMGA member and landscape designer/ horticulturist, Faith Vosburgh, presented information to a group of at least fifty participants on how to grow plants from seed. Giving a brief overview of the botany surrounding seed structure and growth, she continued to explain the various treatments seeds require before germination. Based on her personal experience, Faith shared examples of seed starting equipment. She discussed the timeline as when to plant the seedlings out of doors and explained the importance of "hardening-off" the baby plant by gradually exposing it to outdoor climate a few hours at a time. She explained that seed packets contain a wealth of information about how to best plant for successful results.

Jan Smith (L) and Karen Lyons (R) assembling the RRL Seed Catalog, having too much fun!



Beginning in February, the same seeds that were available at this Seed Event will be at the Rockbridge Regional Library, 138 South Main Street in Lexington. Seeds will be available for free “check-out” while supplies last. To promote self-sufficiency and a deeper connection to the environment, the goal of this RAMGA ongoing initiative is to provide the community with access to a variety of seeds to plant.



Seed team members from L to R: Jenny Childress, Karen Lyons, Faith Vosburgh, and Peggy Agnor

New Seed Catalog at the Rockbridge Regional Library



Interested in saving seed? Consider joining the Seed Savers group. Contact Karen Lyons at klyons0221@gmail.com.

RAMGA 2024 PLANT SALE

We will still need to do some digs for the 2024 plant sale. If you are going to be doing some dividing in your garden and will have extra plants or if you would like some of us to come dig up extra plants, please let me (Faith) know. We will be following Asian Jumping Worm protocol. Perennials are our biggest need. If you are starting plants inside and have extras, keep the plant sale in mind. We will also be doing some propagating, so if you'd like to be involved, I'd love to hear from you. Hopefully, we can get the Mountain Gateway Community College greenhouse up and running.

CONTINUING EDUCATION

Tuesday, February 6, 7pm. Charlottesville Tree Stewards present a Winter Tree ID: "Buds' and Bark". Free and online. [Winter Tree ID info](#).

Tuesday, February 6, 6:30pm. "How and Why to Grow Hedgerows" presented by the Piedmont Master Gardeners, The Center at Belvedere, 540 Belvedere Blvd., Charlottesville. Free.

Saturday, February 10, 9:45am-4pm. 6th Annual Prince William Native Plant Symposium, both online and in-person. Click here for more information: [Prince William Native Plant Symposium](#)

Monday, February 12, 6pm, Hillel House. "Wildflowers of the Chessie Trail" presented by Peggy Dyson-Cobb at the Friends of the Chessie Trail Annual Meeting.

Monday, February 12, 6:30pm, Piovano Room, Rockbridge Regional Library, "Planting for Birds" by Robin Puffenberger, sponsored by the Rockbridge Bird Club.

Saturday, February 17, 10am – noon. Native Gardening 101 Series. Part 1: "Jumpstart Your Growing Season". Online. \$10 fee includes three webinars. Saturday, June 8, 10am, "Summer Maintenance Dos and Don'ts and Saturday, September 7, "Fall Maintenance and Planning Ahead. [Registration](#)

After several years hiatus due to COVID, the Piedmont Landscape Association is back to hosting their annual seminar on Wednesday, February 21 at the Paramount Theater in downtown Charlottesville. This year's speakers include Dani Baker, Larry Weaner, Michiko Kurisu and Hoichi Kurisu, and David Culp, all well known in their fields. This is a consistently excellent series and one I (Faith) have attended for many years. Registration: <https://www.piedmontlandscape.org/seminar2023.html>

Upcoming:

The annual Waynesboro Shenandoah Plant Symposium (another one I try not to miss) is scheduled for Friday, March 15 at the Wayne Theatre in downtown Waynesboro. The roster of speakers includes Marianne Willburn, an award-winning garden blogger, Heather Holm, an expert on native bees, Bob Brzuszek who'll be speaking on hummingbird gardening, and Mark Weathington, director of the JC Raulston Arboretum at NC State University. For more information and to register:

Faith's Garden Notes...

I know many people are not crazy about yucca. And I can understand why: it looks out of place in our northern Blue Ridge flora. Yucca seems synonymous with the Southwest desert landscape. But it is native to the southeast from South Carolina to Florida and Mississippi, and now ranges all the way to New England. This is a very hardy plant and can be grown from zones 4 to 10. The most common yucca is *Yucca filamentosa*.



Yucca is a low virtually stemless evergreen shrub with a basal rosette of stiff, sword-shaped leaves with long curly threads along the margins. In late spring, a flowering stalk rises from the center of the rosette, usually around 3' tall but can reach 8' and is covered with long terminal panicles of creamy bell-shaped flowers. Baby plants grow from offsets of the basal rosette.

Why do I mention yucca? Because it is the one thing right now in my perennial beds that looks alive. The photo on the left is from my garden, taken on January 29th. I grow the cultivar 'Color Guard' and have several of these scattered throughout the garden. 'Color Guard' leaves have bright yellow striping against green with long white curly threads along the margins. It is striking in the summer but stands out even more in the winter against the dead foliage of the perennials. It really does look more like a perennial than a shrub. In the summer it holds its own. Yellow is one of the predominant colors in some of my garden beds. I am always looking for those color echoes to pull a bed together. Yucca is also a vertical plant and, as

many of you have heard me say, most gardens need that vertical accent to offset the many blob forms of perennials. The cotton puff flowers are lovely, but don't last long. I'll cut the stem off when the flowers start to fade as the fading flowers look a bit like dirty Kleenex to me.

Have I changed your mind about yuccas? Did I mention that it is deer-resistant?

Sources:

<https://www.missouribotanicalgarden.org/PlantFinder/PlantFinderDetails.aspx?kempercode=d184>

<https://plants.ces.ncsu.edu/plants/yucca-filamentosa/>

Dirr, Michael. Manual of Woody Landscape Plants. 6th edition. Stipes Publishing, 1998.



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