



Hello, Extension Master Gardeners of Northern Virginia!

Welcome to the first edition of *The Latest Dirt* for the new year. I enjoyed reading all of this month's articles while putting together the newsletter, but I think my favorite article comes from the Help Desk this month, because it included a picture of a very fat - and likely very happy - caterpillar. I'm sure the gardener who submitted it for identification wasn't at all happy with that caterpillar, though - read on to learn more!

While I'm on the subject of photos - as the weather gets warmer and you head outside, consider adding a camera to your usual gardening toolkit. The Virginia Cooperative Extension Master Gardener State Office wants to showcase master gardener volunteer activities. Take a few photos at volunteer events, training, community garden projects, meetings and public events for the VCE social media team to share. [Click here for the VCE Master Gardener Photo Submission Form.](#)

I'm also happy to get photo illustrations for the newsletter; these always make reading so much more fun! Please send newsletter submissions, questions or comments to mgnvnewsletter@mgnv.org.

I hope you enjoy this issue of *The Latest Dirt*, which is [best viewed online](#).

Happy reading and happy gardening!

Christine Jessel Grider
Newsletter Editor, 2020

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MARCH EVENT CALENDAR

(Note: you must be logged in to VMS to access any VMS links in the newsletter and the links in the calendar below).

Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
<p>1</p> <p>Glencarlyn Garden Work Party</p> <p>Intern Pruning Practicum at Simpson Garden</p>	<p>2</p> <p>Sunny Garden Propagation</p> <p>MGNV Board Meeting</p>	<p>3</p> <p>Intern Pruning Practicum at Simpson Garden</p> <p>Microgreens</p>	<p>4</p> <p>OVG Work Party</p>	<p>5</p> <p>Shade/Quarry Garden Work Party</p> <p>Grow What You Eat</p>	<p>6</p> <p>Youth Behavior Management 101 Seminar</p>	<p>7</p> <p>Sunny Garden Work Party</p> <p>7th Spring Garden Kick-Off</p>
<p>8</p> <p>Grow What You Eat</p>	<p>9</p> <p>MGNV Continuing Education Committee Meeting</p> <p>Glencarlyn Garden Work Party</p> <p>Selecting Native Plants for the Home Garden</p>	<p>10</p> <p>MGNV Social Media Committee Meeting</p>	<p>11</p> <p>OVG Work Party</p> <p>Exhibit at EcoAction Arlington Annual Meeting</p>	<p>12</p> <p>Turf Talk: How to Have a Healthy Lawn</p>	<p>13</p>	<p>14</p> <p>Shade/Quarry Garden Work Party</p> <p>Winter Pruning for Woody Plants</p>
<p>15</p> <p>Glencarlyn Garden Work Party</p>	<p>16</p> <p>Sunny Garden Work Party</p>	<p>17</p> <p>Simpson Garden Work Party</p> <p>Brown Bag Seminar Update on Ticks & Mosquitos</p> <p>Beatley Library Plant Clinic</p>	<p>18</p> <p>OVG Work Party</p>	<p>19</p> <p>MGNV Cont Ed: What a Warming World Means to Plants- Pests & Their Natural Enemies</p>	<p>20</p> <p>Build Healthy Soil and Manage Water in Your Yard</p>	<p>21</p> <p>Sunny Garden Work Party</p>
<p>22</p> <p>Sunny Garden Propagation</p>	<p>23</p> <p>Public Education Committee Meeting</p> <p>Glencarlyn Garden Work Party</p> <p>Tomato Love</p>	<p>24</p> <p>Simpson Garden Work Party</p> <p>Beatley Library Plant Clinic</p>	<p>25</p> <p>OVG Work Party</p> <p>Arlington Central Library Plant Clinic</p>	<p>26</p> <p>Quarterly Membership Meeting: Fellowship and Business Meeting</p>	<p>27</p>	<p>28</p> <p>EMGS at Buddie Ford Nature Center</p> <p>Shade/Quarry Garden Work Party</p> <p>Turf Alternatives</p>
<p>29</p> <p>Winter Pruning for Woody Plants</p> <p>Glencarlyn Garden Work Party</p>	<p>30</p> <p>Sunny Garden Work Party</p>	<p>31</p> <p>Simpson Garden Work Party</p> <p>Beatley Library Plant Clinic</p> <p>Tomato Love</p>				

SAVE THE DATE - MARCH 2020

Friday, March 6, Continuing Education – [Youth Behavior Management 101 Seminar](#), 11 a.m. - 1 p.m.

Saturday, March 7 – [AFAC Plot Against Hunger Spring Kickoff](#), 10 a.m. - 2 p.m. Volunteer shifts are available for tables about composting and waste management, season extension, common garden pests and Ask A Master Gardener.

Tuesday, March 17, Continuing Education – [Brown Bag Seminar Update on Ticks & Mosquitos](#), 12:30-1:30 p.m.

Thursday, March 19, Continuing Education - [What a Warming World Means to Plants - Pests & Their Natural Enemies](#), 9:30 a.m. - noon.

Thursday, March 26 – [MGNV Quarterly Membership Meeting](#), 6:30 - 8:30 p.m. Volunteer shifts are available for set up, flower arrangements and clean up.

SPECIAL EVENTS: SPRING GARDEN KICKOFF, FALL INFORMATION NIGHT

Sign up for the Spring Garden Kickoff

Please take time to [sign up for the Spring Garden Kickoff](#) at the Arlington Central Library from 10 a.m.-2 p.m. on March 7, 2020. This event is a collaboration between the AFAC Plot Against Hunger, Extension and VCE. You're invited to support any of four information tables: Ask A Master Gardener, composting, season extension and/or common garden pests; many contributors make for light work. You can sign up for one station, move around and take time to enjoy the event, which will include additional information tables, breakout sessions, and lots of good vibes for the gardeners who are being encouraged to grow fresh vegetables for the Arlington Food Assistance Center in 2020.



Plan to attend Fall 2020 Information Night

Please mark May 21 at 7 p.m. to attend the annual Virginia Cooperative Extension Master Gardener Information Night for the Fall 2020 Volunteer Training Program overview at Fairlington (room 118).

This is the event where the public comes to learn what learn what it means to be an Extension Master Gardener. Attendees learn about training and requirements in a short program before visiting tables set up around the room representing demo gardens, plant clinics, some committees and recent trainees and interns. [The volunteer sign up is on VMS under the May 2020 Master Gardener Training calendar.](#)



Thanks in advance for your support of this important event!

CHECK IN ON CONTINUING EDUCATION

Register now for March continuing education

The March continuing education program, [“What a Warming World Means to Plants, Pests and Their Natural Enemies,”](#) is scheduled for March 19 at Arlington Mill Community Center. University of Maryland Extension Entomologist Mike Rapp, Ph.D., will discuss how warmer temperatures alter the ecology of biomes and affect ranges of pests, seasonal phenology of insects and mites, and interactions among plants, herbivores, and their natural enemies. Raupp has written a [Bug of the Week blog](#) for ten years and is a frequent guest bug expert for Good Morning America, NPR, and other news outlets. He has appeared on BBC, CNN, National Geographic Ultimate Explorer and The Tonight Show with Jay Leno, among others.



Entomologist Mike Raupp. (Submitted)

Please plan to arrive at 9:30 a.m. to allow ample time for parking, to find the room, and to socialize and settle in before the program begins promptly at 10 a.m.

Space for this program is very limited; please sign up (as a "volunteer") to reserve a seat. If your plans change, please remove your name from the response list so someone else will have the opportunity to attend.

February's continuing education program is now online

The February continuing education presentation on [Soil Management and Soil Preservation](#) is posted on the Members Only section of the [MGNV website](#).

The Agent Plan of Work presentation is also available. When possible, future continuing education presentations [will be posted here as well](#); you can access the site with the password MGNV2020.

If you have any trouble connecting to online continuing education presentations, please reach out to your Tech Team or Tyler Ormsby.

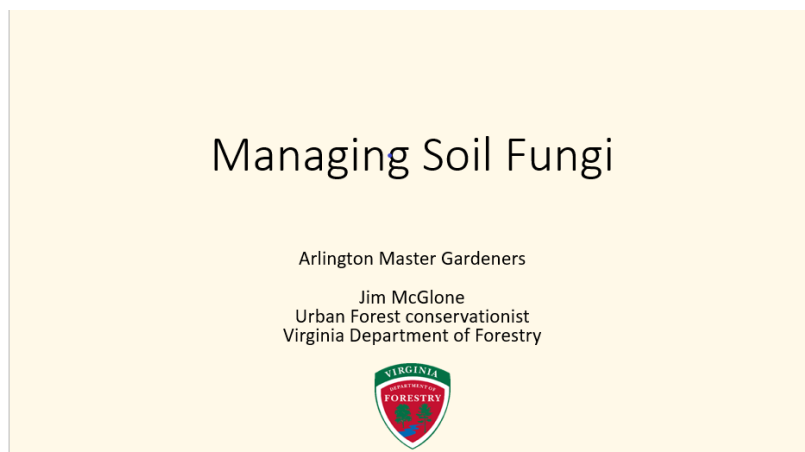


Image from Jim McGlone's slide presentation, "Managing Soil Fungi." (Submitted)

THE DIRT ON THE HELP DESK

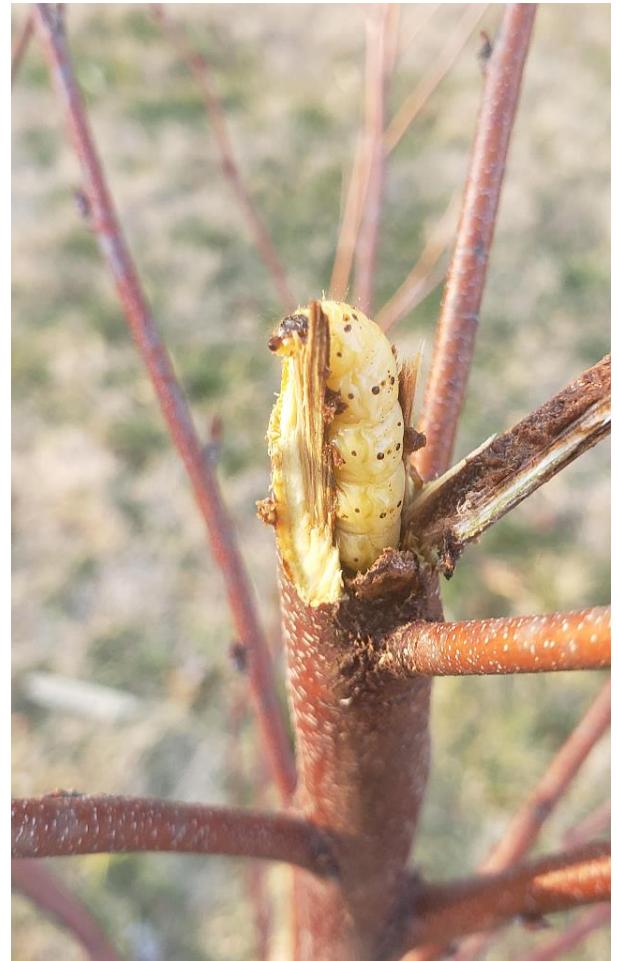
Submitted by Teddye Clayton

The 2019 master gardener interns began their required rotations on the Help Desk in February, and we hope that some of them will decide to join our team of Help Desk regulars after they complete their internships. Each intern is teamed with an experienced Help Desk “coach,” who has been specially trained to guide the intern through Help Desk procedures and reduce the angst of being on the front lines in answering questions from the public.

Joyce Hylton reports good (but not great) news about Help Desk office equipment. “The antique machine occupying space on the counter and masquerading as a computer has been replaced by one that is measurably better,” she said, adding that if she understood correctly, “we were upgraded from a three-gigabyte to a 16-gigabyte computer. I guess this might be equivalent to trading in our ‘58 Belair Chevrolet for a ‘85 Ford Taurus; we will be able to move just a little bit better, but we still can’t drive in the fast lane.”

We also recently completed a detailed guide for transferring images from the microscope to the computer. Our microscope is an essential resource when clients come in with insects or plant material damaged by insects or disease. Using it, we were able to identify our first-of-the-year tick, the dreaded Deer Tick, [also known as the Black Legged Tick](#), which is a vector for Lyme disease. Fortunately, discovery and removal of the tick within 24 hours will greatly reduce the risk of infection. Image of fat golden-colored caterpillar boring into the cambium of a young birch sapling. The microscope also helped us to distinguish a drugstore beetle, which has clubbed antennae, from a cigarette beetle, whose antennae are serrated. The drugstore beetle got its name from its habit of feeding on prescription drugs, while the cigarette beetle prefers tobacco products. But both will eat almost anything and are frequent pantry pests that infest dry stored food products, spices, seeds, and grains. Control requires identifying the source of the infestation and a thorough cleanup using a vacuum; [Virginia Cooperative Extension provides a publication detailing further eradication steps here](#).

A client sent a photo of a caterpillar that had devoured the cambium of a birch sapling (*pictured, right*). Because it was a caterpillar not usually found in these parts, and thus hard to identify, we forwarded the photo to the Virginia Tech Insect Lab as well as to Alonso Abugattas, Arlington’s natural resources manager. VT’s Eric Day tentatively identified it as a leopard moth, while Alonso went further and identified it as a nonnative wood leopard moth, which is a pest of both fruit and decorative trees. Its life cycle includes a period of two or three years in which the caterpillar hides inside stems of host plants and feeds off the juices before it pupates into the adult moth. The caterpillars siphon the nutrients of the tree, resulting in browning leaves, death of new shoots, and damaged branches. Control requires removing and destroying the affected branches and applying chemical pesticides to the entire tree and entry points.



A wood leopard moth caterpillar inside a birch seedling. (Submitted).

WHAT'S GOING ON IN THE GARDENS?

Glencarlyn Library Community Garden

Gazebo Renovation

The gazebo, a prominent feature at the Glencarlyn Library Community Garden, was built in 2001 from funds generously donated by neighborhood resident Sue Zajac in memory of her husband. Since its assembly from a Dalton Pavilions kit during “Gazebo Raising Day” under the expert supervision of contractor Sam Celia, the gazebo has been a site for educational garden talks and herbal sachet demonstrations by the garden coordinators and EMG volunteers. It has also served the Glencarlyn neighborhood as a location for picnics and small concerts as well as a peaceful resting spot for reading, chatting, and viewing the garden.

After 19 years of use, the moss-covered shingles on the gazebo roof were beginning to split and curl, while the decorative finial was listing off-center. After investigating various options, the garden coordinators located a local firm, Kirby Kerns Contractors, with experience in roofing with cedar shakes. On a chilly day in early December, a team of workers spent the day removing the old shingles and replacing them with custom-fitted hip and ridge cedar shakes. On January 9, 2020, the project manager returned to install the replacement finial on a newly fabricated base. With its renovated roof, the gazebo should now continue as a garden focal point well into the future.



Workers from Kirby Kerns replace the Glencarlyn garden gazebo roof. (Photo/Elaine Mills)

Winter Garden Observations

This winter, our resident mockingbird has returned to the winterberry (*Ilex verticillata* ‘Red Sprite’) just off the parking lot at the entrance to the garden. He has determined that this shrub is HIS winter larder and dive-bombs all other birds to keep them away. We are lucky that he and a female are very conservative in their eating so that we can enjoy the red glow of the fruit through Valentine’s Day into March.



Mockingbird guarding winterberry fruit. (Photo/Mary Free)

Early signs of returning plant life in the garden have included the emergence of fresh new leaves on golden ragwort (*Packera aurea*) and the charming diminutive flowers of snowdrops (*Galanthus nivalis*) in late January. The downward-facing blooms of Lenten rose (*Helleborus orientalis*) have been especially stunning in early February.



White and purple Lenten rose blooming. (Photo/Anne Clamp Reed)

Organic Vegetable Garden

Find new additions and free editions at the OVG this spring

During mid-January, OVG coordinators got together over tea to select seeds for the coming growing season. We chose some of our favorites like Black Beauty eggplant, lunchbox pepper, and Roma bean seeds. We also opted for some new crops. Come on by this spring and see what they are.

In February, Nancy Dowling held a coffee for OVG volunteers. We caught up with one another while nibbling on fruit, pastries, and coffee, and then discussed the coming planting year. We decided to hold our first work party on Weds., March 4, 2020. Tom Laughlin suggested the OVG begin tracking changes in the garden due to climate change and to keep a better record of how different plants fare each season. Volunteers were enthusiastic about the idea. No good idea goes unpunished, so Tom is spearheading the initiative.

The mild Arlington winter meant our overwintered crops – garlic, spinach, kale, and arugula – fared well. More fragile plants like lettuce and cilantro also made it through December, January and February unscathed. We'll see what the next month brings.

Finally, the OVG received a new addition over the winter: A Little Free Library. It's only for gardening books, but anyone in the community can partake. Bring a book, take a book.



Photo: The Little Free Library bookshelf is waiting for donations and patrons at the Organic Vegetable Garden. (Submitted)

MEMBERSHIP UPDATE

by Laurine Musto, membership chair



The 2020 MGNV membership drive has concluded, and we are 244 members strong! This is a 5 percent increase over our membership of 232 in 2019. Much of this increase can be attributed to our 2019 interns, who joined at an enthusiastic rate of close to 90 percent! Our current membership roster includes 164 active MGs, 30 active with distinction MGs, 11 Emeritus members, 3 inactive members, 25 interns, and 11 affiliates. The current membership drive raised close to \$8,000 for MGNV activities through payment of dues and generous donations from members.

The 2020 MGNV Membership/Discount cards will be mailed to member's home addresses by the end of March. The 2019 card is valid until 4/1/2020.

If you have any questions, please contact me at laurinemusto@gmail.com.

TECH TIPS

The MGNV Social Media Team is busy as bees!

Lots of changes on the [MGNV website!](#)

The Problem Plants section has been renamed Invasive Plants. [New Invasive Plant fact sheets](#) will be appearing on the website all year. Look for posts highlighting the fact sheets each Monday morning.

Best Bet Fact Sheets have been completely revised.

As always, we continue to update [Tried and True Native Plant Selections for the Mid-Atlantic](#), with a number of new fact sheets being published this year, as well as videos added to many of the pages. Posts highlighting seasonally appropriate native plant fact sheets are posted on the website every Friday.

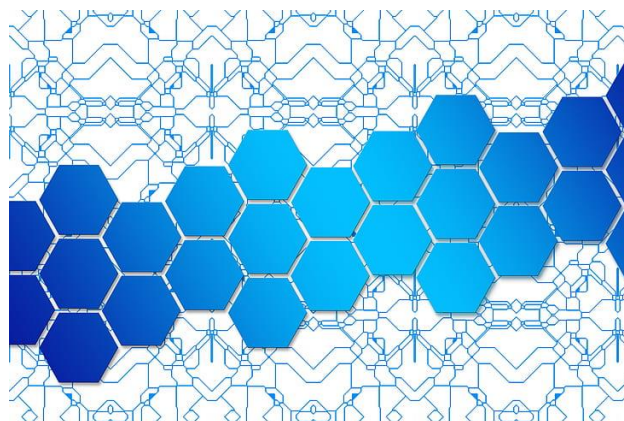
We strive for original content at least once a week. Most new articles post every Wednesday. The [Master Gardener Book Shelf](#) and [Regional Gardens](#) are some of our regularly published series.

Due to some technical changes, our current webpage theme will need to be replaced. We are excited about revising and refreshing the look of the website. Let us know what you really like about the layout and what you would like to see improved. What are you having trouble finding?

Are you on [Facebook](#)? Follow MGNV to get Elaine Mill's Sunday Bark Quiz posts and Tuesday Mystery Plant posts, as well as daily posts carefully selected by the Social Media team. All articles posted on the website also appear in our Facebook feed.

And if you are on [Instagram](#), we have daily delights for you, thanks again to the indefatigable Elaine Mills.

Last but not least, subscribe to our video channel on [YouTube](#), courtesy of Mary Free!



IMPORTANT LINKS

[Visit the MGNV Website](#)

[MGNV Members-only Page](#)

[Log in to VMS](#)

[Google Drive](#)

[Membership Directory](#)

[Follow MGNV on Facebook](#)

[Follow MGNV on Instagram](#)

Need Technology Help? Contact Our Tech Team!

Google Account and Google Drive Access: Liz Tefera - etefera@verizon.net

MGNV Listserv: Henry Staples - hstaples@mgnv.org

MGNV Website: Elena Rodriguez - elena.rodriguez@mgnv.org

VMS: Bev Keane - beverlykeane@hotmail.com

Newsletter: Christine Jessel Grider - christine.jesselgrider@mgnv.org

HELP WANTED

MGNV Seeks Treasurer

Do you have:

- Interest in doing work that supports MGNV?
- Experience with financial tasks and regulatory policies?
- Good communication skills?
- Patience?
- The ability to work from home?

If you answered YES to most of these questions, you might be a candidate for the next MGNV treasurer.

The MGNV board is looking for an interested member to begin shadowing the current treasurer, learning the job, and becoming the organization's treasurer on January 1, 2021.

MGNV TREASURER POSITION SUMMARY: The treasurer is the officer of the MGNV Board of Directors responsible for the financial activity of the organization. Responsibilities include:

Managing the organization's checking account, certificates of deposit, bank credit card account, PayPal account, tax filing and other reporting to Arlington County, the Commonwealth of Virginia and the Internal Revenue Service.

Preparing checks, making deposits, reconciling bank and credit card statements and maintaining hard copy and automated accounting records.

Preparing the MGNV annual budget and reporting regularly to the Board regarding the organization's finances.

Assisting the audit committee by providing the financial records for the year, answering questions and preparing a response to the audit findings.

To ensure MGNV follows sound financial procedures, the treasurer also provides information and assistance to the members of MGNV involved in collecting funds and making deposits, including the Membership Chair, Green Spring Plant Sale Lead and Glencarlyn leadership.

For more information, please contact Carol Goldberg, carol.goldberg@verizon.net