

The Vine

Spring 2023

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Hello St. Mary's County Master Gardener's and happy spring to everyone. This is one of my favorite times of year- a time of renewal, growth and green. The longer days and warmer temperatures beckon an inner earning to do—to plant, to cultivate, to be productive. At home, we are enjoying the short burst of color from our peonies. This year we tried our hand at growing annual strawberries. Annual strawberries are planted in early fall as plug plants, covered in the winter to prevent cold injury and then harvested in late spring. This was a good season for annual strawberries, and ours have been very productive. We are enjoying the sweet treat with homemade ice cream and fresh strawberry pies.



The very first strawberry of the season. April 21, 2023.

Mariah was on reduced work schedule the last few weeks and will be on extended medical leave until mid-June. We appreciate Mariah keeping the MG program moving and getting this newsletter together. We also appreciate everyone's patience and support of the Master Gardener program during this time.

If you are in the Charlotte Hall area, be sure to stop in and check out the new *Barns of New Market* farmers market. The market was built by St. Mary's County government under the oversight of the Southern Maryland Resource, Conservation and Development Board as a new location for the overflowing market at the Charlotte Hall Library. The SM Master Gardeners and the Watershed Restoration program were important partners on this project. MG's helped to design, plant and maintain the native plant garden and tree planting surrounding the property. One aspect I am particularly pleased with is the five new educational signs that we installed last month. Sign topics include Agricultural History, Soils, Forest and Forest Buffers, Wetlands, and Native Plants. The market features a boardwalk that overlooks a wetland area and connects to the Three Notch Trail-- a popular biking and walking path.



"New educational sign on wetland overlooking the wetland area at the Barns of New Market"



A big thank you to MG Shannon Dyson who was a phenomenal help in designing each sign and to all the MG's who worked hard to make this project a success.

Please join me in welcoming Caroline DiGiovanni as our new Watershed Restoration Educator for St. Mary's and Calvert Counties. Caroline looks forward to continuing the great programming started by Nicole Basenback and collaborating with the MG program to promote the health of the Chesapeake Bay. Caroline can be reached at: cdigiova@umd.edu Read more about Caroline's background below.

A couple of additional announcements. If you missed the State MG newsletter, please take a moment to read it over. It is loaded with MG program updates: <https://extension.umd.edu/programs/environment-natural-resources/program-areas/master-gardener-program/volunteer-resources/newsletter> Also, the Charles County Extension office is hiring a full-time Home Horticulture Educator and MG Coordinator to replace Kaitlyn Baligush who took a new position with the State MG office. Please pass this opportunity on to anyone who may be interested. <https://ejobs.umd.edu/postings/107341>

Thank you to everyone for submitting articles for this edition of The Vine. I always enjoy reading about activities of the MG program around the county and beyond.

Good Growing and Thank You for Your Service!
Ben Beale

Caroline DiGiovanni
Watershed Restoration Educator for St Mary's and Calvert Counties

Hello, my name is Caroline DiGiovanni. I am excited to be joining the UME team as the Watershed Restoration Educator for St. Mary's and Calvert Counties. My background includes work in organic agriculture, environmental education and public outreach. I have my B.S. in Environmental Science from Stockton University (The Richard Stockton College of New Jersey) In my free time I enjoy gardening, kayaking, spending time with friends and my three cats. I look forward to collaborating with my co-workers at Extension and the community to promote the health of our local waterways and the Chesapeake Bay!



Attacking Two New Gardens

By: Penny Shissler

Last year I committed myself to volunteering at three northern county sites, The Barns at Charlotte Hall, the Northern Senior Center, and the 5th District Park. I spent most of my time last year working at The Barns, pulling back the mulch, removing that “accidentally” (cough cough) planted grass, laying cardboard, and recovering with the mulch. This year I started attacking the sign gardens at the Northern Senior Center and the 5th District Park. I looked at the NSC last year and wasn’t sure what I was going to be able to do with it, since the sign is mostly surrounded by bushes.



My first look at it this year found it covered in chick-

weed. So, I started removing the chickweed at the right and the front of the sign. I continued with the left side and the rear, leaving the center to be done last, as you really can’t see it. Working on the two ends as I pull the chickweed and the wire grass where the roots run deep, I have been turning the

compacted soil. The bushes appear to have not been trimmed in quite some time. Cutting all the dead wood and branches is giving it a “bonsai” look, as now you can see through the bushes. There is some ornamental grass at the right end, a stonecrop in the center, daylilies (I think) and some coreopsis, all which will be thinned and relocated. I will be adding some natives from my home garden and black-eyed Susans from the 5th district park sign. The sign garden at the Fifth District Park is full of beautiful daffodils, irises, a stonecrop, and a multitude of black-eyed Susans. It too was covered in chickweed. I pulled the chickweed and thinned out the irises and replanted and relocated some. On a second visit I removed the dead daffodil flowers and stopped by the Charlotte Hall transfer station and picked up a couple buckets of mulch.





before



after



before



after

Start 'em Out Young

On a weekend when my six-year-old grandson was visiting we went out to run errands and stopped by the 5th district park. I had been carrying around two buckets and a large plastic container of mulch in my car. I asked my grandson if he wanted to help spread the mulch. He was more than willing to help. I got one of the buckets and proceeded to show him how to lay down the mulch around the plants. He wanted to “do it himself” so I gave him that bucket and got another. Being it was a Saturday and game day cars were entering the park. This kid would stop and wave at every car that came through! We were able to get the front, sides, and some of the back covered. I told my grandson it was Earth Day and that if anyone asked him what he did on Earth Day he was to tell them, “I helped spread mulch in a community garden”.





An Unusual Iris
By: Lynn Duff

I am so excited to see this iris. It is from our front yard. It is two toned and the 2 other buds are also two toned! And it smells AWESOME! Thought you might enjoy it!

Return To My Happy Place
By: Janet Marks

During the long gray Pittsburgh winters, I often sought refuge from the pressures of college by visiting Phipps Conservatory. The outside world would disappear amid the welcoming palm trees, dense ferns, and delightful orchids. After an hour or two in the conservatory, I would emerge renewed and ready to tackle my schoolwork again.

This April, I had occasion to visit Pittsburgh and I wondered if Phipps Conservatory and Botanical Gardens would still be my happy place.

Walking up to Phipps through Schenley Park on a glorious spring day, the Victorian architecture beckoned. Built in 1893, the conservatory boasts 14 rooms, each with a distinct theme. After purchasing tickets in a somewhat dull visitors center, I bounded up the stairs to entrance to the Palm Court. I had no idea what the docents were saying as they greeted me, because I was staring up at the palm trees with my mouth agape - the palms seemed so much taller and lusher than I remembered. The eye-level plantings were dense and pristine. I kept looking up and down, finding it hard to focus on all the detail and majesty.

Each new room offered up a different feast for the eyes and atmosphere for the soul. From a formal French garden to a tropical fruit and spice forrest, I could wax poetic about every space. When I was in college, my favorite room was the Orchids. It was still amazing as ever, covered high to low in the most exquisite flowers. Now, my next favorite room is the Desert Room, which featured cacti and succulents grouped by region of origin. I was fascinated by the endless variety in the shapes and sizes of those plants.

Since I left college, Phipps has significantly expanded their outdoor spaces, which now include a vegetable demonstration garden and a superbly zen Japanese garden, among other themes. Sculptures have been integrated into the indoor gardens to echo the theme of the plantings. I still looked for the Brontosaurus that I always swore must be living in the Fern room, but I still did not see her.

So the answer is a resounding "Yes" - Phipps is still my happy place. Even better now that I don't have to catch up on notes for the lecture I skipped to visit.

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Cactus Room



Victoria Room



Gratuitous Orchid Picture



Bee Swarm

By: Frances Beale

On Monday evening, my son, Ben, informed me that we had a swarm of honey bees on a fence post. I had never seen a swarm, and I was very anxious that my one surviving hive had decided to depart the premises! Ben was good enough to get another box and frames while I "suited up". Since both my smoker and bee brush were destroyed by some varmint while in storage, I simply scooped up handfuls of bees off the fence post and dropped them (very gently) in the new box.

Then I consulted my local bee expert (Stanley Zimmerman from Zimmerman's Greenhouse) and together we got the new hive set up correctly. This hive will help Ben pollinate his watermelon and pumpkin plants at another location. Unfortunately, I did not get a picture of the swarm, but did want to show you a shot of the new hive. We still do not know if the original hive split or if these are someone else's and the bees are not talking!



Health Department Garden & Arnold Arboretum in Boston pictures

By: Monika Lee



Health Department Garden



Lilacs blooming in time for Mother's Day!



Amazing poppy super bloom in California(Monika's daughter in the picture)

The Front Yard Project

By: Amy Henderson

The “Front Yard” garden at Leonardtown Library and Garvey Senior Center is blossoming with native perennials—each taking its turn as the growing season progresses. The garden provides examples of what you can put in your garden—native flowers, shrubs and trees that will feed bees, butterflies and birds, and which, once established, will require little maintenance in terms of watering or other care.

As Doug Tallamy writes in his book, *Nature’s Best Hope: A New Approach to Conservation That Starts in Your Yard*, “...the built landscapes between habitat fragments must be ecologically enriched to the point where they can sustainably support entire life cycles of local biodiversity. Restoring viable habitat within the human-dominated landscapes that separate habitat fragments is the single most effective thing we can do to stop the steady drain of species from our local ecosystems...you should care whether the ecosystems that support birds are healthy because those same ecosystems support you.”

For a little gardening inspiration, and to see biodiversity regeneration in action, please visit the Front Yard!



***Itea virginica* “Henry’s Garnet”**
Henry’s Garnet Virginia Sweetspire



Eastern Beebalm
Monarda bradburiana



Amsonia “Blue Ice”
Amsonia tabernemontana



Columbine
Aquilegia canadensis

Roasted Broccoli with Parmigiano
Recipe Submitted By: Ruth Yates

From the cookbook *The Mediterranean Family Table* by Angelo Acquista, M.D.

This recipe is easy to fix and very tasty. I make it often to “get my green vegetables”.

Serves 4

Ingredients

6 cups broccoli florets (a bit more than 1 head)
6 tablespoons extra-virgin olive oil
6 cloves garlic, sliced

½ tablespoon salt (or less to taste)
1 teaspoon black pepper
1 tablespoon lemon juice
½ cup grated Parmigiano cheese

Directions

1. Preheat oven to 400 degrees F.
2. In a large bowl, mix the broccoli florets with 4 tablespoons of olive oil, the garlic, salt and pepper. Spread the florets on a baking pan in a single layer
3. Bake them for 20 minutes.
4. Remove the broccoli from the oven and quickly while it is still hot, drizzle it with the remaining 2 tablespoons of olive oil and the lemon juice. Sprinkle the Parmigiano over all.



Balsamic Roasted Beet Salad

Recipe Submitted By: Ruth Yates

From the cookbook *The Mediterranean Family Table* by Angelo Acquista, M.D.

This is a very healthy salad with many elements of the Mediterranean diet, including antioxidant-rich omega-3-loaded nuts.

Serves 6

Ingredients

1 tablespoon Dijon mustard	6 raw medium beets
3 tablespoons balsamic vinegar	½ raw onion, sliced
1 teaspoon salt	1 handful almonds or walnuts
1 teaspoon black pepper	2 bunches arugula, washed and dried
6 tablespoons extra-virgin olive oil	

Directions

1. Preheat the oven to 450 degrees.
2. In a small bowl, combine the mustard, vinegar, salt and pepper. Slowly whisk in the oil, then set the vinaigrette aside.
3. Wrap the beets in a sheet of aluminum foil and bake them for 45 minutes to 1 hour (until the beets are fork-tender or soft enough to allow you to put a knife through them).
4. Allow the beets to cool, then peel and slice them into wedges.
5. Place the beets in a bowl, add the onion, pour half of the vinaigrette over the vegetables, and toss.
6. Place a dry pan over medium heat, then add the nuts and toast them for 2 to 3 minutes, tossing regularly to prevent burning.
7. Place the arugula into a bowl and dress it with the remainder of the vinaigrette.
8. For each serving plate, create a bed of arugula and top it with some of the beet mixture and then a sprinkling of nuts.

Tip: If you'd like, add crumbled blue cheese to the salad, it tastes great.



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Check out MG Web site and the Facebook,

<https://extension.umd.edu/st-marys-county/home-gardening/master-gardener-program>



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