



# CHARLES COUNTY COMPOST

9375 Chesapeake St., Suite 119, La Plata, MD 20646

**Compost: A mixture of unattractive materials that when properly treated, becomes something useful and enriching.**

## CHARLES COUNTY MASTER GARDENER NEWSLETTER APRIL 2000

Hello Master Gardeners! Read on to find out what we have all been up to....

**\*\*** Neal Larson, Don Oberpriller, Donna Robertson and Jan Taylor worked at the National Colonial Farm's Museum Garden Clean-up on a dark, wet, cool March 18. They weeded and mulched the pathways in preparation for the spring educational programs that were starting the following week. They learned about tried and true suggestions to garden problems, among lots of other things, and they were able to bring some plants home for their gardens.

**\*\*** Debra Beland, Ellen Davis, Trudi Hinze, Diane Kramer and Don Oberpriller showed up at Wentworths on a very rainy March 21 to select the actual native plant material for the Port Tobacco Project. Next, we will be planting this material on April 15, 2000 at 9:00 a.m.

**\*\*** Neal Larson, Ed Spurlock, and Jim Winters manned (no pun intended) a Master Gardener information and demonstration table at an open house at

Hugh Gardiner Inc. on March 24. Neal took his model of a septic tank system along with the literature regarding same.

Jim demonstrated composting and passed out pamphlets on how to compost. Ed plugged the information sources available to citizens, and answered questions. He also explained the Master Gardener program and the Extension Service to people. Several of our judges and prominent citizens attended and they estimated that they spoke with or gave information to at least 100 people! Great exposure!

**\*\*** Mary Copeland attended 2 very informative "advanced trainings" at Behnke's Nursery in Beltsville. One was called "Salad Gardening Nine Months a Year" and was presented by our very own Jon Traunfeld from the Maryland Home and Garden Information Center (who is also the head of the Maryland State Master Gardener Program), and the

other was called "Rocks, Boulders and Rock Walls" by Andre Viette of Andre Viette Farm and Nursery.

\*\* Trudi Hinze did a great bird project with the children at First Baptist Church of St. Charles Pre-School and Kindergarten (60 children and 8 teachers and assistants). She took the ingredients to show them and let each one make a "Bird Seed Suet Cake." She showed them how to make a hanging suet container using the red plastic net bags that are used to hold onions or fruit at the grocery store. They talked about the importance of feeding the birds in this area, the many kinds of birds in our area, which birds like the suet and the various ingredients in the suet cakes, why feeding the birds just plain bread can be harmful, why it is necessary to supply the birds with water also, and how the birds are important to our environment. They also discussed working with clean hands and utensils when making the suet cakes as birds can get sick from germs too. The recipe is attached.

\*\* Erma Howard has been busy working at The Sotterley Plantation. She is putting together an information guide for The Sotterley Herb Garden, which is a re-creation of the colonial herb garden. There are many school children that visit the gardens and so she decided it would be very educational to have a brochure to explain the uses of each of the herbs planted in the garden. The information she is gathering will be listed according to use, such as: medicinal, culinary, aromatic, and ornamental. Did you know that the simple 16th-century herb garden was laid out as a garden of enchantment and included a Tea Corner, Cooking Corner, Scented (Potpourri) Corner and Simpling

(Physic) Corner? She also wants to share the "Recipe for a "Sweet Dream" using dried herbs that she discovered from her research. The recipe is attached.

\*\* Several MGs volunteered at the 12<sup>th</sup> Annual Potomac Watershed Cleanup on April 1, 2000. Thanks for helping to clean up the Bay.

\*\* Betty Kostkowski gave her "Worm Composting" demonstration at the Earth Day celebration at the Mt. Hope/Nanjemoy Elementary School on April 12, 2000 for the second grade classes. And, there are more opportunities listed below!

### VOLUNTEER OPPORTUNITIES

\*\*\*\* The Academy of Natural Sciences is looking for Master Gardeners who would be willing to train volunteers on how to maintain the Academy's Bayscape Gardens. Pam King has said that she would go on a site visit and train any of you who would be interested in then training their volunteers. If you are interested, please call Sheila Hughes at (410) 586-9700.

\*\*\*\* The Charles County Fair is coming up and the Charles County Garden Club would like to know if any of you would be interested in setting up an educational exhibit inside our flower building and/or having an information booth at the Fair this year in front of our flower building. If anyone is interested, please call me as soon as possible at (301) 870-7765 or email me at sandebeland@aol.com so that we can make a commitment now.

\*\*\*\* From Tom Harten –Teacher,  
CHESPAX Environmental Education  
Program

I work for the Calvert County Public School System as an environmental education teacher with the CHESPAX Program. We are in our second year of running a small native plant nursery at King's Landing Park in Huntingtown, MD. The purpose of this nursery is to provide fifth grade students with lessons on the values of native plants as well as teaching some of the techniques for plant propagation. A secondary goal of this project is to establish a native plant resource for Calvert County teachers and students as they plan various types of planting projects for their school sites. I understand that as a part of the Master Gardener program there is a requirement that participants donate a number of hours to the community in exchange for the training that this program provides. We would heartily welcome any persons in the Calvert County area interested in completing some of these hours to assist us in our project. My own knowledge is somewhat limited, primarily what I've been able to glean from different texts and by learning from numerous mistakes made over the past two years! Any expertise that a Master Gardener could bring to our project would be of great assistance. Please feel free to contact me at this e-mail address: [tjharten@concentric.net](mailto:tjharten@concentric.net) or by telephone at (410) 535-2960.

### **ADVANCED TRAINING**

There will be an Advanced Training for Maryland Master Gardeners on June 1, 2000, at the University of Maryland in College Park. The brochure is attached for your

information. We have been informed that if you want to have the best chance to get the classes you want, you NEED to register as soon as you receive your brochure.

### **FIELD TRIP**

Do not forget the May 3, 2000 field trip to Longwood Gardens. We will be given a special IPM tour by Casey Sclar that will count as Advanced Training, and what a beautiful place to receive some training. Call Shirley Leyland immediately to see if there is still space.

### **FOR YOUR INFORMATION**

- **The Northeast Regional Master Gardener Conference** will be held October 10 – 12, 2000 at the Oglebay Conference Center in Wheeling WV. The Steering Committee, made up of a Master Gardener and Extension Faculty from each program throughout WV, has planned a great educational and fun conference for you and your spouse/guest. Highlights of the conference include:
  - Oglebay Conference Center, a horticultural wonder in itself!
  - Mike McGrath, Keynote speaker
  - 80 workshops from 12 states.
  - Phipps Conservatory or local WV and PA gardening tours
  - Gateway Clipper dinner cruise on the Ohio River or Dinner at Station Square
  - Search for Excellence recognition and banquet
  - Trade Show featuring 20 businesses
  - Silent and Live Auction

- We have tours so you can see West Virginia and the Ohio River Valley area in its full autumn splendor. Plan to spend the week with us and enjoy Master Gardening at its best!!

Call Gayla if you would like more information and the registration form.

- Our Master Gardener Website address is: [http://polaris.umuc.edu/~jcrowno2/index\\_2/view\\_page.html](http://polaris.umuc.edu/~jcrowno2/index_2/view_page.html). Please visit it and e:mail any comments or ideas to Joan Crownover at: [jcrowno2@polaris.umuc.edu](mailto:jcrowno2@polaris.umuc.edu).

- Did you know that you can now email your Master Gardener hours to NormaRodriguez at: [rebecca@chesapeake.net](mailto:rebecca@chesapeake.net). She will then print out your email and it will be placed in your Master Gardener records. Please be very sure to give ALL of the same information that you must fill in on the timesheet. We are working on having a timesheet form available on our website so this will be easier for anyone interested in using this method. Aren't we getting modern? You may, of course, just fill in your time sheet by hand and mail it to Pam King at her office. The choice is yours. Please let's save Norma all of the telephone calls and letters reminding us to turn things in.

- The U.S. National Arboretum has a wonderful calendar of events, including Moonlight Walks, Houseplants for the Millennium Show, Camellia Show, Azalea Collection Tour, Garden Sale (April 29), etc. They also have educational lectures that can count as Advanced Training if cleared through Pam King in advance. You can get on their mailing list by calling them at (202) 245-2726.

- The Washington Cathedral has its Flower Mart on Friday and Saturday, May 5 and 6, 2000. There is a wonderful selection of plants and native plants for sale and garden related items. If interested and you want more information call them at (202) 537-6263. They also offer a Tour & Tea program for \$15. Reservations are required – call 202-537-8993. This would be a cool field trip.

### Gardening Tip

Submitted By: Don Oberpriller

When preparing containers for planting, instead of using gravel, rocks or other heavy bulk materials for drainage, try using aluminum soda cans or styrofoam packing peanuts (not the biodegradable kind.). They make the pots lighter and you are recycling at the same time. Coffee filters are a good material to line the bottom of your container to prevent the soil from washing out the drain hole.

### Vines

Submitted By: Jacquelyn Hawkins McGrail

Vines are plants with long stems, that cling, twine, or wrap around supports or structures, or scramble or trail along the ground. They are used in the garden as vertical accents, when grown on a structure or on another plant, or as groundcovers, when grown without support. Climbing plants lift themselves off the ground by several means. Clingers attach by aerial roots or adhesive pads, and can climb smooth surfaces such as walls, tree trunks, and rock faces. Twiners curl their stems, tendrils, or leaf stalks around structures of the right diameter, and can only climb supports they can wrap their twining parts around (this varies from plant to plant). Scandent, scrambling, and

trailing plants have long stems that can only weave themselves loosely, if at all, to their supports, and usually must be tied to vertical structures.

Vines are grown for their foliage, flowers, and/or fruit. They can create a one-of-a-kind art work in a garden, or they can serve a simple utilitarian purpose. They cover ugly fences or walls, create privacy, give enclosure and shade, block an undesirable view, or play a trick by lending their flowers to a non-blooming shrub. Vines can cover large areas while only taking up one square foot of garden space on the ground.

Types of vines include hardy perennials and annuals (or tender perennials treated as annuals) that self-attach by clinging or twining, most of which are flowering, but some of which are grown for their foliage alone.

Clematis is a genus of more than 200 species and 400 cultivars. Most are deciduous, leaf-twining, woody vines from Europe, Asia, Australia, North America, and Central America.

A few are non-climbing perennials or scandent, trailing shrubs. Many have decorative, filamentous, silvery seed heads. Grow in fertile, well drained, soils rich in organics. Roots and base should be shaded with an underplanting of a small shrub, perennial plant, or groundcover. I plant sedums around my clematis, and hostas work well, also. Use any plant that has shallow roots that will not compete with the deep roots of the clematis. Plant the rootball of clematis 2-3" below the soil surface, to make plant stronger and reduce loss from wilt, breakage. This is

very different from the way most plants must be planted, which is at the same level they were growing in the nursery, but clematis is a special case. Provide support according to vigor and size of the clematis (this varies, with delicate clematis requiring only a light trellis, and the most vigorous requiring sturdy structures made from at least 2"x 2" lumber). Provide string or wire to start plant onto its support, and provide support of proper diameter for twining. Most clematis cannot twine around a thick piece of lumber, or a mailbox post, and require some slender structures (thinner wood, or wire) to climb on. Another great way to grow clematis is to plant them at the base of a shrub or small tree and let them ramble through the branches. I grow a clematis on a rose of sharon, so that the clematis blooms in the spring, and the rose of sharon blooms in the late summer. Evergreens like yews, boxwood, junipers, etc. also make good subjects for growing clematis. Just be mindful when pruning the supporting plant--don't cut down the clematis by mistake. Clematis like a neutral to slightly sweet soil, so scratch in a little lime for them if your soil is acid. Clematis need to be fed, with a fertilizer made for flowering plants. Organic, long lasting fertilizers work well, including the granular Bulb Food sold in boxes or bags, which is good for ALL flowering plants, not just bulbs. Good drainage and soil rich in organic material like compost is also important for clematis, and those that don't come back in spring may have rotted in damp cold winter soil. Improve drainage with sand, or plant away from low, wet areas.

Clematis are divided into three groups, according to season of bloom

and bloom habit, which determine how they should be pruned:

**GROUP 1:** Includes early flowering species, *C. alpina*, *C. macropetala*, and their cultivars. These clematis bloom on the previous year's shoots in early spring, and occasionally bloom a second time on new growth in summer. Prune Group 1 clematis lightly after flowering, to clean up (remove dead and damaged stems) and shorten the plant to fit its trellis or other support, if necessary. This light pruning encourages more flowers the following year.

**GROUP 2:** Includes early to midseason,, large flowered cultivars. These clematis bloom in late spring and early summer on new growth, specifically, on side shoots arising from the previous year's growth, and again in mid to late summer at the tips of current year's new shoots. Prune group 2 clematis in early spring, cutting back all stems to a pair of strong buds, which will provide framework for flowering shoots. When you do this type of pruning, you remove the weaker, spindly growth from last season, but leave a substantial framework of stems on the plant. This is not a severe pruning.

**GROUP 3:** Includes late blooming, large flowered cultivars & late blooming species & small-flowered cultivars. These clematis flower on the current year's shoots in summer and fall. Prune all stems to a pair of strong buds 6-8" above the ground in early spring, before new growth begins. This IS severe pruning.

Now that I've confused you with groups and differential pruning, let me

say that if your clematis is blooming and growing well, you need not prune it at all! On the other hand, if you severely prune a clematis that should be only lightly pruned, it will probably be fine! At most, you will lose the flowers for that year, but you may even get a few by the end of the season, and next year things should be fine. I should also mention that most clematis come labeled with their names and their type, and even with pruning instructions, so save those tags!

Some of the less familiar, but very worthwhile clematis include:

**Clematis alpina:** Alpine clematis. Group 1, Zones 6-9, grows to 8', Eurasian in origin. This lovely species clematis has 1.5" bell-like blue-purple flowers with white stamens in early spring, followed by silky seed heads. There are named varieties in blue-purple, red, white, some with larger flowers, some with double flowers.

**Clematis macropetala:** Bigpetal clematis. Group 1, Zones 6-9, grows to 6-10', from China. This clematis blooms with solitary, open, bell-shaped, blue, lilac, pink, or white flowers. There are named cultivars, which are improved one way or another over the natural specise.

**Clematis terniflora:** (aka *C. maximowicziana*, *C. paniculata*) Sweet Autumn Clematis. Group 3, Zones 4-9, Japanese in origin. This is a strong & vigorous twiner, grows to 30', with numerous, fragrant, white, star-like flowers to 1.25", followed by silvery fluffy seed heads. It needs a very sturdy support to grow on.

**Clematis montana:** Anemone clematis. Group 1, Zones 6-9, grows to 15-45', from China and the Himalayas. This is a very vigorous vine, with single, flat-ish, white or pink, 2-3" flowers with yellow anthers. There are named cultivars, including 'Rubens', which is soft pink and very floriferous.

**Clematis tangutica:** Golden clematis. Group 3, Zones 6-9, to 20', from China. This vigorous vine bears abundant, solitary, bell-shaped, yellow, 1.5" flowers that continue over a long period, so that the fluffy, silvery seed pods develop while the vine is still blooming.

**Clematis texensis:** Scarlet clematis. Group 3, Zones 4-9, native American, grows to 15'. This clematis bears 1" tulip-shaped, red flowers. 'Duchess of Albany' is a named cultivar with 2" deep pink flowers with darker red inside bands.


**Clematis viticella:** Italian clematis. Group 3, Zones 5-9, European, grows to 12'. This is a delicate clematis with solitary, lilac, blue, or rose red, bell shaped, 1.5" flowers. 'Betty Corning' is a named cultivar with pale lilac, 2" flowers, and grows to 6', thus making it a good choice for a smaller trellis.

(This column is adapted from a Landscape Design Council, Federated Garden Clubs of Maryland, slide program.)

Don't forget .... Earth Day is Saturday, April 22 .... Do some gardening.

Hope to see you all soon.

Sincerely,



Pamela B. King  
Extension Agent  
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