

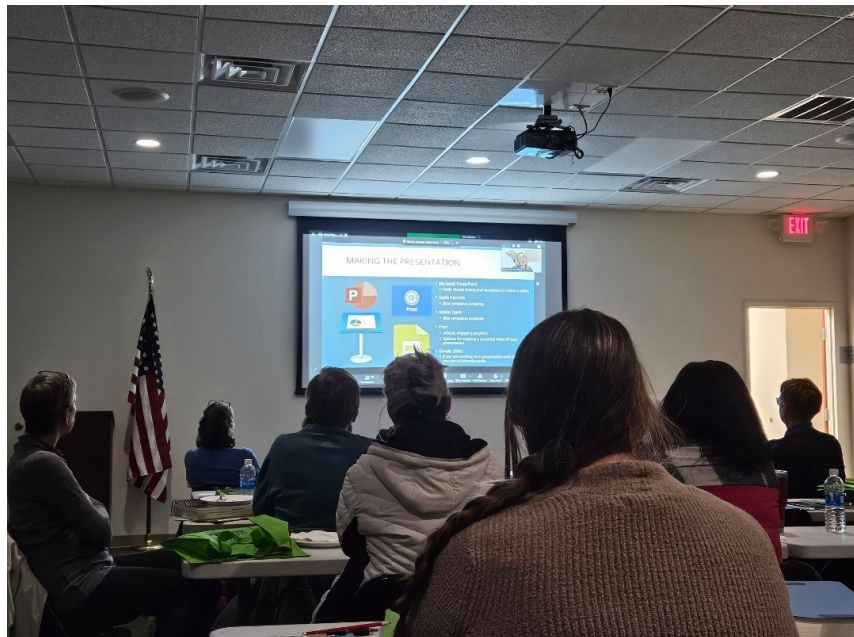
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## *"Message from Mariah"*

The first day of Spring was Tuesday, March 19. We have many spring events coming up that we'd love your involvement at. We also have plant clinics we could use help staffing. Please keep checking your emails to learn more about those volunteer opportunities. Thank you for all the good y'all do for our community!

The basic training class is underway and going well. Please welcome the new interns at our various projects. Look out for an email from me about an upcoming project night. That will be an evening to discuss our local programs with the new interns. Great chance to go and recruit some volunteers!



## ***Seaside Goldenrod***

***By: Caroline Braun***

I noticed a new plant at my Bushwood Wharf park sign garden last weekend that I know I didn't put there! According to Plant Finder (an excellent plant ID app), it's Seaside Goldenrod (*Solidago sempervirens*).

Plant Finder says it isn't invasive. Wikipedia says it's "found along coasts of the Atlantic Ocean and grows on sand dunes, salt marshes, and the banks of estuaries." I assumed it washed up from another shore, since this park sign gets flooded a lot, but Wiki says it spreads via wind-dispersed achenes.

I'm tempted to let it grow there for a season and see what happens. If anyone knows anything about this plant, I welcome any and all information!



## ***How to Guide for Master Gardener Volunteering at Farmers Market***

***By: Jon and Sara Beth Everheart***

For Master Gardeners passionate about sharing their knowledge and expertise while giving back to their communities, volunteering at farmers markets offers a rewarding opportunity to connect with fellow gardeners, support local agriculture, and promote sustainable living practices. From offering gardening advice to educating the public about the benefits of fresh, home grown and locally grown produce, we Master Gardeners can play a vital role in enhancing the market experience for vendors and customers alike. This article will explain how master gardeners can get involved and make a meaningful impact at farmers markets in their local communities.

### **1. Find Your Local Farmers Market**

The first step in volunteering at a farmers market is to identify markets in your local area. For example: Southern Maryland is home to a variety of vibrant farmers markets (Home Grown, BAE, The Barnes at New Market), each offering its own unique selection of vendors and products. Research farmers markets in your county or nearby communities to find one that aligns with your interests and availability. We chose the BAE Farmers market based on public attendance and proximity to home (convenience) considering we have a small child with us. This type of volunteering is great for those who wish to plan ahead and determine their schedule for the entire farmers market season.

### **2. Reach Out to Your Master Gardener Coordinator**



**Photograph #1: Family Volunteering  
(Jon Everheart & Adora Everheart)**

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Once you've identified a farmers market where you're interested in volunteering, reach out to your Master Gardener coordinator, who will then contact the market organizers to inquire about volunteer opportunities. Many farmers markets welcome master gardeners to participate in a variety of roles, from staffing information booths to leading educational workshops or demonstrations. Once volunteer opportunities have been established, your master gardener coordinator will pass this information on to you (master gardeners) for sign up.

### 3. Have a Great Table Setup and Offer Gardening Advice

As a Master Gardener, your expertise is a valuable resource for market-goers seeking advice on gardening practices, plant care, pest management, and much more. Set up an information booth or table at the market where you can field questions, offer tips, and provide educational materials on gardening topics relevant to the local community. We set up a banquet table laden with master gardener resources, used 2 of our personal camping chairs (for comfort), and sometimes added our personal 10' x 10' canopy tent as our outdoor booth area. The canopy tent really helped protect us from long term sun exposure. If you are able to park your vehicle close to where you will be volunteering, allow yourself at least 15 minutes for on site setup time prior to the farmers market opening.

Be sure to have your Master Gardener handbook to use for reference when answering questions. If you are not able to answer a question, document the question and send it to the extension office for a response, or refer them directly to the local extension office. In our experience over the last year, the best handouts for public distribution are as follows: the local master gardener office contact information (for additional questions); soil test kits; vegetable and herb seed starting/sowing/harvest time frames; free seed packages, diagnosing common plant distresses; and composting.



*Photograph #2: Example of Table Setup*



*Photograph #3: Example of Table Setup with Canopy*

### 4. Offer Education and Share Your Personal Experiences

As a Master Gardener, you can encourage those who desire to gain more knowledge about gardening by becoming a Master Gardener themselves. This was a great topic to bring up to those who possessed a genuine enthusiasm for gardening. Share your own personal experiences with taking the class and what you learned and/or already knew. Talk about your favorite subjects of master gardening. What actually changed with your garden after taking the class and putting your knowledge to the ultimate test? What practices did you employ that did not work (what lessons did you learn)? Describe how it feels to be a part of the master gardener community. Always be prepared to provide contact information for your local extension office for the latest master gardener class sign up, schedule, and any local plant/produce information.

*Continued on pg. 4*

## 5. Support Local Growers and Producers

In addition to sharing gardening wisdom, Master Gardeners can support local growers and producers by shopping at the farmers market and promoting the benefits of buying fresh, locally grown produce. Encourage market-goers to explore the wide variety of fruits, vegetables, herbs, flowers, and artisanal products available from local vendors, fostering a sense of community and connection to the land.

The benefits of shopping at a local farmers market include:

- You have access to the freshest produce (and seasonal produce).
- You cut your ecological footprint by bringing your own bags.
- You are stimulating your local economy by buying from a farmers market.
- You can save money (grocery stores are more often than not, more expensive).
- You are promoting a healthy lifestyle within your home.
- You know exactly where your produce is coming from.

## 6. Foster Community Engagement

Volunteering at farmers markets provides Master Gardeners with a unique opportunity to connect with their local community and build relationships with fellow gardeners, farmers, vendors, and consumers. Take the time to engage with market-goers, listen to their stories, and learn from their experiences, fostering a sense of camaraderie and shared purpose. Cooking with an abundance of vegetables was always a topic of discussion. People would ask (for example) “what can I do with too many tomatoes,” which would spark recipe talk and would help generate culinary ideas. It was also nice to hear about cultural experiences on how growing up gardening and/or farming with their families positively influenced their lives.

Another example: If we received questions about squash where we felt that a hands-on experience would be the most beneficial, we would refer the people in question to the vendors that were selling squash on that day. They would have the opportunity to view (in person) the available varieties (think of it like an impromptu field trip). We would encourage them to ask the vendors questions about how they personally grow and harvest their squash and if they have any tips or tricks to share. Encouraging conversation between market-goers and vendors enriches the farmers market experience for everyone.

## 7. Share Resources and Information

As a Master Gardener, you have access to a wealth of resources and information through your affiliation with cooperative extension programs and gardening organizations. Share these resources with market-goers by distributing brochures, handouts, and educational materials, empowering them to further explore their gardening interests and pursuits. We personally believe that if you have an appealing setup, you have a higher chance of someone stopping by to talk to you. Wear your master gardener shirt (if you have one), but always wear your master gardener name tag (badge). People that attend farmers markets weekly will remember your name and often stop by and speak to you on a routine basis. It became a ritual to see some of the same people on a monthly basis.

## In Conclusion

In conclusion, volunteering at farmers markets offers master gardeners a valuable opportunity to share their passion for gardening, support local agriculture, and foster community connections. By offering gardening advice, supporting local growers, and engaging with the public, Master Gardeners can make a meaningful impact at farmers markets while enriching their own gardening journey.

***Days are Getting Longer and Slightly Warmer***  
***By: John and Ann Richards***

Days are getting longer and slightly warmer. Hope some of you have time to help do some pruning at the Fairgrounds. The Lime Light Hydrangeas in front of the Field Rest Rooms and at Commercial 1 Bld need to be cut down to about 24 inches. They bloom best on new growth. The Spirea in front of Tolerance Hall and the Pavilion need about 10-12 inches removed. They also bloom best on new growth. Please look for a warmer day to go out there during Feb or early March. John and I will send a message if we can schedule a pruning day. It is always more fun to work in a group but if you want to go with a friend, please do. There are lots of events scheduled this Spring so we may just be working with spectators. Just tell them you are a Master Gardener and ask if they would like to help.

Thank you for any help! Ann & John Richards  
 Let me know when you are available.



**FREE CARD BOARD MULCH**

MG's who use card board under mulch will be happy to get into the stack of cardboard stored in the 4-H Bld at the Fairground. The Fair recently purchased some new tables so the card board is in large flat sheets. Let me, Ann Richards know if you are interested and I can arrange to unlock so you can pick up.

**PRUNING SHRUBS AT FAIRGROUNDS**

Help will be appreciated! Bring your clippers or. Favorite pruning

**PRUNING SHRUBS AT THE FAIRGROUNDS**

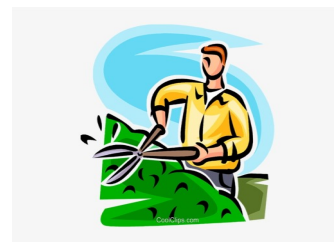
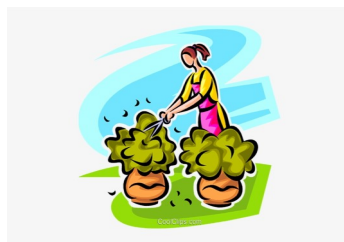
Help will be appreciated! Bring your favorite pruning shears or clippers and a friend to help. Twigs & debris may be left in a neat pile and it will be moved to compost or dumpster. Pruning in Feb or early March is a good time.

The Lime Light Hydrangeas in front of the field rest room and in front of the Commercial 1 Bld should be cut back to about 24 inches. They bloom best on new growth. The Spirea in front of Tolerance Hall and the Pavilion also need about 12-15 inches removed as they too, bloom best on new growth.

If anyone wants to tackle the Knock Out Roses on the corner of the parking lot in front of the Fair sign please do. I would be happy to stand by with a fork to load debris on our pick up truck. We are playing our age card on that chore and they are very much in need of a good pruning. Just pretend you live there and you want your yard to look nice.

Thank you for any help you can give.

Ann & John Richards



## ***St. Mary's County Master Gardeners and the Breeding Bird Atlas*** ***By: Tyler Bell***

I'd like to introduce myself. I'm Tyler Bell, the St. Mary's County coordinator of the MD-DC Breeding Bird Atlas. It's a five-year project that started in January 2020 and concludes at the end of 2024. We're rapidly approaching the beginning of nesting season. I'm hoping to enlist your help. If you've ever participated in the Great Backyard Bird Count, then you already have an eBird account. All data is submitted through a special atlas portal within eBird. Having an account is not critical to contributing data, though. I have an admin account and will happily add your data that way. Here's a link to add data directly: <https://ebird.org/atlasmddc/home>

How does the atlas work? The goal of the atlas is to document breeding activity in all birds in Maryland and DC. Different behaviors result in different breeding codes. There are three levels of confirmation: Possible, Probable and Confirmed. Obviously, Confirmed is the preferred level of detection but in some species, it's virtually impossible to achieve that. Let's start with something easy. If you have bird feeders, you'll already be aware of some of our more common species. So, a male Northern Cardinal comes to the feeder. That's automatically a Possible (H – In Suitable Habitat). Later that day, you notice a male and female at the feeder and the male is feeding the female a hulled sunflower seed. That's Probable (P – Pair In Suitable Habitat, or C – Courtship Display). A few weeks later, you see a nest in a bush outside your house and the female is sitting on it. Regardless of whether you see eggs or hatchlings, that's Confirmed (ON – On Nest)! That all happened in our yard with a nest visible from our kitchen window and the others at our feeders nearby.

So, is it too early to observe breeding behavior? No! We have three owl species in southern Maryland: Eastern Screech-owl, Barred Owl, and Great Horned Owl. They are all in nesting mode. If you hear them singing, that's instantly Possible breeding. If you hear them singing 7+ days later, that's Probable. Finding a nest is difficult but Great Horned Owls are fearless and often nest out in the open. They'll usurp Osprey, hawk, and eagle nests. Since most trees are bare now, it makes it easier to spot. Aside from owls, we have American Woodcocks, otherwise known as timberdoodles. On semi-warm nights, they display shortly after dark. Once the cardinals finally go quiet, the woodcocks begin their aerial display. They fly up in the air making a "peent!" sound then just before they drop to the ground, they make a series of twittering sounds. This is considered a courtship flight and is Probable breeding.

Next month, I'd like to discuss the avalanche of birds that will be arriving. Spring is on the horizon!

Tyler Bell  
jtylerbell@yahoo.com  
St. Mary's County Coordinator, MD-DC  
Breeding Bird Atlas



## ***“All the Dirt Series” Expands*** ***By: SMMG Marlene Smith***

What began in November 2021 as a virtual presentation titled “All the Dirt on Winter Sowing” by Charles County Master Gardeners Marlene Smith and Molly Moore to their Master Gardener colleagues has grown into a series of in-person presentations and hands-on workshops throughout the tri-county region. During 2022 and 2023, Marlene and Molly expanded their “All the Dirt” series to provide targeted presentations on native plants and another on vegetables and herbs. In the fall of 2023, they introduced a new offering titled “All the Dirt on Native Seed Collecting” In a workshop held on October 14, 2023, at the St. Mary’s Public Library - Leonardtown. They covered the ethics of native seed collection and types of native plant seed structures in 10 simple steps and shared their personal experiences collecting native seeds. (Photo of participants in the 10/14 Native Seed Collecting workshop)



What is winter sowing? It’s a proven method to germinate seeds in protective, vented containers outside during winter. It provides very hardy seedlings at minimal cost. In January 2024, Marlene and Molly cohosted three winter sowing workshops with Southern Maryland Audubon and Wild Ones Chesapeake Bay, allowing them to reach new audiences and build volunteer support and expertise in spreading the word on the importance of native plants. On January 6 and 27, public workshops were held at the Charles County Public Library - Waldorf West and at the St. Mary’s Public Library – Lexington Park, respectively. (Photo of participants in the 1/6 Winter Sowing workshop)



On December 2, 2023, they further expanded their reach by offering their “All the Dirt on Winter Sowing” train-the-trainer presentation/hands-on workshop for Master Gardeners in the tri-county region. Attendees were encouraged to participate in upcoming winter sowing workshops in January 2024 hosted by Marlene and Molly. Their goal: Getting hundreds, if not thousands, of new native plants in yards, gardens, patios, and containers this spring and summer. (Photo of participants in the



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Marlene and Molly also held a private workshop on November 16 for the students in the Natural Resources Management program at Dr. James A. Forrest Career and Technology Center in Leonardtown, teaching them how to harvest and store native seeds properly. (Photo of students in the 11/16 Native Seed Cleaning workshop)



The “All the Dirt” presentations are available by scanning the QR codes below with your phone’s camera. In addition, the two “All the Dirt on Winter Sowing” presentations (one on native plants and one on vegetable plants) have been uploaded to the University of Maryland Extension State Master Gardener website for access by all University of Maryland Master Gardeners to use in their own winter sowing presentations and workshops.

# “All the Dirt” Resources



All the Dirt on Winter Sowing  
November 2021



All the Dirt on Winter Sowing Native Plants  
January 2023



All the Dirt on Winter Sowing Veggies,  
Herbs, Annuals, & Natives  
February 2023



All the Dirt on Native Seed Collecting  
October 2023



***Easy Roasted Beets***  
***Recipe Submitted By: Mariah Dean***

Found this on <https://www.spendwithpennies.com/simple-roasted-beets/> . Roasted beets are delicious and nutritious.

“These simple roasted beets are the perfect way to enjoy all of the earthy sweetness of this root vegetable without losing the perfect texture from boiling them.”

**Ingredients:**

6 fresh beets or as many as desired  
 1 tablespoon olive oil about 1 tablespoon for every 4-6 beets  
 salt and pepper to taste

**Directions:**

1. Preheat oven to 375°F.
2. Wash beets under cold water and cut off the top and bottom. Cut beets in half and toss with olive oil, salt & pepper.
3. Lay out a large piece of tinfoil, top with a piece of parchment paper. Wrap and seal beets. (Or place beets in a greased baking dish and cover).
4. Roast the foil package for 1 hour or until beets are tender when poked with a fork.
5. Using rubber gloves or paper towels, rub the beets and the skins will just slide right off.
6. Serve warm with butter or chilled in salads.



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Check out MG Web site and the Facebook,

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



<https://www.facebook.com/St-Marys-County-Master-Gardeners-University-of-Maryland-Extension-111823550482511>