Happy New Year! This is the beginning of a yearly cycle for the Harford County Master Gardeners - a new president, a new Board, and hopefully, a new Spring will arrive without too much more snow. I’m Ellen Haas, your new president. I was born in Denver, Colorado, where Fall came disappointingly early (for me, at least), and the landscape seemed to be overly populated by cottonwood and pine trees (this was before landscapers showed Denver residents how to grow Rocky Mountain Aspen trees in their front yards).

As President my goal is to help Master Gardeners achieve their mission to educate the residents of Harford County about safe and effective horticultural practices, under the aegis of University of Maryland Extension. Our mission is very important, especially in this age of climate change and the many other environmental issues that challenge our Earth. We take action by the very act of serving as Master Gardeners.

February brought many changes. We elected a new Board including Anne Spelman VP, Carrole Kesselring Secretary, and Kathy Ullrich Treasurer. Cheers to Carrole, who returns as Secretary for another year. I know that we all send many thanks for the generous help given to us by outgoing officers Joan Parris, Eleanor Cone, and Ethel Colbert. Thanks especially to Joan for providing me with her time and her kind assistance. Special thanks to Elina Farnsworth, our new Newsletter Editor.
February also brought some memorable programs and experiences. Anne Spelman and I attended a very interesting Women in Agriculture presentation, “Speaking to the Public on Hot Topics in Agriculture.” I helped teach at the 4H Winter Workshop, where MG’s and Interns presented and assisted with seven different gardening classes. In mid-month I attended a very successful Intern Orientation, in which all of our Committee Chairs presented our Harford County programs and volunteer activities to our new Interns. I know that I didn’t cover all of the activities on the MG calendar, but time and space don’t permit me to list everything and thank everyone involved.

By the time you read this email, March will be here. Look at your attached email calendar and our website to find March Master Gardener programs and classes. Don’t forget to attend the March Monthly Meeting on March 5th at 10:00 a.m., where Master Gardeners Maxine Rising and Eleanor Cone will give an educational presentation on Saving Seeds. The all-important Planning Meeting will take place at the end of the month. Committee Chairs please prepare your budgets and plan to attend this important meeting on March 26th at 10:00 a.m. I’ll see you in March, if not before!

MEET YOUR NEW OFFICERS AND EDITOR!

![Photo of new officers](image)

**Carrole– Secretary, Anne– VP, Kathy– Treasurer, Ellen– Pres.**

**Ellen Haas – President**

Ellen Haas was born in Denver, Colorado, where she joyfully grew vegetables until college began. Stints at Arizona State University, the University of Colorado, and California State University at Long Beach resulted in a Masters Degree in Industrial Psychology, but unfortunately, no gardening was possible. Finally, at Virginia Tech, Ellen obtained a community vegetable garden plot and earned a Ph.D. in Engineering. She met her husband, Gary, while at Virginia Tech and were married in 1982. Soon after both found jobs at the Army Research Laboratory at Aberdeen Proving Ground and moved to Harford County in 1992. Ellen retired at the end of August 2013, and five days later, started Master Gardener Training where she found that she could express her passion for gardening! She is a 2013 MG graduate.
Anne Spelman – Vice President
Although I have lived in Abingdon, MD since 1992, it wasn’t until my retirement in the summer of 2013 that I started to find my way around Harford County. Taking the Master Gardener training in 2013 has let me go back to my first love of environmental science (my education was a B.S. Environmental Studies from Grand Valley State and a Masters of Urban Planning from the University of Michigan). I have spent the last 26 years as an Aerospace Quality Engineer, covering the eastern seaboard, France and Italy. So now I am looking forward to finally settling down, learning about plants, and playing in the dirt!

Carrole Kesselring - Secretary
Carrole Kesselring was born in Canada, has been a resident of the US for 47 years, the last 30 living in Jarrettsville with her husband, David. She has been busy raising two lovely daughters, Erin (35) and Caroline (33), plus a number of cats, dogs, geckos, gerbils, etc.,. In addition to she has haphazardly done some flower garden design in her own backyard while taking on managerial roles with a number of companies including Hallmark, Laura Ashley, and Stouffers Inn. Carrole attended Indiana University, earned a BS in Business Administration from Towson University and an MA from Notre Dame of Maryland University. She retired in 2011, became a MG in 2012 and continues to expand her flower garden including plans to add a cutting garden this spring.

Kathy Ullrich - Treasurer
I got into vegetable gardening about 40 years ago, although I remember growing flowers with my Mom at a very early age. My first solo experience was working a plot in a community vegetable garden. The biggest challenge there was a big, old groundhog who seemed to prefer the produce in my plot over all the others. Fast forward 40 years and my battle with critters continues, but this time it is the deer! After years of trying to deter them, I conceded...as a result, I have greatly reduced the size of my vegetable garden and I have learned what landscape plants the deer avoid. To fill my gardening passion I tend many indoor house plants that satisfy my need for greenery and flowers throughout the year.

Elina Farnsworth - Editor
A French native, I followed my husband to the USA about 10 years ago. We have been living in Bel Air for about 2 years with our 2 young daughters. Being part of the Master Gardeners enables me to meet people with the same interests and learn about gardening, a passion that I am hoping to pass along to my daughters. I am currently a French teacher at Harford Tech High School.

THIS IS WHY WE SHOULD ALL LOVE WINTER
From Healthy Harford Winter Newsletter Issue

Chillin' Out: 4 Good Reasons Get Outdoors this Winter
Did you know that Nordic parents regularly encourage even their young children to spend time outside in the frigid weather? According to a report by BBC News, parents in countries like Sweden and Finland assert that children who spend more time outdoors are sick far less often than those cooped up in the petri dish of germs that homes, schools and public places become in winter. And they may be on to something. Studies show that the benefits of spending time outside—whatever the weather—are many.

Here are just a few ways that spending time in the great outdoors poses great benefit:
**Boost your mood.** A recent study from the University of Michigan linked group nature walks with enhanced mental health and significantly lower levels of depression and stress.

**Boost your focus.** A study published in Psychological Science asserts that interacting with nature gives your brain a break from everyday overstimulation, having a restorative effect on your attention span.

**Boost your immunity.** Studies have shown that children who grow up spending a portion of each day outside have fewer allergies and get sick less often than their indoor-bound peers. The same is true for adults. In fact, Toyko’s Nippon Medical School found that women who spent six hours in the woods over two days had an increase in virus- and tumor-fighting white blood cells. And that increase lasted a full six days.

**Boost your physical fitness.** It’s a lot easier to get moving when out in nature, compared to when slouched on the couch! Being outside usually equates to moving, which translates to more calories burned.

**You’re never too old to enjoy snow’s magic!** Think back to your childhood and remember the fun times you had making snow angels, building snow forts and snowmen, sledding and even hiking through forests transformed into winter wonderlands. Join your kids or the kids in your neighborhood for a snowy adventure. You could also take a hike through the drifts and get more caloric bang for your buck! Exercising in the cold requires more energy to raise your body temperature, burning as much as 10 to 40 percent more calories than the same level of exertion would in more temperate weather.

The great outdoors beckons with the promise of a better mood and improved health. With so many benefits available right outside of your front door, the cold weather is no excuse for staying snuggled inside. As our Nordic friends say, “There is no such thing as bad weather, just bad clothing.” So bundle up, get outside and get healthy!

SAFETY TIP: Don’t forget the sun’s rays can still cause sunburn in the winter, especially when they reflect off of the snow. Make sure to cover exposed skin with sunscreen and consider using sunglasses.
By Gordon Johnson  
Extension Vegetable & Fruit Specialist University of Delaware

March is the major month for pruning tree fruits, grapes, and cane fruits. Pruning earlier than March often stimulates plants too early and can result in later cold damage; pruning after plants have leafed out can result in loss of plant vigor.

On young fruits, pruning is used to develop the plant architecture and to allow for good root systems to develop. On bearing fruits, pruning is used to maintain productivity. In commercial orchards, pruning is done to create maximum fruit bearing surface, to allow sunlight to enter, to allow air to circulate throughout the tree canopy, to promote good spray penetration, to renew fruiting wood, and to maintain growth or vigor in all parts of the tree. Pruning is also a way of regulating the fruit load on the tree in the current season and from season to season.

On bearing tree fruits, the first step is to remove any suckers from the base of the plant. The second step would be to remove damaged or diseased wood. Remove this back to a main branch or scaffold limb and make the pruning cut at the branch collar (do not flush cut). Next, remove any watersprouts. These are rapidly growing upright shoots that form along the trunk or scaffold branches. Depending on the training system, additional pruning or training will be needed to maintain proper plant shape or height. For example, in fruits trained to an open center, remove any inward growing material. For central leader systems, remove excess branches to the main trunk. Finally, thin out flowering wood or spurs as necessary to reduce fruit load and make pruning cuts to encourage future fruiting wood development (this step varies considerably depending on the type of fruit).

In bearing grapes (generally starting the third year after planting), pruning is used to set the fruiting area next year. Cane pruning is the usual system for Vinifera types but is also appropriate for some hybrids and American types. In this system a permanent trunk is established (often two trunks are established) to the wire, and every year two canes arising from the trunk, each 8-10 buds long, are selected and tied to the wire (one each direction), and all other canes are cut out. Canes should be about the thickness of your little finger and should come out from the trunk as close to the wire as possible. These canes should have buds fairly close together (avoid large thick canes with buds spaced far apart).

Another system, often used with hybrid grapes, is the cordon or spur pruning system. With this system, in the second season, one cane is trained to each side of the trunk, and they become permanent arms that remain as the base on which short spurs are established to produce new fruiting canes each year. These spurs are two or three buds long.

In blueberries, a cane fruit, the philosophy behind pruning is to constantly renew the older, decreasingly productive canes by cutting them out and forcing new canes. Plants are continually replacing old canes with new canes while most canes are in a productive, intermediate stage. For mature bearing blueberries, plants should produce at least three to five new canes per year. Start by pruning out all dead wood. Keep the three best one-year-old canes and remove the rest. Locate the oldest canes and prune out one of every six canes, starting with the oldest. Prune out all low branches and then detail prune by removing twiggy wood on older canes to increase fruit size.

Enjoy pruning!
Weeds - all gardeners have them and they can be the bane of our existence. Finding a way to make this task more enjoyable can seem like an impossible feat. However, there are actually many ideas on how to turn this chore into a more bearable one. The methods are focused around companionship, mental modifications that can be used to motivate the gardener, and ways to distract from the task at hand while actively getting it finished.

First, seeing as humans are incredibly social beings, weeding can be made more enjoyable with the companionship of friends, family, or children. If you have a gardening friend who also needs help with weeding in their garden, set up a couple of days that you both can work together. For example, your friend could weed with you in your garden on Monday and you both could work in your friend’s garden on Friday. Also, if you have a family member (perhaps a young teenager) who could use a bit of extra cash, consider paying him or her to weed with you. They will enjoy having a bit of pocket money and you will enjoy having less work to do. Finally, children can be very helpful in the garden if you can make it a game for them. The boys can appreciate the idea of playing in the dirt and beating those nasty weeds while the girls like to make sure that we are taking care of the pretty or useful plants and protecting them from the bully weeds that threaten their space and nutrients. Having good people by your side can make weeding go much quicker and take some of the burden off of you.

Next, simply changing the way that you feel about weeding through modifying the way that you look at the task can do wonders. One of the most popular mind tricks is to visualize the finished product. When you look at the garden section and imagine how it will look, it will bring about more positive feelings toward the job rather than seeing how it currently is and having that negative impression in your mind. Another method is to work in small sections at a time. Every time that you finish weeding a small section and focus on that finished spot, you can feel a sense of accomplishment. It is very important to limit your sight with this method. The purpose is to not feel overwhelmed, hence the small sections. If you look around at the whole garden, then you may become frustrated and defeated. An additional method is rewarding yourself when you finish a section. This should be applied to larger sections. Otherwise, you’d be rewarding yourself too often and the weeding would get done too slowly; that would become very counterproductive. When you finish weeding a larger section, have a refreshing drink, take a 15 minute break, or have a snack. Then, get back out there feeling rejuvenated and ready to tackle the next section for another break. Remember, most of how we handle a task involves how we prepare ourselves mentally for it so if you can put yourself in the right mindset for it, it can become much easier.

Finally, distraction can be a useful tool when weeding. When you need to weed, take some form of music player with you. It helps to put you in a more positive mood and it can elevate your speed and energy. Also, you can focus on the lyrics and rhythm instead of thinking negative thoughts about weeding. Another way to distract yourself is to keep in mind that you are actually exercising. According to WebMD’s Fun and Fit Family Guide, weeding for one hour can burn 200 – 400 calories. When you’re weeding, focus on how you are performing that movement and what muscle groups are activated. It can
be very satisfying to know that you are working out your muscles, burning calories, and making your garden look better all at the same time.

Lastly, don’t be afraid to let your mind wander a bit. Think of what you’re going to do this weekend or what you’re going to have for dinner. Think of a place that you’d like to visit or that great time that you had with friends the other day. As always, keep the thoughts positive because the key is to associate weeding with more good feelings rather than bad.

CALLING ALL NATIVE PLANT ENTHUSIASTS

If you are interested in native plants, please join Tracy Ripani, a MG Intern, on her journey to revive the North East chapter of the Maryland Native Plant Society (MNPS). The NE chapter of the MNPS covers Harford and Cecil counties. According to the MNPS’s website, its mission is to promote awareness, appreciation, and conservation of Maryland's native plants and their habitats. The society pursues its mission through education, research, advocacy, and service activities. Membership is open to all who are interested in Maryland's native plants and their habitats. You can learn more about the MNPS at www.mdflora.org

The first meeting will take place at the Rising Sun Library (111 Colonial Way) on Saturday, March 14th at 10:30 am. Future meeting times and locations will vary in an effort to accommodate residents of both counties and members’ various schedules.

At the meeting attendees will meet and greet, share resources, experiences and ideas. We will make plans for excursions, projects, and guest-speakers. For more information, contact MG Tracy Ripani at tripani@ccps.org

EDUCATION OPPORTUNITIES

Harford County Daytime Study Group 2015 Schedule (tentative)

Everyone is welcome to attend the Daytime Study group to help achieve your education hours for 2015. We meet the third Wednesday of each month at 10am at the Extension Office.

February 18th - Bill Kuhl, McLean Nursery, Hollies, winter berries
March 18th - Seed starting and seed saving discussion. We will start peppers and tomatoes to take home.
April 15- Discussion of area Gardening groups with representatives from each group.
May 20 - trip to Patapsco pottery, or discussion with tropical plants as annuals. TBD
June 17 - Best culinary herbs: how to grow and use them, tasting.

July 15 - Dahlias or succulents. TBD

August 19 - Bonsai demonstration.

September 16 - Order and discuss fall planted bulbs

October 21 - Propogation class

November - No Meeting Scheduled

December 2 - Create centerpieces & decorate for Holiday Party

Field trips will be announced - watch for email updates.

CECIL COUNTY EVENTS

MG Rain Barrel workshop
February 21st at the Cecil County Administrative Building
Senior Center (back entrance) starting at 9:00 a.m. For Fee: $75 Create your own functioning rain barrel
To register you will need to access the Aquabarrel website. Go to the Cecil MG website at https://extension.umd.edu/cecil-county/gardening/master-gardener-rain-barrel-workshop you will find the information and a direct link to the Cecil County Event page at Aquabarrel.

Cecil Co Bird Club will have a plant speaker at their March Meeting 3/4/15
Speaker: Doug Tallamy, author of The Living Landscape (with Rick Darke) and Bringing Nature Home will speak about how we can all help birds and other wildlife by using native plants in our yards. Find out which plants support the most species, and why caterpillars are especially important to nesting birds. If you missed Doug’s last talk for Cecil Bird Club, you will definitely want to see this fascinating and informative presentation.

Location: Elkton High School, 110 James Street, Elkton. Directions: From I-95 take the Elkton Exit and go south on MD 279 (Elkton Road) for about 2.5 miles. Turn right on James Street. The high school is at the end of James Street. We meet in Room B-120, located on the right as soon as you enter the main door.

Time: 7:00 to 9:00 p.m.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Calendar of Events</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>March 5, Thursday; 10 am</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>March 26, Thursday; 10 am</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>March 18 Daytime Study Group 10 am; HCEO</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>March 18 Evening Study Group 7 pm; HCEO</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Date Change due to Easter Week:</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>April 9 (changed from April 2)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
The University of Maryland, College of Agriculture and Natural Resources programs are open to all and will not discriminate against anyone because of race, age, sex, color, sexual orientation, physical or mental disability, religion, ancestry or national origin, marital status, genetic information, political affiliation, or gender identity and expression.