MG’s Travel and Learn! GROW 2014
By: Gerri Frazier

On March 8th a group of four UME-St. Mary’s Master Gardeners attended the GROW: A Celebration of Trees Symposium, sponsored by the Rockbridge Master Gardeners and Boxerwood Nature Center. The conference opened with a wonderful talk by Nancy Ross Hugo, author of the recently published book Seeing Trees: Discover the Extraordinary Lives of Everyday Trees. Her exceptional photography brought to life the most minute elements of well-know trees. The second speaker was the former football coach of the University of Georgia Bulldogs, Vince Dooley. His energy and wit brought insight and envy as he shared slides of his outstanding garden and his horticultural journey. The surprise was where he had obtained many of his beautiful specimens...castoffs from the horticultural research of none other than our afternoon speaker, Dr. Michael Dirr! Throughout Dooley’s talk the two friends bantered about their world travels as they searched for new tree specimens.

After a lovely lunch, Michael Dirr, the premier authority on trees, shared insight into some of his favorites in his talk titled “In Praise of Noble Trees”. As he shared photos after photo of the most amazing trees, he talked about the parentage, characteristics, and various tolerances of each variety he enlightened us as to what made each of these trees deserve the title of “Noble”, and why he encourages the continued planting of each tree on his list.

This was a well planned day at Virginia Military Institute and I look forward to the next GROW symposium in 2016!

Marcoscent—withering but persistent

Cauliflorous—bearing flowers on the stem or trunk.

For example: a Beech

For example: a Redbud

Thanks to Suzanne Patterson for passing along these vocabulary words that she learned at the GROW symposium!
A Few Timely Tips

TURF

♦ If soil test results recommend more than 50 lbs. of limestone per 1,000 sq. feet to raise the pH, the amount of lime should be applied in two applications about 6 months apart. For example, if 85 lbs. is needed, apply 50 lbs. immediately and the remaining 35 lbs. at a later date.

♦ There is still time to apply a crabgrass pre-emergent if your lawn has had a crabgrass problem in the past. Read the product label for application rates, recommendations for a possible repeat application, which provides season-long crabgrass control and for information on watering the product in. (TT 43 Herbicides for Crabgrass and Goosegrass Control in Turf)

♦ Small patches of crabgrass can be controlled during the growing season by hand pulling or applying a labeled post-emergent herbicide as a spot treatment on young crabgrass. Maintaining proper mowing height reduces the severity of a crabgrass infestation. - See more at: http://extension.umd.edu/learn/april-lawn-tips#sthash.yCvAYh6P.dpuf

VEGGIE

♦ Turn under oats, vetch, rye and other fall-planted cover crops in the vegetable garden.

♦ Continue to start sowing seeds of spinach, lettuce, kale, mustard, and other greens indoors under fluorescent tubes. See starting seeds indoors. Tomato, eggplant, and pepper seeds can still be started indoors under lights.

♦ Seedlings may keel over and die due to pathogenic water molds if the soil remains too wet. - See more at: http://extension.umd.edu/hgic/april-vegetable-tips#sthash.GHbuhXDd.dpuf

SOIL/COMPOST

♦ If your compost pile dries out, add water so that the materials have the moisture content of a wrung-out sponge. If your pile is overly wet and smelly, mix in some dry materials high in carbon, like shredded newspaper, straw or shredded leaves.

♦ Be sure to bury kitchen scraps deep inside your outdoor compost pile to prevent offensive odors that might also attract rodents.

♦ Keep sticks, roots and woody stems out of your compost pile. They take too long to breakdown and make it difficult to turn the ingredients. The composting process will slow down considerably when temperatures dip below 50 degrees F. Turning the pile every 2 weeks will hasten the breakdown process.

Ask a Master Gardener plant clinics will begin in April!
Here are the start dates:
April 15th—Lexington Park
April 19th—Charlotte Hall
April 22nd—Leonardtown

Lexington Park Library
1st and 3rd Tuesdays from 11am-1pm
Leonardtown Library
2nd and 4th Tuesdays from 11 am-1 pm
Charlotte Hall Library
1st and 3rd Saturdays from 10 am-12pm

Pictured Right: This large Red Maple is a beautiful cool shade provider all summer but it is impossible to grow grass under its canopy. Several years ago I read about accepting moss as a ground cover under dense shade trees and once I got it started it has spread and is greener than the winter grasses. Moss is fairly tough too, holding up through the foot traffic of several picnics during the summer and tolerating drought very well. For more information about moss: http://extension.umd.edu/learn/moss-your-landscape-friend-or-foe

--From John and Ann Richards
After this very cold and snowy winter, I expected to see some winter damage to various plants. However, I was surprised last weekend, while tending my church’s landscape gardens, by another type of damage indirectly caused by the harsh winter.

As I was pruning the first of five ‘Knock Out’ roses, I noticed that the bush was very loose in the ground. Vole damage was my first thought. I gave the bush a slight tug, and it lifted right out of the ground. I repeated this action on the other roses with the same results. All of the roses had their roots severely damaged or completely chewed off by the voles. This landscape also contained about a dozen small Nandina shrubs. On these plants the roots had been totally eaten off leaving the shrub just lying on top of the ground. The tulips were gone as well.

The only shrubs the voles left seemingly unharmed were some small evergreen bushes in the holly family. The daffodils were left alone as well, as those are toxic to voles. I had never seen vole damage to this extent. I have experienced one rose or shrub out of a grouping of shrubs damaged, but not the entire landscape damaged!

Voles are small brown or gray rodents. They are similar in size to mice, but with smaller ears and shorter tails. Unlike moles which eat grubs and worms, voles are vegetarians. They eat succulent green tissue during the growing season. In the fall they store seed, tubers, bulbs, etc. for the winter. In the winter, voles dine on woody tissue, and can girdle (chew a ring of the outer layer off) the stems and roots of ornamental plants.

Voles can be controlled with the uses of mouse traps, both the snap and the sticky types. Since mulch is an excellent hiding place for voles, limit the mulch layer to 2-4 inches deep. One source even recommended getting a cat and planting your tulips in wire cages!

At this time, the church is not certain what shrubs to replant in their landscape. In the meantime, herbaceous perennials and some annuals will be used to fill in the bare spots. Suggestions for vole resistant plants are welcomed!

For more information about voles:
Reducing Vole Damage to Plants in Landscapes, Orchards and Nurseries
Voles in Horticultural Plantings
Since moving into a new house this past fall, my wife and I have been debating on what to do with the landscape. Our house was built near the middle of a field with very few natural barriers surrounding our property. We have decided we will plant a small stand of native trees to make the landscape look more natural, aesthetically pleasing and hopefully increase the wildlife value.

During the Master Gardener Intern training, I was offered a video called “From Turf to Trees: Converting Lawn to Forest.” I jumped at the opportunity to see what insight it offered to our landscape plan. This short seven minute video discusses the proper techniques and best practices for converting a lawn area of any size to a natural forest area and I have summarized the content below:

**Planning**

- Make a list of what you want to accomplish (i.e. shade, aesthetics, or timber products).
- Once you’ve got a plan, determine how many trees, you will need. Trees should be spaced 8-12 ft. apart to ensure fast upward growth.
- When buying, consider bare root seedlings, like those available from the John S. Ayton State Tree Nursery, as they are cheaper and easier to plant.

**Planting**

- Use herbicides to kill turf and weeds in 3-4 ft. wide circles around area to be planted two -three weeks prior to planting. This is important so established plants will not outcompete the new trees.
- Plant in early spring, keeping seedlings cool, shaded and moist prior to planting.
- Using a “dibble bar”, Figure 1, should allow an inexperienced planter to plant 300 to 500 seedlings a day.

**Care and Maintenance**

- Installing tree tubes over the seedling will deter wildlife from making a snack of your newly planted seedlings.
- Hoe and mow weeds as necessary to reduce competition.

After watching the video, I realized I was a little late to order seedlings and make the conversion this year, but I’m going to plan out my area this fall, and hopefully will update the progress of our small stand of trees in a future newsletter. The video is available at the following link: [http://www.dnr.state.md.us/forests/nursery/](http://www.dnr.state.md.us/forests/nursery/) or on DVD at the UME-St. Mary’s Office.

**Figure 1: Dibble Bar Planting Method**
**Fair Flower Bed News**  
*By Ann Richards*

I have been late in getting the flower beds cleared off this early Spring...my excuse...the weather. The real reason, I am a year older....many of you have asked when we will get started.

John and I spent several hours out there last weekend on a warm day. We pruned the Knockout roses on the Sign Corner and the barberry/evergreen hedges near the Office. We also planted a flat of yellow pansy plants in the flag pole beds. We hope they will make the grounds look cared for until one of our local greenhouse growers donates some plants in May.

We need help with pruning the Knockouts along Fair Grounds Rd. and shaping up the shrubs. If the trimmings from the roses are left in a pile they can easily be lifted with a pitch fork. A suggestion by noted horticulturist, Dr. Goin, a few years ago has been very helpful. He said to take hedge shears and chop or prune last year’s flowers into four inch pieces and leave them on the beds for organic matter....it works. We also get lots of volunteers out of the seeds and very often have to weed them out as spring progresses....better flower seedlings than weeds, right?

The daffodils are starting to bloom along the front of the new Auditorium which will be officially named Tolerance Hall this year. (it has a display inside of all of the past Fair Queens of Tolerance) A more apt name might be Grand Central because it is that busy....the whole fair ground has been buzzing even in winter! The fairground has evolved as a community center where all sorts of indoor/outdoor events are enjoyed. The grounds continue to host small banquets and parties, estate sales, 4-H and Scout meetings, Rabies Clinics, Tech Center Robotics training, Friends of Library Book Sale, Penn Line Tree Trimmers Training, Shop with a Cop, Leprechaun Lily Children’s Consignment Clothing Sale, Tractor Pulls, the Crab Fest, the Wild Fowl Fest, the Circus, 4-H/FFA Livestock Shows the Oyster Fest and of course the Fair. Many new events will pop up on our new digital sign this year. The St Mary's County Fair Association is an all volunteer, non-profit organization. All of the revenue from events is used to improve the facility. We do the planting and painting and beautification and it is appreciated!!! We receive many many compliments about the beauty of the flowers and the cheerful colors on the fairgrounds ...and of course we always say, "We have lots of help from the wonderful volunteers in St. Mary's County!"

**Recipe Box**

**Cream Cheese Chili made in Crock Pot—from the kitchen of Cherie Heeley**

- 2 chicken breasts, still frozen
- 1 can Rotel tomatoes undrained, 1 can corn, not drained (14oz)
- 1 can black beans, drained and rinsed
- 1 pkg. dry Ranch dressing mix, 1 T cumin, 1 t chili powder, 1t onion powder
- 1 (8oz) cream cheese

Put chicken in bottom of crock. All else next; cream cheese on top. Cook on low 6-8 hrs. Stir after 2-3 hrs. Shred chicken when done. Serve over rice or barley, or use as a dip. Delicious!
Our Vision: The Maryland Master Gardener vision is a healthier world through environmental stewardship.

Our Mission: to support the University of Maryland Extension mission by educating residents about safe, effective and sustainable horticultural practices that build healthy gardens, landscapes, and communities.

CLASSIFIEDS

Native Trees Available...
As freezing and snowy as this winter was I still dug up a few native trees from my woods (in between the snows). They are available to MGs and serious takers. If I run out there is still plenty of youngsters out in my woods, easy to get to. Here’s what I have: American Beech, Eastern Hornbeam, White Pine. Out in my woods are Redbud, Oak, Sycamore, Cedar, etc., etc. I also have available burning bush and well rooted side runners of Forsythia. Contact --Liz DeLorme 301.475.2365 morganza82@copper.net

UPCOMING ADVANCED TRAINING AND MASTER GARDENER EVENTS

For more info on the upcoming classes please check out full descriptions on the MG website
- Native Plant Essentials
- Organic Vegetable Gardening (FULL)
- Native Landscaping for Maryland Shade Gardens
- Entomology - Ecological IPM
- Vegetables: Intensive Techniques and Small Spaces
- Vegetables: Plant and Pest Diagnostics
- Plant Diseases
- Youth Vegetable Gardening
- Native Grasses

Save the date:
MG ANNUAL TRAINING DAY
Thursday, May 29, 2014
UMCP 8am-4:30pm