University of Maryland Extension programs are open to all citizens without regard to race, color, gender, disability, religion, age, sexual orientation, marital or parental status, or national origin.
Master Gardener Plant Sale
May 7, 2011

We’ll be looking for nicely potted healthy plants, labeled with their names.

New this year; staging will be in Barbie Walter’s yard, with overflow in Janet Cooney’s yard. Sue Brewer has been working on her property and we want to give her yard a rest so she can reseed and renovate.

Good news: the time you spend digging and potting counts as volunteer hours; in fact, everything you do for the plant sale counts as volunteer hours.

A second plant sale site is in the planning stage. Gale Kladitis and Terry Thir will be our plant sale chairpersons this year.

Join us for the Plant Sale meeting January 22, 2011 at The Towne Mouse in La Plata.

This is our major fundraiser for the year so everyone’s participation is important!
A Lovely Retirement Ceremony for Pam King

By Carol Teets

On November 9, 2010, 93 people gathered at La Plata Methodist Church to celebrate the retirement of Pam King, the Charles County Extension Agent. Pam served as an Extension Agent for 31 years and it was a pleasure for the Master Gardeners to be involved in this celebration. Jessica Milstead was the Mistress of Ceremonies, and volunteers Marty Eldridge, Maggie Tieger, Carol Teets, and Danielle Weber were in attendance.

The retirement program was organized and executed by the Extension Office staff and was well attended by representatives from our community. A representative from Senator Mac Middleton’s office; Associate Dean Dr. Nick Place of the University of Maryland; and Charles County Commissioners Edith Patterson, Gary Hodge, Reuben Collins, and Sam Graves were among those who attended and shared in the remarks and presentations that celebrated the success of Pam’s career. Pam was also surrounded by co-workers, family, and volunteers who with mixed emotions, wished her well.

After dinner and dessert, in Pam King fashion, she took the opportunity to thank everyone and to do a little teaching...YES one last time!!! Pam reminded us of our need to “Go Green” and to challenge ourselves, as she has challenged herself in retirement, to ask ourselves each day “What will I do today to make a difference?”

What a great reminder of the difference Pam King has made in Charles County and the Master Gardener Program. Thank you again Pam!

From the State MG office:

**MG ANNUAL TRAINING DAY 2011**

*Tuesday, May 17, 2011*

Stamp Student Union

University of Maryland College Park

All classes (except for labs) will be in the same building - no need to walk between buildings!

We’ll be in a larger space this year - no crowding during the keynote address!

Please note this carefully on your 2011 calendar. This year’s training is more than a week earlier than usual and on a different day of the week than usual.

Registration will begin in April

Happy New Year to the Charles County MGs

There is always a sense of anticipation at the beginning of a new year; we are past the winter solstice, the shortest day of the year and some of us can already sense spring in the air! Although there are still months of winter left, I know that many of you are planning your early spring plantings already with great delight!

You will find in this issue of The Compost an introduction to Brian Clark, the Extension Educator from Prince George’s County who has graciously offered to provide educational programs to the Charles County Master Gardeners as needed in the absence of an Ag Educator assigned to Charles County. UME is actively working on a new staffing plan for Extension programming throughout the state, hopefully to be shared later this spring after working its’ way up through the administrative channels for final approval. We will certainly keep you posted as we learn more about what is in store for our county. For now, any administrative concerns or needs should be directed to me as the County Extension Director.

I also wanted to share with you that we have had the opportunity to meet Dr. Wallace Loh, the new president of the University of Maryland. In his meeting with the College of Agriculture and Natural Resources faculty and staff, Dr. Loh expressed strong support for UM Extension and indicated that he would like to visit some of the counties to learn about our programs. It would certainly be great to get him here in Charles County to learn about many of the exciting cutting edge programs you are involved with.

As a new class gets ready to start their journey to become master gardeners, I want to thank each of you for the part you have played in making CCMG a vibrant and exciting partner with UME. Please let me know what I can do to further support your efforts.

Warm regards,

Karol Dyson

County Extension Director

---

Editor’s note:

Brian Clark’s introduction is found on page 21.
On October 9, on a brilliant autumn day, a group of MGs took a walk to look for autumn plants on the White Plains to Middletown Road segment of the Indian Head Rail trail. At this time of year there are fewer flowers than in high season, but to compensate, the ferns and other non-flowering plants stand out better than when there are flowers everywhere. Not that there weren’t flowers -- we saw Downy Lobelia (Lobelia puberula), as well as Ragworts (Senecio sp.), Joe-Pye Weed (Eupatorium sp.), and Boneset (another Eupatorium sp.).

The tree foliage was also beginning to color up, especially the reds, but also some purples and yellows. Our autumn colors may not be as brilliant as those of New England, but they have a charm of their own.

A special treat was the ferns and other non-flowering plants. Bracken (Pteridium) covers several banks at the White Plains end of the trail. Elsewhere we saw a lot of New York Fern (Thelypteris noveboracensis) and Hay-Scented Fern (Dennstaedtia punctiloba). At the bottom of a bank there was a beautiful stand of one of the large wetland ferns that we couldn’t get close enough to identify. It may have been Ostrich Fern (Matteucia struthiopteris). Grape Fern (Botrychium dissectum) is a little jewel that I have recently learned to identify. I thought it was rare until I found it in six different places in my own woods! The Running Cedar (a clubmoss, with name-changing going on at a confusing pace) and mosses and lichens were other treats.

After this expedition we had a special treat – which may have had something to do with the great participation in the walk itself. Gale Kladitis and Cindi Barnhart threw a weenie roast for us at Gale’s house. Husbands roasted the weenies and we had an abundance of good food, put-

(Continued on page 5)
Southern Maryland Beekeepers Training 2011

By Barbie Walter
The Association of Southern Maryland Beekeepers announced their annual beekeeping short course.

Trade a few winter Saturdays for years of adventure while you give Mother Nature a helping hand. One of the most beneficial insects is also one of the most fascinating, but the stresses of modern agriculture are making life difficult for the honey bee. By starting a hive or two of your own, you can improve the environment while having the time of your life.

Topics to be covered are bee behavior, beekeeping equipment, installing a package of bees or a nucleus hive, year-round management, nectar sources, honey production, and diseases.

2011 Classes will be held on Saturdays from 9:00 - 12:00 at: Charlotte Hall Library 37600 New Market Road Charlotte Hall, MD 20622

February 5
February 12
February 19
February 26
March 12 (March 19 Snow day if needed)

To be followed by one or two field days. Field days are outside, and yes, we go into the hives looking for eggs, queen, diseases, stores of food, anything showing if we have a strong hive or not. There is no way of guessing at an approximate date yet. It all depends on when the bees arrive, when the packages are installed, what the weather is like and how strong the nectar flow is. The date will be determined a week or so before the class in the Spring.

The charge for the course is $40 for one person or $50 for two people in the same family who can share course materials.

To check on class availability or for other questions, call Karen Cooksey, President of Southern Maryland Beekeepers, 301-705-7611.

If St. Mary’s County libraries are closed for snow, the class cannot be held.

Editor’s note:
If the February 2011 class is too full to accommodate MGs, Karen has made an offer to arrange training for us as a day course of Advanced Training.

What are Fern Allies - and Mosses - and Lichens -- Anyway?
Fern allies, mosses, and lichens as well as the ferns themselves are often called “lower” plants, as distinguished from the “higher” plants we know and love, in which pollen fertilizes an ovule. The lower plants reproduce by means of spores. (They have a stage of sexual reproduction, but that’s ‘way more complicated than we need to get into here.)

Mosses and lichens are really low in the plant hierarchy, because they are non-vascular. They do not have “veins” to transport fluids throughout the plant. They also do not have true roots, though mosses usually have structures called “rhizoids” to anchor them to the surface on which they are growing. Most mosses are limited to damp environments that never dry out.

Lichens are not actually plants, though in lay terms they are often lumped together. A lichen consists of an alga and a fungus, neither of which is a true plant, growing together in symbiosis. These organisms can colonize bare rock, gaining most of their water by absorbing atmospheric moisture. On the other hand they grow very slowly. When reproduction time comes, pieces of the lichen may break off and fly away in the wind, or a complicated set of changes may occur to produce a reproductive body combining both alga and fungus.

(Continued from page 4)
A Ribbon Was Won at the Charles County Fair

By Cheryl Kasunich

The Charles County Master Gardeners were active participants in the 2010 County Fair, and we received a second place ribbon for our efforts. Our exhibit was presented in the Flower Building at the invitation of the Charles County Garden Club. This year’s display focused on the “Grow It Eat It” campaign. A growing salad box supplied by Gale Kladitis was displayed along with a Grow It Eat It poster and brochures on how to build one at home.

We had a new banner for the display, made with digital art work supplied by the University of Maryland. The state and county offices provided key help in gathering and producing materials for the exhibit. Since education displays must follow published guidelines to be eligible for judging, we were glad to meet with a representative of the Charles County Garden Club prior to planning our display.

Rosemary Ewing and I set up the exhibit, and it was staffed by a total of 13 MG volunteers during all the open fair hours. Volunteers had an opportunity to talk to visitors about Masters Gardener programs and services, as well as distributing information on composting, soil test sample bags, and a new “How to Become a Master Gardener” brochure, along with bookmarks and HGIC magnets.

Thank you to the volunteers:
Teresa Ambol    Nancy Maude
Cindi Barnhart  Debbie Sindt
Carolyn Chlosta  Jessi Thibault
Mary Cocke       Terry Thir
Rosemary Ewing  Carol Washeleski
Ann Gillespie Sandra Womack
Planning for the 2011 Fair will begin in March. A call for volunteers will be made at the end of the annual training class.

Holiday Party Was Very Tasty and Informative

By Teresa Ambol

I must admit I was hesitant about going to the Christmas party. The potluck thing makes me a little nervous, but the program would give me needed training hours.

All fears dissolved when I saw the Hampshire Community Center. It was framed in lights with a beautiful big Christmas tree in the reception area. The room was decorated, green tablecloths and place settings with poinsettias as centerpieces.

I met new people and talked to familiar people. There were over thirty people in attendance. The myriad of foods was great!

After dessert, Carol Teets introduced members who work with the steering committee, administration of the MGs, and The Compost. It was great to see the faces of those who do so much work in the Master Gardeners group. Linda Lockhart and Elaine Miller received cyclamen plants for all their years of dedicated work on the Steering Committee.

Carol introduced our speaker Brian Clark, the PG County Extension Educator. Brian spoke on “high tunnels”. These are used to extend the growing season. They are an enlarged new take on the old idea of a cold frame. When asked why this was such a new exciting thing (since cold frames have been around for a long time) Brian responded “it’s old made new again”. This season his group built a 20’ x 40’ high tunnel and grew vegetables. The season was extended from mid-March through mid-December. He is building another one on a blacktop to bring gardens into cities. Brian wrapped up his talk by answering questions.

A Christmas gift drawing was held and Poinsettia door prizes were awarded to the lucky people sitting in randomly marked chairs. It was time to clean up and go home.

What a wonderful Christmas gift – being with all these wonderful people! It was a great way to start the holidays and end the year.

Editor’s note:
Thank you to all the members who contributed gifts for our drawing. Over twenty MGs went home with gardening gear, food, books and other lovely and useful items.
Coming to A Pomfret Garden in the Spring

By Cindi Barnhart

Gale Kladitis and I made a trip to the new Wegman’s in Prince Georges County. Among the bountiful produce was a strange looking vegetable, a Romanesco cauliflower. The produce man working on the aisle said it was a cross between a cauliflower and broccoli.

According to Answers.com, though classified as (and also called) a summer cauliflower, this vegetable’s appearance is so uniquely striking that it deserves its own listing. Like regular cauliflower, Romanesco has a tightly compact head of florets attached by clusters of stalks—but there the similarity in appearance ends. The Romanesco, which hails from northern Italy, is a beautiful pale lime green color; its florets, rather than being rounded, rise in a pyramid of pointed, spiraling cones. Its flavor is somewhat more delicate than that of regular cauliflower. Romanesco is available only briefly—from September through November. Choose a firm head with crisp leaves. Store in a plastic bag in the refrigerator for up to 1 week. Romanesco can be cooked in any fashion suitable for regular cauliflower. It makes beautiful crudités, and is stunning cooked whole.

Gale has ordered seeds for next year and we will see if it grows well in Southern Maryland.

An Artful Flower Presentation Was Arranged

By Barbie Walter

This request for a presentation took the form of flower arranging for Mary Sims, at the private home of a member in the Mt. Airy Claybreakers Garden Club, in Upper Marlboro on October 14. The focus was on utilizing unusual natural plant materials found in members’ gardens as well as fruits and vegetables.

La Plata Library Outreach

Janet McGrane has secured the display window, inside the main door, for February 2011 in the La Plata library branch on Garrett Avenue. She will need some volunteers to plan, set up and tear down by March 1.

Please join us, as many hands make light work, and we need volunteers to tend the beds next year on a schedule. We need to use volunteers to attend to the watering and weeding because no one is there to take care of the beds. However, we hope to find an interested community group that we can train to work with us.

One day we were treated to a lovely home-cooked lunch of beef barley soup by the father of camp Director Melissa Lynch.

We spent a total of five days there, we and will regroup and go down in the spring to replant and probably weed the beds again.
Sunchokes Are Quite Tasty, Prolific and Tall

By Cindi Barnhart

In June Alberta Carson gave me Sunchoke plants for my garden.

The Sunchoke, *Helianthus tuberosus*, is an underground vegetable, sort of a cross between a rutabaga, potato, and water chestnut, and looks like a tall branched sunflower, with smaller bright yellow flowers. Also called a Jerusalem artichoke, it is one of the few native tubers of North America, is related to the sunflower, and makes a delicious addition to salad, salsa, marinade, and soup. They're so easy to grow throughout North America that many gardeners consider them invasive weeds.

I have not harvested mine but Gale Kladitis gave me some of her crop and I used them in a salad. When I harvest mine I plan to make a butternut and sunchoke soup.

According to Alberta, “Sunchokes should be harvested after the frost which will make them sweeter. I cut the sunflower blooms off so all energy will go to the roots to make them larger. When the stems die back cover the roots with 4+ inches of mulch, and then cover the mulch with plastic (or whatever) to keep the ground from freezing and make it easy to dig up the chokes throughout the winter as you need them. This beats harvesting and then storing them. It will also leave some in the ground to root next year. Keep harvesting into next year until they began to sprout.”

---

**STEERING COMMITTEE IS REVVING UP FOR 2011**

As acting Master Gardener Chairperson I would like to revitalize our Steering Committee to lead the Charles County Master Gardeners in 2011. A member of the Steering Committee is expected to attend Committee meetings regularly and to participate in governance decisions and activities. If you are interested in being a part of this committee please let me, Carol Teets, know. If you have served on this Committee in the past and want to continue please let me know as well.

Currently the following people have committed to serve:

- Ann Gillespie
- Marty Eldridge
- Janet McGrane
- Barbie Walter
- Jessica Milstead
- Gale Kladitis
- Maggie Tieger
- Cindi Barnhart

---

**CHARLES COUNTY MASTER GARDENER TRAINING CLASS 2011**

Classes will be held at the University of Maryland Extension Charles County Office, 9375 Chesapeake Street, Suite 119, La Plata, MD.

Prospective Master Gardeners will explore topics such as diagnosing plant problems and organic vegetable gardening each Tuesday and Thursday, 9 a.m. to 3 p.m., from February 15 to March 10.

Graduation and a spring potluck will be held at Hampshire Neighborhood Community Center in Waldorf.

The fee for this 40-hour training is $165, which includes the new Maryland Master Gardener Handbook. For more details on becoming a Master Gardener, click on “How to Become a CCMG”, on the website: http://mastergardener.umd.edu/local/Charles/index.cfm or contact the University of Maryland Extension Charles County Office (301-934-5403 or 301-753-8195) for more information or to enroll.
RAIL TRAIL  (Continued from page 5)

Now the fern-allies. These aren't ferns but, like ferns, they are vascular plants that reproduce by means of spores rather than seeds. The most common ones are generally called Lycopodi-ums. These are small plants that trail along the ground in the woods. Their leaves tend to be needle-like. This is the reason for common names like Running Cedar and Princess Pine. These common names vary all over the map. My “Running Cedar” may be your “Princess Pine,” and all we can do is acknowledge that common names aren’t standardized. The scientific names and classification of these plants has changed drastically, and is still not settled, so for our purposes it’s not critical to try to get those names right.

All these plants are considered more primitive than the flowering plants. They originated earlier, by many millions of years. In their heyday they, along with the ferns, dominated terrestrial plant life, but the flowering plants were able to take advantage of a wider range of environments, reproduce faster, and grow larger. These primitive plants ended up relegated to much smaller niches. They aren’t as showy as the flowering plants but they have their interest nonetheless.

Editor’s note:

We have approached Heidi Fick, Indian Head Rail Trail Manager at Charles County Parks and Recreation, to see if we can partner with them to plant ferns and other native plants along the trail. Possibly we (MGs) can maintain an area to be devoted to natives.
So Many Weeds - But We Will Conquer Them
By Janet Cooney & Jan Lakey-Waters

When we went to Camp Merrick in October we were not prepared for the weeds we encountered. The beds were overflowing with weeds of every kind.

Jan Lakey-Waters brought her husband Jim and Malcolm, her grandson. They spent the day pulling and hauling away six foot long Japanese knotweed and other weeds. Janet Cooney and her son John worked tirelessly on the weeding, hauling top soil and brush back to the existing compost pile in hopes of using it next year. We shored up a bed that was bulging and tried to remove the soil we thought was causing the bulge, but plants will have to be removed and the raised bed repaired in the spring.

A pleasant surprise was finding Wild Poinsettia (Euphorbia heterophylla), also known as Painted Leaf and Fire on the Mountain, in the beds. Although this plant is considered a weed according to Wildflowers in the USA, it is spreading into our region and we consider it a new native.

Mentoring Is Planned For the New MG Class
By Barbie Walter

This year we are beginning a new practice that I hope will help new trainees to feel more comfortable as they start their MG work. The idea is that the new trainee will have someone to answer questions, help with time sheets, and invite them to take part in activities and projects so they can get their hours. Some of the new trainees are not comfortable just showing up to do things, and we all remember the confusion with time sheets the first few times we did it.

So, any of you who want to be a “buddy” to, or partner with a new trainee please let me know. Also, it will be an easy way to get volunteer time throughout the next year. This help in getting oriented should make interns’ first year as MGs easier and more successful.
### Winter/ Spring 2011 Events

#### January

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Day</th>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Event</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>22</td>
<td>Saturday, 10:00 a.m.</td>
<td>Plant Sale Committee Meeting, Towne Mouse, La Plata</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>25</td>
<td>Tuesday, 10:00 a.m.</td>
<td>Membership Meeting, Panera in La Plata, Open to all MGs</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

#### February

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Day</th>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Event</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>15-24</td>
<td>Tuesdays and Thursdays, 9 a.m. - 3:00 p.m.</td>
<td>Master Gardener Training Class, Extension office, contact Barbie Walter for more information</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>22</td>
<td>Tuesday, 10:00 a.m.</td>
<td>Membership Meeting, location TBD, Open to all MGs</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

#### March

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Day</th>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Event</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1-8</td>
<td>Tuesdays and Thursdays, 9 a.m. - 3:00 p.m.</td>
<td>Master Gardener Training Class continues, Extension office, contact Barbie Walter for more information</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10</td>
<td>Thursday, 9 a.m. - 3:00 p.m.</td>
<td>Intern Graduation and MG Potluck, Hampshire Neighborhood Center, Waldorf</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>22</td>
<td>Tuesday, 10:00 a.m.</td>
<td>Project Day, Project leaders share information on current projects with new 2011 interns and all MGs, Extension office</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

#### April

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Day</th>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Event</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>13</td>
<td>Wednesday, Native Plant Walk, Time and Location TBD, contact Jessica Milstead</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>26</td>
<td>Tuesday, 10:00 a.m.</td>
<td>Membership Meeting, Extension Office, Open to all MGs</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>30</td>
<td>Saturday, Christmas in April, contact Carol Teets</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

#### May

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Day</th>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Event</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td>Saturday, MG Plant sale, more information to follow</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>17</td>
<td>Tuesday, MG Annual Training Day, Stamp Student Union, University of Maryland, College Park, See page 15</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

(Continued on page 15)
Fall Session: A Stupendous Growing Success

By Gale Kladitis

The Fall session for the Detention Center was fantastic. We had seven sessions, starting on Tuesday September 7 and ending on October 19. We missed having Pam King’s introduction to plant life but we were lucky enough to get Brian Clark, Prince Georges County Extension Educator, to speak on lawn maintenance. The vegetable garden was composted and planted in fall greens such as lettuce, spinach, collards, kale and radishes. It was growing nicely when our classes ended. The major project for the class was a request from the Director, Pam Dottellis, to remove all of the overgrown junipers in the parking lot at the Main Building. Our classes had been trimming the junipers for years and it had become too difficult to control the growth and keep the plants from interfering with the parked cars. Next spring we plan to plant small trees along the walkway. The students also planted 140 daffodil bulbs at the Annex and removed a dead dogwood tree from the raised bed on the corner. We had a terrific celebration after the certificates were awarded on October 19, when we discussed the plans for the spring sessions. The Detention Center Master Gardener volunteers will have a meeting prior to the spring sessions in order to put in place a comprehensive plan for the maintenance of the vegetable garden and distribution of the produce. Any Master Gardener, including interns, interested in joining our wonderful volunteers can contact me anytime by email or phone.

Photo by Cindi Barnhart
Radishes harvested from the garden on October 19 by a class member.

Christmas In April

By Gale Kladitis

This valuable community effort provides a wonderful opportunity for earning volunteer hours. Assess assigned Christmas In April properties before April 30 or join us for the actual day of service, on Saturday April 30, 2011.

Site Visits

By Gale Kladitis

When someone calls or visits the Extension office with a question about problems with their plantings, or for advice on landscaping, the call is referred to me. Mary Beth Chandler and I share the task of putting together a team to go out to look and give advice.

Dr. Samuel Mudd House

By Gale Kladitis

You may want to join the team of MGs who maintain the herb garden and surrounding landscape at the Dr. Samuel Mudd House in Waldorf, April through October.

Contact the project leader by referring to your Membership Directory.