I Am Only Stepping Down and Not Away

Although I am not leaving the Master Gardener program I am leaving the newsletter’s editor position and I want to thank everyone for their support and contributions. I have been working on The Compost since 2005 and have been the Editor since Winter 2007. I am so proud of our achievements and it was a pleasure to be able to showcase our accomplishments. I will continue to assist our transitioning new Editor Mary Grant, and be a photographer for the Master Gardener program.

Thank you to my writers, without whom I would have had no articles. Thank you to my photographers who inspired many stories by sending that single photo. My mailing staff came together with a light heart and quick hands to assemble, address and send our missive to the waiting readers. My copy editor worked tirelessly to be sure we were disseminating correct information and she made my efforts go smoother. Please support our new Editor as you have supported me.

I will see you all in the new year and look forward to working on new and interesting projects with everyone.

Cindi Barnhart
Dear Master Gardeners and Interns,

It has been quite a year, so where do I begin? We graduated 12 fine interns; certified 16 new Master Gardeners; awarded 9 three-year pins, 5 five-year pins, 3 ten-year pins; and awarded Emeritus status to 3 Master Gardeners and chose one Honorary Master Gardener (for life). An additional 21 Master Gardeners were certified in October as evaluators for the Bay-Wise program. We aptly handled all of our existing programs and projects, such as Christmas in April, Grow it Eat It, Camp Merrick, plant walks, plant clinics, Dr. Mudd, Memorial Garden, JC Parks Elementary, Thomas Stone Green School, annual plant sale, Detention Center and County Fair. We also added several new projects, including Girl Scout Garden at Camp Winona in Hughesville, Butterfly Festival in Solomon’s Island, St. Mary’s School in Bryantown, Indian Head Clovers 4-H Club, Jude House, and a joint venture with St Mary’s and Charles UME Nutrition Educators for the Farmers Market in Waldorf. I’m sure I have forgotten some of the special things we have done through the year, not because they were not important, but rather because there were so many. As we close the door on the year 2012 and begin our new adventure into 2013 please keep your excitement, enthusiasm and energy for the coming projects and our new class of Interns. Charles County Master Gardeners are the best and thank you for making me look so good.

Gale Kladitis
Chair, Charles County Master Gardeners Steering Committee
Understanding A Soil Test Report Part II

For Part I of this article and background on the types of soil tests described, see the Summer 2012 issue of The Compost, pp. 4-6. Part II was first published in the September 2012 Annapolis Horticultural Society Newsletter and is reprinted here with permission from the author Dr. Frank Gouin, Professor Emeritus, University of Maryland, College Park, MD

A & L Eastern Agricultural Soil Laboratories offers S2 and S3 soil testing. I always recommend the S2 soil test for soils that are located near the Bay or ocean and for soil samples being taken near roads where road salt is applied during the winter months. I also recommend the S2 test where I suspect over-fertilization.

When sodium levels in the soil exceed potassium levels, sodium toxicity becomes evident in the foliage. The symptoms are crisp brown scorched tissues along the margins of the leaves during the early stages of symptom development, followed by the entire leaf turning brown except for a green midrib. These are the very same symptoms as seen with high soluble salts. Thus, by having the S2 test you can distinguish between the two and determine the cause. If the test results show soluble salt levels greater than 3 mhos/cm and low levels of sodium, you look at the P and K levels in the S1 test to see if the concentrations are in the very high range and/or off the scale. The combination of very high soluble salts and extremely high levels of P and/or K is a good indication that foliar burn is due to excess fertilizer.

But if the results indicate that the soil has high soluble salt levels and high levels of sodium, the conclusion is generally salty bay or ocean water or road salt accumulation. The only solution to solving such a soil problem is dilution. If the soil is sandy and the drainage is good, heavy, repeated applications of water (leaching) is the best and simplest solution. Adding a surfactant such as dish detergent to the water will hasten the leaching process. However, if the soil is a silt or clay loam and the drainage is marginal, diluting the soil with peat moss or pine fines is the only solution.

I always recommend the S3 test in sandy soil areas and where I suspect the plants are suffering from iron deficiency due to repeated applications of hardwood bark mulch. This test also identifies other possible problems. Although boron is only required in soils at levels of 1 to 2 lbs per

(Continued on page 5)
New MG Advanced Training Certificate
Being Offered for Vegetable Gardening

By Robin Hessey
State Master Gardener Advanced Training Coordinator

Better Yields through Better Soils (counts for 1 day)

Saturday, February 2, 2013; 9:00am-4:00pm
Snow date: Saturday, February 23, 2013
Cylburn Arboretum, Baltimore City.
Fee: $30 plus optional lunch (Bring your own lunch or order an optional lunch from Whole Foods for $15 - see registration form.)
Registration Deadline: January 25, 2013

One great intensive day with seven great presenters and all focused on soils. You’ll learn about:
- Soil properties and tests
- Soil problems and what to do about them
- Soil microorganisms, what they do and how to encourage them
- Safety issues
- Soil fertility and amendments
- History of land use and how it affects current soil conditions
- Cover crops
- How to make high quality compost

**Plus check out soilless growing during an optional tour of the Center for Livable Future’s new aquaponics facility at Cylburn from 4-5 pm!**

Organic Vegetable Gardening (counts for 1 day)

Saturday, March 2, 2013 9:00am-3:30pm
UME, Cockeysville, Baltimore County
Fee: $35
Registration deadline: February 22, 2013

Yes, you too can have a successful organic vegetable garden! In this program we will define the terms “organic” and “sustainable” and teach you about the products and techniques that will help you succeed. We’ll also discuss contaminants, safety, climate change, reading labels, soils and fertilizers. Get this important overview and the specific information you’ll need both for your own garden and to teach to others.

(Continued on page 21)

SOIL TEST (Continued from page 4)

Acre, it is important for the transportation of metabolites throughout the plants. Boron deficiency symptoms often begin to occur when levels drop below ½ lb per acre. One of the best sources for boron is biosolids compost, lobster compost, crab waste (Chesapeake Blue) compost or animal manure compost.

Repeated applications of hardwood bark mulch over many years will result in the accumulation of manganese (Mn). High levels of manganese in the soil will inhibit iron uptake by the roots of plants.

I recommend the S3 test where I see symptoms of measles on the bark of crab apple, apple or pear trees or numerous black dots on American and English holly leaves or frog-eye symptoms on cherry laurel leaves. If you are familiar with measles on children, the very same symptoms appear on the smooth bark of apple, crab apple and pear trees. All of the above symptoms are due to zinc (Zn) deficiency. Soils deficient in zinc are best corrected by amending them with chicken manure compost. Zinc is added to chicken feed to help prevent respiratory diseases.

Sulfur has become deficient in some soils and that can be diagnosed from the S3 test. Because sulfur is no longer a contaminant in fertilizers, our air is becoming cleaner and sulfur deficiency symptoms are becoming more common.

In the good old days, sulfur dioxide was a major air pollutant which helped in maintaining adequate levels of sulfur in our soils. Our fertilizers have become more concentrated and less contaminated with sulfate compounds such as super-phosphate, ammonium sulfate and potassium sulfate. These sources have been replaced with ammonium phosphate, potassium nitrate, and others. With increased emphasis on cleaner air, we have less sulfur-polluted rains and atmospheric sulfur-laden dust falling on our land. It will eventually become necessary to blend sulfur in the fertilizer bag or we will have to apply it separately.

If the S3 soil test indicates extremely high levels of sulfur, there is a good possibility your soil may be contaminated with pyrites. Pyrites are iron sulfite (fool’s gold) crystals. There are several areas in Prince George’s County where pyritic soil is a problem. Some of the most se-
Bay-Wise Is Growing Greater Every Year

By Ronda R. Goldman, Class of 2006
Charles County Bay-Wise Coordinator

Winter is a time for rest and hibernation. As the season is underway the Bay-Wise program is growing and preparing to burst with activity in the spring. The fall training was a complete success that resulted in the addition of 21 new Bay-Wise Master Gardeners.

The fall training was facilitated by Wanda MacLachlan and began on October 10, 2012. The program consisted of two full days of classroom instruction, pre and post testing, and a field experience. The trainees learned about the state of the Bay, living walls, soil compaction, and other environmental concerns. Each lesson helped to build knowledge, understanding, and appreciation for the world in which we live and how we can empower our communities to help. The Bay-Wise training also encouraged the Master Gardeners to use their new knowledge to impact the county by building lasting connections that span generations, which was expounded upon during the certification of JC Parks Elementary School’s outdoor classroom. Connecting with our schools is a strong priority as the program seeks to grow among the school age population as well as among adults.

In order to facilitate healthy and meaningful connections among our youth, Bay-Wise launched a program entitled, “Celebrity Chefs in the Garden.” This is a pilot project that encourages Charles County students to grow their own certifiable Bay-Wise

Looking Back On Our Accomplishments

By Sally Hopp, Class of 2011

It looks dreary outside but we all know what that means. Our gardens and plants are resting so as to brighten our spring with beauty. As we look back over the year we’re amazed at how busy it has been for us all and how much we have accomplished for others:

* The garden in the Charles County Detention Center that provided fresh food to people in need

* Yard work for Christmas in April, refreshing and renovating the homes of people who no longer can do it all themselves

* Of course the Charles County Fair, the ultimate show of what we do and how we can help better the community

And strengthening our own knowledge and ability to contribute:

* The basic training classes

* And the advanced training classes on plants that gave us knowledge to understand nature and all its glory — knowledge that we will take with us forever and use in everything we do from gardening to cooking

(Continued on page 7)
Already five years old, the La Plata Garden Club’s Star Garden has become a beautiful and serene showpiece for the Town of La Plata. Throughout those five years, with constant nurturing and oversight, the garden has matured into a lovely array of trees, shrubs, perennials, herbs, seasonal annuals and hardscape. If you haven’t yet visited the garden, you are truly missing one of the Town’s tucked-away treasures!

As it goes with gardens, much work goes into making them the special places they become. This garden is no different. During the growing season, members of the garden club, as well as Master Gardeners who can earn hours for their labors, maintain the garden and keep it looking nice. Special work days for things such as mulching, spring renewal and fall cleanup are also held. A garden chairperson(s) maintains constant watch over the garden, to ensure that all is growing – or not – as it should be.

Current garden co-chairs and Master Gardeners Dianne Shisler and Sherie Zimmer called out the troops for one of our biggest ever cleanup days on October 24. The crew of workers, which included many Master Gardeners, helped deadhead, transplant, prune, trim, remove dead shrubs and prepare the garden for winter. Many man- well, actually woman- hours went into this year’s cleanup efforts. The club appreciates the help it receives from the Master Gardener Program and thanks all who supported the Star Garden during 2012.

If you haven’t been to the garden, just find the new La Plata town star and you will see the garden located right next to it, just off of Firehouse Alley at its intersection with St. Mary’s Avenue.

Editor’s Note:

Five Master Gardeners from other counties took the training as well as sixteen from Charles County.
The Blessed Mother Garden we were asked to develop was a 30’x30’ niche cut out of a dense woodline. This alcove really got my landscape juices going. At the top of the U-shaped space is a hundred year old oak tree. Fortunately, we were able to access heavy equipment to break up the surface roots that would impede the development of the garden. Volunteers worked with us to clean out broken roots, amend the soil, and clean out straggly vines.

We gave wide berth to the stately oak and brought the Blessed Mother statue forward to the center of the garden. On each side of the U, toward the back, we planted two white Crape Myrtles (Natchez), like candles in the background. In back of the statue, we planted three Clethra. With a mature size of 10’x10’, they will create a nice dark green backdrop for the statue in time.

Inside the garden area we filled in each side of the path with deer resistant, butterfly attracting, drought tolerant, colorful perennial plantings. We chose Russian Sage (Perovskia atriplicifolia), the herb Anise Hyssop (Agastache), Artemesia, Black-Eyed Susan (Rudbeckia), Penstemon, Goldenrod (Solidago), Coneflower (Echinacea), Gayfeather (Liatris), Catmint (Nepeta), Verbascum, Stokes’ Aster (Stokesia laevis), and Dianthus.

To create the rest of the “bones” of the garden, we planted pink and red Knock Out Roses on each side, and created a path from the point of entry up to the statue, and curving around to each side. A semicircle of low-growing plants softens the base of the statue. Along the entry path are variegated Liriope to provide some color throughout the year. The front of the garden was closed in with low-growing grasses.

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BLESSED  (Continued from page 8)

purchased mostly one gallon size plants. As a result, users of the garden will be able to watch it mature over a number of years, teaching a lesson in delayed gratification.

SOIL TEST  (Continued from page 5)

vere cases are in the Silver Hill Metro Station area, along the Baltimore-Washington Parkway, in some areas on the D.C. Beltway and in the Bowie area. Many people mistake pyritic soils as top soils because they tend to be dark in color. When first exposed to light, the pH of these soils will be measured as neutral (pH 7). However, as they begin to weather from alternate wetting and drying, the iron sulfite gradually converts to iron sulfate and the pH drops to pH 3 and below. The most severe sulfite problem that I have seen was the Fresh Kills Landfill in New York. The only solution to this problem was repeated applications of limestone until the sulfates were neutralized.

In my 40+ years of reading soil test results, I have never seen soil deficient in iron or copper. However, knowing their concentrations in the soil is important to predict potential problems.

ENOUGH SAID

WANTED — COPY EDITING FOR THE COMPOST

By Jessica Milstead

I have been helping Cindi with copy editing of our newsletter ever since Cindi became Editor. Since she is stepping down, this is an opportune time for me to step down as well, so that the new Editor can structure the tasks of preparing the newsletter as she wishes. Besides, it’s been long enough! My work has consisted primarily of checking names and catching grammatical bobbles and the like. If this is your forte, why don’t you volunteer your services to the new Editor-Mary Grant? While I’ll be available to consult as needed, I believe it is time for someone else to have a chance to put her or his impression on The Compost.

Detention Center Garden Grows Well In 2012

By Gale Kladitis, Class of 2008

We had some amazing things growing in the garden this summer. The students were most impressed with their even dozen of watermelons. Each week they would declare the watermelons ripe and each week I declared it too soon to pick. Determining ripeness of watermelons is not as simple as with other melons. I’m not good at waiting until just the right time to pick either, although this time we timed the picking just right and enjoyed the watermelons with the students at the picnic table area.

The most fascinating plants were the peanuts. Master Gardeners

and students alike were all watching the blossoms make long roots and enter the ground to make the peanuts.

Sally Hopp brought two sunflower plants from home and the students planted them at the end of the pepper rows. Sally said her home plants grew to about 5 feet, but the ones in the DC garden reached about 10 feet and had heads larger than dinner plates.

It was an interesting and joyful season in the garden this year. The new classes will begin May 1, 2013, so watch your email for additional information.

Peanuts and sunflower heads from the Charles County Detention Center garden.

Photo by Gale Kladitis
Monarch Festival Entertained and Informed
By Rosemary Ewing, Class of 2010
Mary Sims, Janet McGrane, Anne Gillespie and I participated in the first annual Cobb Island Monarch Mania Butterfly Festival on Saturday, October 13.
The festival celebrated the annual migration of the Monarch from the United States to the mountains of Mexico. Residents of all ages enjoyed presentations on the Monarch’s life cycle and its migration route, as well as a tag and release ceremony.
We were pleased to be able to share information on creating backyard butterfly habitats. We also responded to general gardening questions and distributed information on the Charles County Master Gardener Program.

Greening Parking Lots - A Creative Solution
By Jessica Milstead, Class of 2002
If you haven’t seen the parking lot for the new office buildings at 3581 Old Washington Road in Waldorf, it’s worth a look. The developers appear to have used old-fashioned impermeable paving (water runs off instead of through it as with permeable paving), but very creatively. Spotted throughout the parking lot are areas you might call small “rain gardens”. The curbs all have openings into these areas which are lower than the level of the parking lot and contain native plantings. Each area has an above-ground drain opening that is above the level of the plantings to give excess water a place to go.

The buildings and parking are surrounded on three sides by existing wooded areas, and eventually all these spaces drain into the woods, which of course are great for grabbing the water and slowing it down.

This is a really creative solution to the problem of parking lot runoff, the first one of its type that I’ve seen. It’s well worth a look.

Monarch Mania Festival
October 13, 2012
Complete

2012 Holiday Buffet and Advanced Training
By Mary Gaskins, Class of 2005
We held our annual MG Holiday Buffet and Advanced Training at the Hampshire Neighborhood Center in St. Charles on December 4, 2012. Jan Lakey-Waters once again provided beautiful centerpieces for the tables. Culinary delights were in abundance at the potluck dinner.

We again invited guests from the community with whom we had partnered or sought support from during the year. Reuben Collins spoke to us on behalf of his fellow Charles County Commissioners. Other guests were Emily Ferren and Janet Salazar from the Charles County Public Library; Chris Rooney and Bonnetta Adeeb from Thomas Stone High School; Mike Callahan, leader of the Cobb Island Butterfly Festival this past autumn; and our very own, much-missed, Marcia Wakefield.

Shelley Gaskins, Horticul- turist, of the Smithsonian Gardens in Washington, DC, provided advanced training for the evening with her presentation entitled Plants, Design, and Decoration: Winter Interest in the Smithsonian Gardens. She shared a delightful slide show of some of the fantastic plants and stunning decorations used in their gardens both this year and in the past. Especially interesting was her analysis of successes and failures.

She showed examples of how the design elements of line, form, shape, color, texture, tone, and space affect the impact of a display on its audience. Effective use of the design principles of unity/harmony, balance, contrast, emphasis, proportion, scale, movement, and rhythm determine the visitor’s experience of the display. The gigantic garden gate on Independence Avenue was an effective demonstration of the importance of scale to the success of decorations.

Shelley provided us with an extensive handout covering her presentation so we could listen, enjoy the slide show, and ask questions rather than taking notes.

The meeting concluded with a drawing and lucky participants went home with either a door prize or one of the beautiful table centerpieces. Our thanks go to Master Gardener Jessi Thibault for arranging the use of this facility again this year.
Bug Day - More Than Enough To Be Seen

By David Lewis, Class of 2011

Bug Day was held on September 25 at my house in Charleston Estates. Mother Nature was extremely cooperative and the weather was perfect. The turnout was exceptional, with about 35 Master Gardeners in attendance. The interns got to meet many new faces and mingle with many of the Master Gardeners they had not met. Gale held a brief membership meeting to kick off the day. After the meeting I took the group on a tour of the gardens which surround the house. Since it was around noon the general consensus was it was time for lunch. Everyone found a shady, quiet spot and sat down to their sack lunch. It was a great time to mingle, socialize and meet other members who have worked on different projects. After lunch everyone was pretty well ready to take a nap, but Jessica Milstead rallied the troops for one of her famous nature walks in the surrounding 14 acres. While the emphasis was on bugs, the group still got to pick Jessica’s brain regarding some of the local flora and fauna. I never knew I had so many different plants on my property. Especially noteworthy was the diverse collection of ferns. Jessica showed us over 5 different types. Halfway through the property tour, time ran out and we had to call it a day. The bad news is we did not get to finish the nature/bug watch tour. The good news is there’s always next year. Maybe we will get a few more experts and break up into smaller groups for a more detailed exploration of the property.

Can you identify this plant found along the pathway to Dave’s shoreline? Jessica Milstead speaks about host plants for butterflies such as fennel for the Black Swallowtail.

Site Visits
Ongoing
Contact: Jessica Milstead

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, and I put together a team to go out to look and give advice.

Nature Walks with Jessica
Ongoing
Contact: Jessica Milstead

These are ongoing walks as the seasons allow. The walks do count as Advanced Training for Master Gardeners and are also open to Interns. On hiatus for the winter.

The Compost Newsletter
Ongoing
Contact: Mary Grant

Photographers and writers are needed to keep our outstanding publication informative. Help to cover our activities and contribute to the newsletter.

Charles County Detention Center Horticultural Education
Ongoing
Contact: Gale Kladitis / Dave Lewis

Spring and fall sessions at the Detention Center offer valuable horticultural instruction and hands-on experience to the in-house population. Teachers as well as other volunteers are welcome.

Master Gardener Training 2013:
February 19 to March 28
Contact: Barbie Walter

Tuesdays and Thursdays for six weeks with Project Day built in.

Contact the project leader by referring to your Membership Directory.

Speakers Bureau
Ongoing
Contact: Marian Bruemmer

Use your knowledge to inform the public and/or your fellow Master Gardeners.

Christmas In April
Ongoing
Contact: Carol Teets

This valuable community effort provides a wonderful opportunity for earning volunteer hours. Assess assigned Christmas In April properties before April 27 or join us for the actual day of service, on Saturday April 27, 2013.

Dr. Samuel Mudd House
Ongoing
Contact: Beth Bonifant

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/November.
Winter / Spring Events

January
11 Friday, 10 a.m.; Plant Sale meeting, Extension Office
22 Tuesday, 10 a.m.; Membership Meeting, Extension Office, Open to all MGs

February
2 Saturday, 9 a.m. - 4 p.m.; Better Yields through Better Soils, GIEI class, Baltimore City, MD See page 20 for details
19-28 Tuesday and Thursday, 9 a.m. – 3 p.m.; Master Gardener 2013 Training Class, Extension Office
26 Tuesday, 10 a.m.; Membership Meeting, location TBA, Open to all MGs

March
2 Saturday, 9 a.m. - 3 p.m.; Organic Vegetable Gardening, GIEI class, Cockeysville, MD See page 20 for details
5-28 Tuesday and Thursday, 9 a.m. – 3 p.m.; Master Gardener Training Class, Extension Office, contact Barbie Walter
26 Tuesday, 10 a.m.; Membership Meeting and Project Day, Location TBA.
28 Thursday, 9 a.m. - 1 p.m.; MG Training Class Graduation and Potluck, Location TBA.
1 p.m.; Advanced Training

April
23 Tuesday, 10 a.m.; Membership Meeting, Extension Office, Open to all MGs
27 Saturday, Christmas in April, contact Carol Teets

May
1 Wednesday, 9 a.m.; Preliminary Detention Center vegetable garden preparation, La Plata, contact Gale Kladitis or Dave Lewis for all dates concerning the Charles County Detention Center Program See page 11 for details
8 Wednesday, 9 a.m.- 12:00 p.m.; Detention Center Program
15 Wednesday, 9 a.m.- 12:00 p.m.; Detention Center Program
22 Wednesday, 9 a.m.- 12:00 p.m.; Detention Center Program
28 Tuesday, 10 a.m.; Membership Meeting, location TBA, Open to all MGs
29 Wednesday, 9 a.m.- 12:00 p.m., Detention Center Program

June
5 Wednesday, 9 a.m.- 12:00 p.m., Detention Center Program
12 Wednesday, 9 a.m.- 12:00 p.m., Detention Center Program
19 Tuesday, 9 a.m. - 3:30 p.m.; Intensive Techniques and Small Space Gardening, Frederick, MD See page 21 for details
18 Wednesday, 9 a.m.- 12:00 p.m.; Detention Center Program
25 Tuesday, 10 a.m.; Membership Meeting, Extension Office, Open to all MGs
25 Tuesday, 9 a.m. - 3:30 p.m.; Intensive Techniques and Small Space Gardening, Frederick, MD See page 21 for details

July
16 Tuesday, 9 a.m. - 3:30 p.m.; Vegetable Plant and Pest Diagnosis, Howard County, See page 21 for details
18 Tuesday, 9 a.m. - 3:30 p.m.; Vegetable Plant and Pest Diagnosis, Charles County, See page 21 for details

If you would like more information on a project, please contact the project leader by referring to your Membership Directory.

(Continued on page 13)