



# Trumpet Vine

*Knowledge for the Community from Loudoun County Master Gardeners*

*Winter 2011-2012*

Volume VIII, Issue 1 [www.loudouncountymastergardeners.org](http://www.loudouncountymastergardeners.org)

## LOUDOUN COUNTY MASTER GARDENER MONTHLY MEETINGS

FREE AND OPEN TO THE PUBLIC

UNLESS NOTED, MEETINGS ARE HELD  
AT THE VIRGINIA COOPERATIVE  
EXTENSION OFFICE, 30B CATOCTIN  
CIRCLE SE, LEESBURG, AT 7PM

Jan. 5. Winter Flower  
Arranging, David Nash,  
Northern VA Community  
College

Feb. 2. Orchard Mason Bees,  
Denise Shreve, Our Native Bees

March 1. Benefits of Using  
Native Plants, Carrie Blair,  
Virginia Native Plant Society

April 5. Vertical Gardening,  
Linna Ferguson, Certified  
Square Foot Gardener

May 3. Grapes and Vineyards,  
Sebastien Marquet, Doukenie  
Winery

June 7. Permaculture, Michael  
Judd, design consultant

For more informations, please  
visit our web site at  
<http://www.loudouncountymastergardeners.org/>

Visit us on Facebook:  
Master Gardeners of Loudoun  
County, Virginia.

## Winter Gardening

Take a look at your winter garden. What is the main feature? Trees! The perennials are dormant, the annuals gone. The greenery is provided by the evergreens in our yards. The deciduous trees provide a beautiful framework of branches against the winter sky.



Now is the time we can really enjoy the textural elements of the bark. And, it's not too late to plant a tree! Fall planting of trees allows the roots to establish before the rigors of the summer heat and drought conditions. In "Notes from the Help Desk", there is information on planting a living Christmas tree, information which is appropriate for planting any tree. To celebrate the season of trees, we have included several articles: medicinal properties of the White Pine, the ABCs of the Ironwood and River Birch trees, and the proper care and pruning of the Crape Myrtle.

Winter is a time for planning. Seed catalogs will be coming your way shortly. What to do with all of this information? Find out in "Planning your Vegetable Garden" and consider the issues of "Genetically Modified Seeds".

Finally, with the Holiday season upon us, check our reviews of some great books for the gardener in your life!



Have you saved the date yet? If not, mark your calendars for March 24-25 at Carradoc Hall, Leesburg for the Loudoun County Master Gardener Annual Gardening Symposium. Once again we have a great line up of speakers along with wonderful vendors for you to visit with in between sessions.

*Now about the Symposium itself.* We chose not to have a theme this year unless you call "something for everyone" a theme. We have a wide range of wonderful speakers, including a professor from VA Tech, not one but two Extension Agents, a local beekeeper, an organic gardener and more who will share their passion for sustainable gardening and the wonders of nature.

Here's an *introduction* to a few of them:

**Mary K. Stickley**, Manager of Gardens and Grounds, Museum of the Shenandoah Valley, and garden consultant, has broad experience in the horticulture industry. In this talk, "The Lazy Gardener" she will describe some simple tips and techniques that will help keep your garden gorgeous without so much work.

**Nancy Ross Hugo** is a writer, lecturer and educator who has developed a very keen sense of observation. Her daily blog illustrates this, <http://windowsillarranging.blogspot.com/>. In her third book, *Seeing Trees*, Nancy describes how to view trees in ways that reveal secrets about how they have evolved and why they are engineered the way they are. She argues that looking carefully at seeds, catkins, flowers, resting buds, emerging leaves, and other small tree phenomena not only provides insight into tree biology but also uncovers a whole new universe of tree beauty.

**Donna Williamson**, garden designer and garden coach will talk about the Seven Strategies for Garden Success. The key to a beautiful and coherent garden is discerning, shaping, and sustaining the intention for the space. Seven strategies for sorting out the real issues make this a simpler process. Once intention lights the way, gardens can come together with sensibility and artistry.

If you think organic turf is an oxymoron you must hear **Chip Osborne**, President of Osborne Organics of Marblehead MA. Chip will discuss some compelling reasons why we should consider a natural approach to lawn care. Public health, *children's* health, storm-water runoff, and water quality issues are all reasons why we should begin to reduce our dependence on synthetic and chemical products to grow our lawns and gardens. Chip will present "Simple Steps to Organic Lawn Care"®, a detailed approach to a natural lawn care program.

Registration will be \$37.50 for one day and \$65 for both days. Lunch provided by Carradoc Hall is included in the registration price. Registration is online and by mail, please check our website, [www.loudouncountymastergardeners.org](http://www.loudouncountymastergardeners.org) for more information on the schedule and speakers.

Registration is now open. Have a question? Need more information? Email me at [lcmastergardener@aol.com](mailto:lcmastergardener@aol.com). See you at the Symposium!

**Becky Phillips, Master Gardener**

## Planning Your Vegetable Garden

### How to make sense of all those garden catalogs?

The weather has turned cold, the garden has been tucked away for winter, the days are short and the nights are long. What is a gardener to do? Throw another log on the fire, tuck yourself in your blanket, and snuggle up with a stack of brightly colored seed catalogs! But there are so many of them! And they all have so many vegetables and so many varieties of each one! So how to make sense of this information overload? Here are some suggestions for how to decide what you want to grow in your garden next year and how to choose which seeds to order.

### What to grow?

The first thing you need to decide is what vegetables you would like to grow. The questions to ask yourself are, **first, what do you/your family like to eat?** If only one of you likes broccoli, but everyone likes beans, easy choice. Doesn't mean you can't grow broccoli, just that you will save only a small spot in your garden for that and order more bean seeds.



**Second: how much space do you have for your garden?** If you only have a few sunny spots (most veggies need full sun) within your ornamental beds or if you have a small garden plot, you may need to select bush plants or trellised plants. You can always buy pumpkins at the farmers market rather than plant a space-consuming pumpkin vine. Many people with small plots just stick to tomatoes and peppers and go to the Farmers Market for everything else.

**Third: do you have the interest/ability/ facilities to start seeds indoors?** This is important because some plants have a long growing season or prefer cool weather. The best chance for a good harvest comes from starting these seeds 4-6 weeks before they can be set out in the garden or from buying transplants that have been started by others like the Master Gardeners (shameless marketing plug). Peppers, tomatoes, and broccoli are good examples of plants that are best purchased as transplants or started ahead indoors. Plants that are best if direct seeded include peas, beans, lettuce (though starting lettuce seeds indoors will give you a jump on the first salads), chard, carrots, beets, squash, cucumbers, onions (seeds can be started indoors, sets or plants should be direct seeded), and potatoes (eyes of seed potatoes).



**Fourth: are you willing and able to freeze or can any excess harvest? Do you want excess to donate to the hungry?** The answer to these questions will tell you whether you want to buy seeds for determinate or indeterminate plants, and also help you decide how many plants of each vegetable to grow.

(Continued)



Determinate and indeterminate are terms that you find most commonly associated with tomato plants, but the terms can be applied to other plants as well. A determinate variety will grow to a “determined” size and then stop growing. For example, most tomato varieties that are recommended for patio or containers are determinate and only grow to a manageable height versus their indeterminate cousins who will grow over the roof of your house if they are allowed. Determinate plants will usually put out a large flush of fruit all at once, and then will fruit only sparingly after that. So, if you will be canning tomato sauce you might want determinate plants so you have a big crop at one time. If you would like tomatoes to keep coming all summer for salads, you would want indeterminate plants. Likewise with beans. Bush beans will stay low to the ground and will have a large crop for a short time. Pole beans will keep growing all summer and will put out a smaller quantity of beans, enough for a meal or two, over a much longer period. If you want bush beans all season, the option is to order more seeds and plant successive crops every 2 weeks.

Many seed catalogs, such as Johnny’s Selected Seeds ([www.Johnnyseeds.com](http://www.Johnnyseeds.com)), provide charts and tables to help with harvest predictions. For example, they may tell you the average seeds needed to plant a 100 foot row and the average yield per 100 foot row. You then just need to extrapolate to the size of your row (e.g., assume 10% of their volumes if you are planting a 10 foot row) to determine how many seed you need and how much output you can expect. And if you do have excess beyond what you can eat or preserve, you can always donate it to Interfaith Relief, as we do at our Demonstration Garden.



### How to choose varieties?

OK, so now you have a list of what plants you want to buy seeds for vs. plants and an idea about how many seeds you will need. But there are a million varieties of tomatoes and every other vegetable. And all the catalogs have beautiful pictures and wonderful descriptions of all their products. How do you decide which green bean or which sweet pepper will do the job?

**Look for disease/insect resistance** – Some tomatoes will be listed as resistant to a number of diseases that typically attack tomatoes, e.g., Fusarium wilt, Tomato Mosaic Virus, or Verticillium wilt. Some cucumber varieties will have resistance to powdery mildew or scab. Most heirloom varieties will not have these disease resistances bred into them, so you will need to weigh this factor against some of the other strengths of heirloom crops, such as better flavor. If you have had any diseases in your garden in past years, disease resistant varieties are your best bet for limiting the chemicals, organic or other, you will have to use for control measures.

**Look for organic seeds, if possible** – Organic seed comes from fruit grown under strict organic growing conditions. These seeds are



more likely to be able to prosper **without** as much chemical support. This is especially important if you are planning an organic garden.

(Continued)

Look for the features that are important to you - Seed companies will usually highlight the outstanding characteristics of one of their varieties with an eye-catching name, like Early Girl tomato, or Cut-and-Come-Again lettuce. The product descriptions will help you to find the varieties that you want. When the Master



Gardeners choose varieties for their Spring Plant Sale, they like to choose one early tomato, several heirlooms that are known for their great flavor, a modern hybrid tomato that is disease resistant, a plum tomato for sauce-making, and one or two (or three last year!) cherry tomatoes so we can fill a wide range of customer desires. Likewise, our pepper selections will include green-to-red, green-to-orange, a couple specialty peppers that we have found

grow well here, a few with mild heat, and a few scorchers. We look for those that ripen early and that are prolific producers.

Look for varieties suitable for our growing environment - It only makes sense that seeds from produce that is grown locally will more likely prosper in your garden because they have adapted to our high summer heat and high humidity. In our Demonstration Garden and for our Plant Sale, the Master Gardeners try as much as possible to use a Virginia-based seed company, our favorite, Southern Exposure Seed Exchange ([www.SouthernExposure.com](http://www.SouthernExposure.com)) out of Mineral, Virginia. This is a smaller company and they sometimes run out of popular varieties, so it is best to order early from them. Their catalog is chock full of information about their product, such as best culture, germination temperatures, how/when to harvest, insects and pests to watch for, and maturity dates.

### Random Thoughts

Here are the top 5 vegetable seed companies according to a survey conducted by Mother Earth News:

1. Johnny's Selected Seeds (Maine), 2. Seed Savers Exchange (Iowa) 3. Baker Creek Heirloom Seeds (Missouri), 4. Burpee Seeds and Plants (Pennsylvania), 5. Territorial Seed Company (Oregon). Southern Exposure Seed Exchange was listed #8.

Be cautious about using the leftover seeds from previous year's purchases. Seeds that have been stored properly may still be viable for several years, depending on the type of seed. Proper storage means that your seeds have been kept in an airtight container in a cool, dark location, like in a sealed glass jar in the vegetable drawer of your refrigerator. The average # of years that seeds may be saved is:

Beans, Broccoli, Carrots - 3, Cucumber - 5, Lettuce - 6, Onion - 1, Pepper - 2, Tomato - 4. For a complete list go to [www.ext.vt.edu](http://www.ext.vt.edu) and search for publication 426-316, "Seed for the Garden". If you are not sure if your saved seed is useable, you can do a germination test to find out. (Ten seeds in moist paper towel, in zip loc, check for germination percentage.)

Finally, you can save yourself the time and bother of sorting through all those catalogs to choose good vegetable varieties for your garden by simply ordering your tomatoes, peppers, herbs, broccoli, and artichokes from your Master Gardeners Association. As a *Trumpet Vine* subscriber, you will receive our product catalog (very small!!!) and an order form in the spring. Your pre-ordered plants will be ready for you to pick up in April. Or you can visit us at the Leesburg Flower and Garden Show April 21 and 22, 2012 and buy your plants from our booth there. This is the primary fund-raiser for the MG Association, which receives no operating funding from the town, county, or state. Throwing another log on the fire and looking forward to seeing you all in the spring.

***Barbara Arnold, Master Gardener***

## The Garden Wonk: \* Genetically Modified Seeds

While we're talking about choosing seeds it is helpful to differentiate among the types of available seeds.

**Heirloom seeds:** Most heirloom seeds come from a strain of plants that is over 50 years old. The plants are usually open-pollinated varieties. This type of plant will produce fertile seed and will produce the same plant year after year. Heirloom does not mean organic, but an heirloom seed may fall under an organic classification if it meets the standards. **Organic seeds:** The USDA organic label upholds the rigorous guidelines of the National Standard for Organic Agriculture. If a seed falls outside the standard, it cannot bear an organic label. Under these guidelines, a seed must come from produce grown in soil free of unapproved fertilizers and unapproved pesticides. The seed must be natural and without genetic modification. **Conventional seeds:** Most people use conventional garden seeds. This is the type of seed that you'll find in nearly all stores near the garden tools. If you don't see an heirloom or an organic label, the seed packet contains conventional seeds. Conventional seeds are likely to come from plants that were treated with synthetic pesticides, herbicides, fungicides and fertilizers. Some seeds are not certified organic because the process of certification is very expensive and exacting but they are not treated with any chemicals. So it is important to read carefully and understand what you are buying.

In the United States most commercial farmers are using **genetically modified (GM) seeds**. A GMO (genetically modified organism) is the result of a laboratory process of taking genes from one species and inserting them into another in an attempt to obtain a desired trait or characteristic, hence they are also known as transgenic organisms. This process was made possible through the discovery of DNA and the creation of the first recombinant bacteria in 1973. This process may be called either Genetic Engineering (GE) or Genetic Modification (GM); they are one and the same. Genetically modified seeds are patented by the corporation that developed them. Farmers cannot save these seeds; they must purchase new seeds every year or be in violation of the patent. Patents on the first Monsanto products to enter the marketplace will begin to expire in 2014.

Although there have been attempts to increase nutritional benefits or productivity, the two main traits that have been added to date through genetic modification are herbicide tolerance and the ability of the plant to produce its own pesticide. Roundup Ready® crops are the most widely used. These seeds have been genetically modified so that farmers can spray Roundup® agricultural herbicides for weed control from emergence through flowering. Seeds containing both Bt and herbicide resistance are called stacked trait seeds. In the corn market, Monsanto's triple-stack corn—which combines Roundup Ready 2 weed control technology with YieldGard Corn Borer and YieldGard Rootworm insect control—is the market leader in the United States.

In nature you can't cross a fish with a vegetable. Animals and plants have long been separate in evolution. But laboratory researchers have produced a "frost-resistant" tomato by splicing into its genetic code a gene that protects a flounder from the cold. The first transgenic plant is said to have been created in the early eighties when a gene from a bacterium was spliced into a petunia. Subsequently oilseed rape has had a bay tree gene spliced into it, to improve its oil, and a potato has been given a disease-resistant chicken gene.

The first commercially grown genetically modified crop was a tomato called FlavrSavr that was modified to ripen without softening. Sale of FlavrSavr started in 1994, less than 20 years ago. In 1996 7.4% of the soybean acreage was planted in GM crops, by 2010 that had grown to 93%. In addition to soybeans, common GM crops include corn, tomatoes, rapeseed (canola), rice, sugar cane, sugar beets and Hawaiian papaya.

To learn about the debates over the use of genetically modified seeds, conduct an internet search on GMO seeds.

Becky Phillips and Carol Ivory, Master Gardeners

\* The Garden Wonk: This is the first of a series of articles on more technical topics

## Starting Vegetables from Seed

While you are sitting idle this winter reading your favorite gardening books, venture a thought to growing tomato and pepper plants from seed. Why? You can get started early (which means earlier produce), save money, grow what you want not what is stocked and take ultimate pride in your accomplishments! You simply start them indoors!

**Equipment:** This doesn't take a lot of space or fancy equipment. The easiest way to set up your grow space is to find a spot in the unfinished part of your basement. Suspend one or more shop lights from your open beams. Use light weight chain so that you can adjust the height of your shop lights as the plants grow. Each shop light should be equipped with one cool and one warm florescent tube. You will also want a timer to turn the lights on and off automatically. This equipment is very easy to assemble and disassemble.

**Timing:** Count back from Mother's Day (last frost date in the local area) to pinpoint when you should start the seeds. Peppers are 7 to 8 weeks and tomatoes are 5 to 6 weeks to grow. Translation: Get peppers started the week of March 18<sup>th</sup> and tomatoes the week of April 1<sup>st</sup>.

**Garden supplies:** Now you need the seeds, growing medium, containers and plastic wrap.

Growing Medium - needs to be moist, spongy, porous and well-drained. You can purchase this from most nurseries. Look for SEED STARTING mix not potting soil.

Containers - multi-packs or individual pots 2-3" deep; must have drainage. We recommend using multi-packs because it is easier to maintain moisture.



Planting the Seeds:

- Pre-moisten medium
- Loosely fill containers to ½" from top, don't tamp down, tap to settle
- Plant seeds shallowly — depth is 2x their diameter
- Label your seed if growing more than one kind
- Water seeds in — with warm water
- Cover with plastic wrap
- Move to warm location to germinate 70-75 degrees. MG HINT: place seeds on top of a heating mat or place Xmas lights in a plastic bin, plug them in and place seeds on the lid of the bin - perfect bottom heating solution.



Germination occurs when the seedlings break through the soil. The seed packet will tell you how many days this will take. When this first coat breaks through the soil, it is time to remove the plastic and provide light from the top, 3 inches from the foliage, 14-16 hours a day.



In the Spring Trumpet Vine we will continue this topic with explanations on how to transplant and grow under lights. So find some space, get your equipment set up and get your seeds started in March!

*Excerpts from article by Barbara Arnold, Master Gardener*



## African Violets Make Few Demands

When I was a child all my friends' grandmothers had African violets (*Saintpaulia*) so it's not inexplicable that for most my life I associated African violets with little old ladies. Perhaps I now fall into that category but I like to think I've had a revelation — African violets are easy, fun and they reward you with beautiful blooms all year 'round.

The revelation started about four years ago when my job presented me with a great window. My townhome doesn't have good exposure for house plants so I thought with this new opportunity I'd try something more adventurous than Golden Pothos. My first violet was a rescue from the Home Depot sale table. It was a basic purple violet that bloomed prolifically — and still does. (See photo to the right) Over the next couple years I expanded my colors, picking up more violets from sale tables where they end up when their blooms begin to fade. I bought one fancy little one with blue and white double blooms from Merrifield but all my others have come from the sale table of the big box emporium.



**Violets in the ICU have grown rapidly**

I have had to perform surgery on several of my violets. My oldest one developed a long stalk as it grew and lost its lower leaves. Others have developed multiple crowns making them look like they are having a very bad hair day. I have an African violet ICU in my basement where I still have one grow light set up from last winter. My first patient was the long stalked violet. I simply cut it so there was just a little stalk left and stuck it in the soil. I was traumatized but the violet did fine and was back to work in just a few weeks. Emboldened, I took on the ones with multiple crowns. My information said to make sure each cutting had some root but that was impossible as I tried to salvage every crown. I made sure the base of the crowns had good contact with the soil and propped them up with toothpicks. They all rooted and took off; I lost only one — from over watering.

If you read about African violet care you get the impression that they require a lot special equipment and special care. But you really need only two things:

1. Proper light - bright light, morning light but not direct hot afternoon sun. If you don't have good natural light, a florescent light is good.
2. The crown has to stay dry, the soil should not be kept moist, allow it to dry out between waterings. I've lost only two violets, both from overwatering.

Also nice to do:

- After a plant blooms, let it rest for a while and then give it some violet fertilizer to get it blooming again.
- Remove faded blooms and dried leaves.

African violets do NOT need: special pots, complicated arrangements to raise the humidity or special temperature control (mine are inches from a cold drafty window). Enjoy some African violets this winter.

***Carol Ivory, Master Gardener***



## Hellebores

The Hellebore is one of the wonders of late winter/early spring. Just when we are hoping for the return of warm weather, the Hellebore provides bloom for our enjoyment. This plant is often sold as a shade loving plant, but it also does well in more sunny locations.

The Hellebore is from the *Ranunculaceae*, or buttercup, family. Hellebores are also known as Lenten Rose, or Christmas Rose, because of its bloom time. The plant is also evergreen, thus providing ground color in the winter months.

There are many hybrids of the Hellebore. Because of this, the flower colors range from green to pink to mottled purple. Hellebores are a gardener's delight, providing flowers for upwards of 5 months!

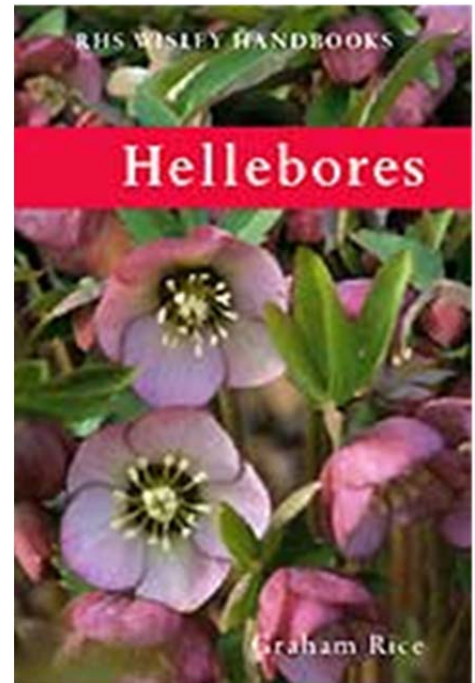


Photo: Simon Garbutt

Hellebores are perfect for the beginning gardeners. They are relatively disease free, and tolerate a lot of benign neglect. They can tolerate our clay soils well. And, they are self-propagating — growing to form clumps — 18 to 24 inches high, and 2 - 3 feet wide.

There have been many books dedicated specifically to the Hellebore, one by Graham Rice provides a great introduction to this wonderful perennial.

If you don't have a Hellebore in your garden yet, now is a great time to do a little research on your favorite variety, and make a little space for this terrific plant.



***Linda Shotton, Loudoun County Master Gardener***

## Don't Commit Crape Murder

Crape myrtle, a native of China, was introduced to South Carolina around 1786 and has become a staple in the southern garden. They are hardy through zone 7 and a few cultivars can survive in zone 6. Crape myrtle have become very popular in Northern Virginia and for good reason, they have few pests, a very long bloom time in the summer, attractive exfoliating bark and an attractive branching structure. They are tough, adaptable and drought tolerant.



**Myrtle murder**

But some crape myrtle owners exhibit a strange, zombie-like behavior that causes them to commit crape murder. It is believed that this is a variant of the same disease that causes people to create mulch volcanoes. Crape murder, also called *stubbing* or *whacking* is a misguided attempt to produce more flowers. Crape myrtles do flower on new wood but stubbing does nothing to produce more blooms. Stubbing creates horrible scars and wounds that never heal. Then a profusion of smaller branches sprout around the cut ruining the tree's proportion and shape. These shoots are weak and have a tendency to flop over when they bloom. Repeated stubbing can kill the tree. To promote reblooming in the summer, you can cut off the seedball clusters as they form (if you can reach them). Cutting off seedballs causes the plant to form lateral buds that will produce 2 more smaller flowers.

Crape myrtles are trees and should be treated like trees. Don't top trees and don't stub crape myrtles. Remove twiggy growth, branches growing into the interior of the tree, any deadwood and crossing branches. Thin out the trunks on young trees.

The number of trunks you leave depends on your personal preference. Leave somewhere between 3 to 7 permanent trunks. The fewer you have the more you can admire their shape and texture. Proper pruning results in a canopy in which air can circulate and every branch receives sunlight. This pruning should be done during the winter and no later than February. Remove new suckers that appear around the base of the tree in the spring. This is important, otherwise the tree will get overgrown and unsightly with suckers.

If you inherit a crape myrtle that has been stubbed you can either try rejuvenation pruning—cut it back to ground level, let the new shoots grow up to about 3 ft., select the ones you want to keep and cut off the rest, or, you can simply replace the tree.

Some people justify stubbing crape myrtle because "they get so tall." Right tree right place starts at the nursery before you make your purchase. Crape myrtle cultivars range in mature height from 18 inches to 30 feet. Choose the cultivar that will grow to fit that space that you have.



**Right tree, right place**

***Carol Ivory, Master Gardener Tree Steward***



## Wild Edibles: White Pine, the Tree of Peace

Autumn winds through December bring the holiday season to our doors. Pine and Juniper boughs decorate our hearths leaving the smell of the forest that mingles with the aromas of holiday baking and good conversation. This month's **Wild Edibles** is devoted to the White Pine, *Pinus strobus*. Often used and thought of as the "Christmas Tree", the white pine has a rich and noble history that predates the arrival of European settlers. The Iroquois Confederacy began hundreds of years before 1492. This symbol culminated the joining of five North Eastern American Tribes into a peaceful union. Weapons were buried beneath this tree or



planted at the bottom of the hole of a new planting to symbolize the laying down of arms in an attempt to negotiate a peaceful outcome. The Iroquois Nation offered this symbol to the new arrivals in order to develop diplomacy. Thus the white Pine is a powerful healing plant for the Iroquois.

Did you know that when the first Europeans arrived in North America, they noticed large swaths of bark peeled from the trees? Many northeast tribes used the inner barks of trees for food and medicine.

**Where Found:** Eastern US; evergreen, tall to at least 150'; needles in clumps of five; native and common to eastern half US; the needle count of five is a distinguishing characteristic. Wildlife and birds feed on the seeds and soft needles. Deer and porcupine seem to like the inner bark for winter feed. Bald eagles will build nests at a main branch located below crown top. This tree, considered the most valuable hardwood in North America, is used for trim work, delicate cabinetry, etc.

**Parts Used:** Twigs, bark, leaves and pitch.

**Pine needles** used for sewing, basket making, tea, good to chew on to freshen breath, strong tea can be used as a hair, face or body wash, high in Vitamin C, pine needle tea helped the early settlers relieve symptoms of scurvy. This is an easy tea to make when out camping overnight. (See recipe below)

**Resins** (pine pitch) used as cement to seal the seams in canoes; also chewed for a sore throat; Indians would dry, powder, and apply the dried resin to sore throats; resin added to a salve is supposed to be great for taking out a splinter or bringing a boil to a head.

**Inner bark:** used with other herbs or inner barks e.g. wild cherry bark, to make a cough syrup for colds, chronic indigestion, flu and kidney troubles. The inner barks and small twigs as a tea helped as an expectorant.

**Essential oil:** antiseptic, antiviral, bactericidal deodorant, diuretic; refreshing, deodorant, stimulating qualities and can bring relief in a body oil for muscular pain.

Whiffing the soft fragrant essential oil can help alleviate a dark mood as it has an uplifting, enlivening quality; the essential oil can be added to bath or skin oils in very small amounts as it can be irritating to the skin for some people; you will find pine oil used in combination with other essential oils for this reason.

Inhalation of the oil is good for colds, sinusitis, and sore throats and can be mixed with eucalyptus or tea tree oil. Placing several drops of pine oil in a pot of water and leaving on a woodstove can permeate the room with a delightful forest fragrance.



Caution: Do not use: Dwarf pine oil: *Pinus pussilio* or *Pinus mugo*, these oils are hazardous to health.

**Recipe: Essential oil: Soothing Muscle Rub**

*In aromatherapy, pine is used in saunas, steam baths and massage blends for sore muscles. The natural evergreen aroma of pine essential oil is a sweet alternative to harshly medicinal pharmaceutical preparations. Here's a recipe that combines the oils of several plants used to add, therapeutic fragrance to steams and saunas.*

**Ingredients:**

30 drops pine essential oil  
30 drops juniper berry essential oil  
30 drops peppermint essential oil  
10 drops lemon essential oil

**Directions:**

To make a penetrating massage oil for overworked muscles, dilute 12 drops of this concentrated blend in 3 ounces of vegetable oil (such as sweet almond.) (Never apply concentrated essential oil blends directly to skin without diluting them first; as irritation may develop.) This fragrant muscle rub is especially nice the day after a strenuous workout when muscles may be tight and sore.

White Pine Needle Tea: <http://www.food.com>

- Prep Time: 5 mins
- Total Time: 25 mins
- Servings: 2

**About This Recipe**

I found this recipe in the Iowa Outdoors magazine. Jacques Cartier, in his book "Voyages to Canada" (1534), credited this tea made from pine needles and bark as saving the lives of his ice-stranded crew. Once 110 men strong, scurvy had taken 25 sailors, with 50 more near death and the remainder too weak to bury the dead. They were cured when Quebec Indians shared the tea, and with it, the secret to obtaining Vitamin C in the depths of winter."

**CAUTION:** Pregnant women or those planning on becoming pregnant should not consume this tea.

**Ingredients**

- o 1/2 cup fresh green white pine needles, finely chopped
- o 3 cups water
- o Honey (or maple syrup)

**Directions**

1. Harvest the newest, green needles at the branch tips.
2. Add needles to boiling water and simmer 20 minutes or until water is reduced by about a third.
3. Add your favorite sweetener.

*Judith Dreyer, MS, BSN, RN, Fauquier County Master Gardener*

## ABCs of Trees

**Botanical Name:** *Betula Nigra*

**Common Name:** River Birch



- Zones:** 4 - 9
- Family:** *Betulaceae*
- Habit:** Deciduous
- Form:** Med. sized, usually multi-trunked, tree with irregular branching; divided crown forms "Y" shape
- Height:** 70 to 80 feet
- Spread:** 40 to 60 feet
- Growth rate:** medium to fast (>2' per yr.)
- Texture:** medium-fine in leaf
- Leaf:** alternate, simple; 1.5-3" long, roughly oval or triangular with wedge-shaped base and doubly toothed edges; dark green above and light green on the underside
- Flower:** males in persistent 2-3" reddish-green catkins; females in upright .25 to .5" light green catkins that appear in spring
- Fruit:** 1 - 1.5" cone-like, long, with many hairy scales; reddish brown with many 3-winged seeds
- Bark:** smooth on young trees, salmon to rust colored; developing papery scales, exfoliating horizontally with several colors (creamy to orangish-brown) visible; later developing coarse scales

**Site Requirements:** moist soil, full sun. Habitat is deep, rich soils on stream banks (thus the name). Needs acidic soil (pH 5 to 6.5).

**Diseases and Insects:** birch leafminers and bronze birch borer are common insects. The leafminer will not kill the tree but may reduce the aesthetic appearance by turning the leaves brown and the borer is not as big a threat to this type of birch as it is to white bark birches.

**Landscape Uses:** tolerant of light flood conditions; can be used as shade trees or street trees with adequate irrigation; planted to help to control soil erosion. Birds eat the seeds, while deer and other wildlife eat the leaves and twigs; known for its spectacular bark and fluttering, whimsical foliage.

**Noteworthy:** This tree needs plenty of room to grow as the branches and crown spread out significantly. The bark is an eye catcher and it makes this tree easy to identify.

**Barbara Bailey, Master Gardener Tree Steward**



Photos: VT Factsheet

## ABCs of Trees

**Botanical Name:** *Carpinus caroliniana*

**Common Name:** American Hornbeam  
Musclewood, Ironwood



|              |  |
|--------------|--|
| Zones:       | 3 - 9  |
| Family:      | Betulaceae - Birch Family  |
| Habit:       | Deciduous  |
| Form:        | Small tree or large shrub with smooth dark blue-grey sinewy bark. May be single or multi-trunked.  |
| Height:      | 10 to 30 feet  |
| Spread:      | 10 to 30 feet, spreading, with a rounded crown   |
| Growth rate: | Slow   |
| Texture:     | Medium to fine   |
| Leaf:        | Leaves are alternate, simple, elliptical, 2-4" long double serrated, with long pointed tips and round bases. Veins on the leaves are straight        |
| Flower:      | Monoecious<br>Female: ½ to ¾" catkin appearing at new branch tips<br>Male: 1-2" long hanging catkin<br>Both male and female catkins appear in spring |



catkins



fluted trunk

**Fruit:** 1/4 inch long oblong nutlet in distinctive paired yellow to yellowish green chain-like clusters of 3-lobed bracts

**Bark:** Smooth blue-gray color with sinewy-like folds, dense and hard. The tree is commonly called Musclewood, Ironwood or Blue Beech, reflecting the appearance of the bark.

**Site Requirements:** shade-loving tree, which prefers moderate soil fertility and moisture. It has a shallow, wide-spreading root system.

**Diseases and Insects:** leaf spots, cankers, twig blight, but none of these are significantly serious.

**Landscape Uses:** Understory tree or as small shade tree in moist well drained conditions. Will tolerate periodic flooding. Best in naturalized situations. Yellow orange and deep red autumn color

**Noteworthy:** Deserves more attention as a subtle landscape tree.



seed cluster

**Sharon Kearns, Master Gardener Tree Steward**



## Join the Garden to Table Team for a “harvest” of community gardeners!

Community gardening is certainly a buzzword these days and the Master Gardener’s “Garden to Table” team (G2T) is proud to be a part of the fresh food movement. Although the G2T team is only a couple of years old, the team has already connected with many committed people all over the county who are dedicated to find ways to grow fresh food.



Recently the G2T team realized there was need for community gardeners across the county to have a forum where they could network and share their own experiences in planning, managing and growing in a community garden setting. With this in mind the G2T team is sponsoring a “Community Garden Seminar” in early 2012. *As we know gardeners get very busy once the spring weather arrives.* This seminar will be held on Saturday February 4, 2012 at the Ashburn Library, 43316 Hay Road, Ashburn, VA 20147, starting at 10:30 AM. The seminar is scheduled to last 2 hours and includes a couple of brief opening presentations *but more importantly* a time for members of the audience to ask questions not only of the

G2T team but of other community gardeners who have been in the dirt.

The seminar is open to all who have an interest in community gardening which includes organizers, team leaders, gardeners or people simply interested in learning more about community gardens. As the economy continues to tighten we need more community gardens to help meet the demand for quality fresh food for families who may not have the knowledge or the means. Light refreshments and door prizes will be part of our little “party” to celebrate winter’s last gasp so come with new season enthusiasm to get the 2012 season off to a great start.



Space may be a consideration along with the weather (after all it is early February) so we are asking anyone who is interested in attending to register by emailing us their name & phone number for planning purposes. We will also send you further informational emails regarding the seminar. Please address your email with “Subject Line: MG Community Gardening Seminar” to [DEHarris01@aol.com](mailto:DEHarris01@aol.com). You may also call the MG Help Desk at 703-771-5150 and leave a message with your interest along with name and phone number.

Perhaps you are not a community gardener but know someone who is and if so, please pass this information onto them. We hope to see old acquaintances and new faces on February 4<sup>th</sup> 2012. If you cannot make it or want to know more about how the G2T team can help you email our Help Desk at [ex107mg@vt.edu](mailto:ex107mg@vt.edu) with your request or call the number above.

We are looking forward to seeing you there!

Date: Saturday, February 4, 2012

Time: 10:30-12:30

Place: Ashburn Library, 43316 Hay Road, Ashburn, VA 20147

*The Garden to Table Team*

## Notes from the Help Desk:

**Q:** We purchased a living Christmas tree this year; how/when do we plant this tree in the ground?

**A:** A living Christmas tree is one that is balled-and-burlapped. After the holiday, the tree can be planted as a permanent part of your landscape, and bring memories of your holiday for years to come. It is advisable to **dig the hole for the tree early** - before the ground freezes. Save the soil to fill the hole when you plant the tree. Choose your landscape spot (factor in the mature size of the tree, it's going to GROW) before the holiday and prepare the hole. The hole should be at least twice as wide as the root ball and the same depth as the root ball. Always handle the tree by the root ball, not the tree trunk and handle carefully. Turn the tree to the desired position and lower into the hole. NOTE: The top of the root ball should be level or slightly above the surrounding ground level - not below it. Remove all wire, burlap, tags, etc. as carefully as possible to encourage root growth. Backfill with the soil excavated to about  $\frac{3}{4}$  deep and water. Do not add soil amendments to excavated soil as this may retard root growth from entering surrounding soil. Finish backfilling around the root ball when water settles. Do not put soil up around the root flare (base of the tree). Firm and level the soil by hand - resist the urge to step on it to tamp it down - that does more harm than good. Add 2 - 3" inches of mulch, staying at least 3 inches away from the root flare. Water this tree throughout the winter whenever the ground is thawed, and continue to water it regularly for the next 2 years.

**Q:** What is the best way to take care of our cut Christmas tree?

**A:** Your tree may absorb a gallon of water the first day. Treat the tree like a bouquet of cut flowers and keep it watered. Put the tree in a location where it is not likely to be knocked over - and away from hot air ducts, wood stoves, fireplaces, etc. Make sure light cords are in good condition.

After the holiday, dispose of the tree where it will be used for organic matter versus sending it to the landfill with other household garbage. Most locations offer tree-pickup.

**Q:** What are your gardening tips for the winter months?

**A:** Of course there are things to remember during the winter months:

- Plan additions or changes in your landscape while you can see your "bare" beds
- Avoid walking on frozen lawns to prevent damage to grass roots
- Gently brush snow from trees and shrubs to prevent breakage
- De-icing salt is harmful, protect your trees and shrubs from salt runoff, try using alternatives.
- In February, check stored bulbs, corms and tubers and discard ones that are soft or rotting

For more Winter Garden Tips see: <http://www.loudouncountymastergardeners.org/alerts.htm>

**Barbara Bailey, Master Gardener**

## Brown Marmorated Stink Bug Survey

In August, we sent out a letter concerning the follow-up Brown Marmorated Stink Bug survey. We are planning on sharing the results with Dr. Tracy Leskey, Entomologist at the USDA Appalachian Fruit Research Station and also with Eric Day, Manager of the Entomology Lab at Virginia Tech.

We are asking that all of you take a few minutes to complete the survey, if you have not done so. Please go to this link to complete the survey: <http://www.surveymonkey.com/s/759Y8PH>.

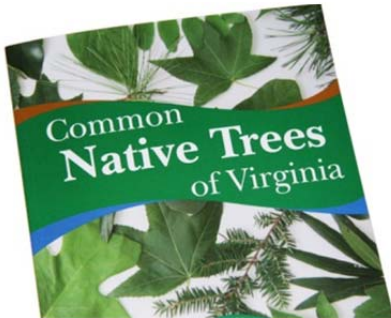
Thank you for your help!

**Diane Hayes, Master Gardener**

## Good Tree Books for Your Bookshelf

### *Common Native Trees of Virginia, Tree Identification Guide*

By Virginia Department of Forestry



This guide is chock full of information for the Virginia tree enthusiast and a good place to start for help identifying native trees in our backyards, parks and forests. To get you started, this black and white guide prepares you to use the key by describing leaf parts, leaf types (needle, scale-like, etc.) and positions of leaves (pinnately compound, etc.), types of leaf margins (wavy, lobed, etc.) and leaf placement (opposite or alternate) on a branch/stem. Using the key or flow chart they provide, you can step through the process of identifying the tree. For example, step 1 is to

identify the leaves. If they are needles, go to number 2, if they are broad and flat, go to number 14. If number 2 was correct, it then goes into the size of the needles, etc. If number 14 was correct, it starts you down the path of placement of leaves, etc. Eventually you will end up with a page number and tree ID!

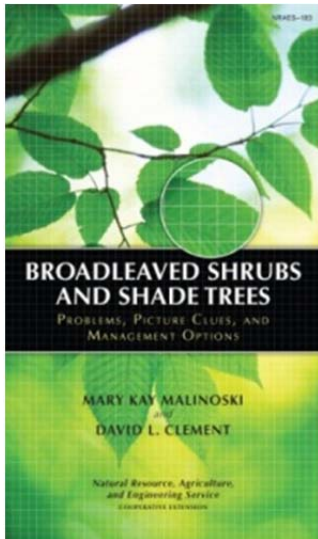
There are 78 pages dedicated to 78 native trees. For each tree there is a map showing where it is naturally found in Virginia, a description of each tree and a drawing of each tree's leaf, fruit and stem and a description of the tree's value and uses. What fun! If you don't have the patience to go through the key provided, then by all means flip through the book and look at the drawings. You may just find what you're looking for in a tree.

This is a simple pocket guide and the price is right! \$2 at [www.dof.virginia.gov](http://www.dof.virginia.gov).

### *Broadleaved Shrubs and Shade Trees*

#### *Problems, Picture Clues, and Management Options*

By Mary Kay Malinoski and David L. Clement



This is another great pocket guide with color photos of plant problems to help you identify possible tree and shrub health issues. The authors stress that integrated pest management (IPM to us avid gardeners) is a "holistic approach" to managing pests and only part of the entire ecosystem approach to gardening. One must also consider the plant's surroundings when diagnosing plant problems; water, soil, location, diseases, weeds, animals, weather, air, and other factors such as the neighbor's use of pesticides, etc.

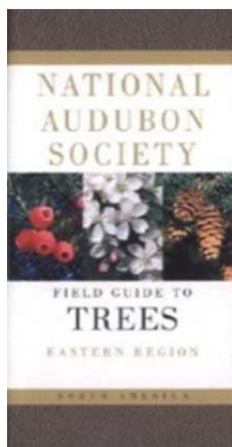
The booklet is 186 pages full of plant symptoms, possible causes and diagnoses. It starts with a chapter called Plant Symptoms and Possible Causes Key containing charts with pictures of leaves, roots, branches, flowers, fruit, stems/trunks as well as the entire tree or shrub along with possible causes of poor health. The causes include abiotic, diseases, insects, wildlife and miscellaneous organisms. The chapters that follow are devoted to details on the

mentioned causes complete with more pictures.

If you love plant CSI, this is a guide for you. It can be ordered from [www.nraes.org](http://www.nraes.org), click on "Book Categories", then "Home and Garden".

(continued)





### ***National Audubon Society Field Guide to North American Trees, Eastern Region***

By Elbert L. Little, former Chief Dendrologist, U.S. Forest Service

One of the best guides a tree lover can own. This book covers 364 trees that are native to eastern North America - from central Texas and the Rocky Mountains to the eastern seaboard. Every species listed has details on its habitat, range and lore; 714 pages of tree delight as you thumb through each section that can assist you in identifying a specific tree.

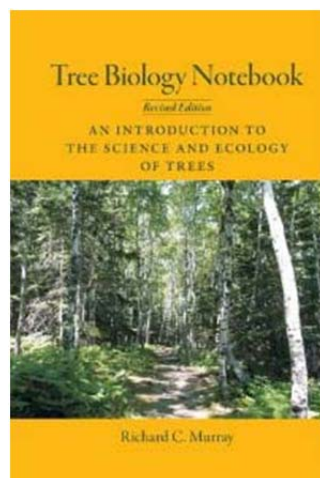
It starts out with a leaf guide based on shape, a flower guide based on color, a fruit guide and an autumn leaf color guide. Using those to identify what tree you may be looking at, you move on to the next section and look at the significant details outlined

for each tree. Within this section there are photos of each tree showing the bark and a leaf sample. It continues with pictures of tree flowers, tree fruit and autumn leaf color. The ginkgo tree has spectacular yellow leaves in the fall which are pictured in this book, and the cross references alert you to go back a section and find its bark and green leaf photo.

The remainder of the field guide is dedicated to information about trees. The book gives the common name and the scientific name to get you started. Then it provides the tree's description — height, diameter, bark color, leaf color, twig size, fruit, growth habit, etc. There are black and white drawings here to help you visualize the mature tree, its fruit, and the area in which the tree grows.

This is a great guide for those budding tree stewards or for those hikers wondering just what that tree might be. It was a big help in my household for a high school biology naturalist journal! The guide can be found at most on-line book stores.

***Barb Bailey, Master Gardener Tree Steward***



### ***Tree Biology Notebook An Introduction to the Science and Ecology of Trees***

By Richard C. Murray

*The Tree Biology Notebook explains everything about trees. From germination to death, from the tiniest root hairs to the biggest branches, from the innermost wood to the outermost leaves, from cellular interactions to forest ecology, you will learn how trees grow and protect themselves, how they interact with their environment and how they affect our lives on earth.*

Read this from cover to cover or use it as a reference book. It provides in-depth explanations of how trees grow, how they handle wounds and diseases, their different types of wood and why they die. It's a deeper dive into tree biology but the information is easy to understand and provides new insight into trees

Richard Murray lives in Silver Spring, MD where he is a practicing arborist. When not working or writing he is an active naturalist, leading tree walks and advocating for trees. This book can be purchased online.

***Carol Ivory, Master Gardener Tree Steward***

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## Gift Suggestions for Gardeners

Take care of those gardeners on your gift list (including yourself!) with favorite gardening items and books from the Master Gardeners.

### Gloves

We are offering Atlas Nitrile gardening gloves. If you think you don't like gardening gloves, try these! You won't want to take them off.



### Great News! We have soil knives!



LCMGA is offering soil knives and sheaths for sale. This is a great gift idea for the gardener in your life.

These are the same knives that we had last spring from A.M. Leonard. The knife is made in Italy. This 11-3/4" tool has lots of functions. It is a trowel, a planter, a knife. It also cuts twine and has depth in inches marked on the edge of the blade. This tool does it all. Its 6 inch blade is double edged and is manufactured from the highest quality Swedish stainless steel.

We are selling it for the same low price as last Spring \$20.00!

We also have leather sheaths for them \$10.00.

Buy both for \$28.00!

### Gardening Books

We have a selection of practical gardening books. In addition to the popular *Good bug, Bad Bug*, we are offering *Good Mushroom, Bad Mushroom* and several others.

Do your Holiday shopping at the Master Gardener Help Desk. All proceeds go to help fund our Master Gardener Programs. For a detailed list of items and order form see:

[http://www.loudouncountymastergardeners.org/BookKnifeGlove\\_Sale\\_Order\\_Form.pdf](http://www.loudouncountymastergardeners.org/BookKnifeGlove_Sale_Order_Form.pdf)