

Gardening in Rich Land



Vol. 25, Issue 1
September 2024

From the President

Val Hutchinson



Yay! September is here and that signals the beginning of fall, my favorite time of year! It wasn't our worst summer for heat, but it was enough to prevent me from weeding in my own backyard, and it is looking sad. Of course, my ancient domestic rabbits survived the heat, and the wild ones are eating all my favorite plants. I've had to buy wire cages to protect the remnants of the hostas I planted this spring. Parts of the new oakleaf hydrangeas and Lady Banks roses are completely gone. Serves me right for laughing at the cute baby bunnies running around earlier.

So along with hurricanes, September will hopefully bring cooler weather, great football games, and lots of learning and teaching opportunities for Master Gardeners. We are, after all, lifelong learners. We can't help ourselves. Curiosity is our middle name! Jackie has asked me to teach composting to the new class, and I am happy as can be preparing for it! I'm reading the chapter again, digging into old notes, and looking at old PowerPoints. I can tell them about the gigantic compost piles at Sissinghurst and how German farmers used to build three big piles a year and plant pumpkin seeds in them. Whichever pile grew the biggest pumpkin, that's the pile the farmer would use for his garden. I love that!

Coming up we have Joyce Pundt and Sally Mullen preparing us to teach programs for "School Days," a 10-day project in October that teaches local school children about crops, water, and plant life. It's one of the largest Clemson outreach programs based on the Sandhill REC property. Joyce is updating the lesson plans and adding more show and tell, since the students are young—mostly kindergarten, first, and second grade. We will all be asked to teach some classes and it's so worthwhile!

We have lots of Ask-a-Master Gardener events coming up, including Soda City and the Midlands Plant and Flower Festival. Susan Wilson has been busy setting up speakers for library events, garden center events, and The Lourie Center. She'll have lots of topics to choose from, and when she calls, please say yes.

I'll put all the October events in the new calendar I'll send out each month. Did anyone have trouble printing it out? Please let me know, because I can send it a few different ways and it's no trouble.

Stan Perry, head of Special Projects, has asked that questions involving the Children's Garden go to Debbie Thomas and she will send them on to him. He said questions involving Master Gardeners will go to me, and I will then send them to him. There is some reorganization going on and he wants to simplify the communications. We are also booking the classrooms for Membership programs through Stan.

(Cont'd on p. 2)

2024-2025 **OFFICERS**

President

Val Hutchinson

President-elect

(Open)

Vice President

Evelyn Abernathy

Secretary

Karen Zimmerman

Treasurer

Heidi McKinley

Past President

Isha Kirton

GIR NEWSLETTER

Editor

Toni G. Hubbell

Layout

Cathy Beattie

Technical Editor

Don McInnes

INSIDE THIS ISSUE

From the President
Membership Mtgs
All About Wild Birds
Angela Jones
Carolina Yard
Cover Crops
The Saga of the Slope
Lex Tomato Tasting
Members' Yards
Newly-certified MGs
Jackie's Houseplants

CONTRIBUTORS

Peggy Culler-Hair
Lawrence Haselden
Gale Housley
Toni Hubbell
Val Hutchinson
Angela Jones
Paulette Kindler
Karen McAbee
Robin McClellan
Regina Monteith
Mary Stepling
Susan Wilson

So – we’re off and running! We have an outstanding team of gardeners and educators, and we are sharing our knowledge with an ever growing, eager to learn community. What’s not to like?

See you very soon! Take care, Val.

A Hydration Warning and a Long Range Plant

Toni G. Hubbell

Our July 2, 2024, Membership Meeting began appropriately with Elaine Jeter explaining how important hydration is to our health, especially in these extremely hot days. As we have heard with each weather report, this month is the hottest on record.



Health officials warn of dehydration during this extreme weather. We are told our bodies can become dehydrated and overheated, leading to heat exhaustion and heat stroke, both very serious medical conditions.

Elaine Jeter talked to the group about why staying hydrated is so important for us and the ways to stay hydrated. We need, she reminded us, to drink water, even if we do not feel thirsty. She described some of the effects of becoming dehydrated which include nausea, muscle cramps and feeling faint. As she finished her report, I noticed many of our members pulling out their water bottles.

Jackie Jordan, Clemson Extension Agent, talked to us next and described a very ambitious, long-range plan to develop a series of teaching videos that can be used at libraries and posted on social media outlets. In our Master Gardener classes, we are taught the science of how and why plants grow, but we are not trained to present this information to the public. Since our mission is to present sustainable horticulture in our communities, it is important that Master Gardeners become effective communicators.

Many Master Gardeners feel overwhelmed when they are in front of an audience, tasked with explaining the importance of home composting, for example. Such fear is normal, of course, as we remember that most people are afraid of three things: fear of heights; fear of deep water and fear of speaking in public.

Jackie envisions a volunteer group working on scripts about the most popular home gardening questions, such as what kind of turf grass should I plant, or what plants will bloom in shade, how to start a home compost pile, how to mulch or prune, and so on. Using these carefully researched scripts, Master Gardeners can use this information to make videos for the public, either during presentations or on social media outlets.

She passed around a sign-up sheet to get a core of volunteers to begin working soon. From the number of us who want to be part of this endeavor, her plan will soon become a reality.

2024-2025 Project Directors

Standing Projects

Ask-a-Master Gardener

Lynn Derrick

Carolina Yard at the Cottage

Regina Monteith

Community Education

Susan Wilson

Compost Education Garden

Karlann Brenner

Continuing Education

Evelyn Abernathy

Development

Elaine Jeter

Gardening in Rich Land

Toni G. Hubbell

Hospitality

Linda Zanders

Intern Mentor Coordinator

Robin McClellan

Membership

Cathy Beattie

Plant Sale & Community Ed.

Isha Kirton

RCMGA Digest

Leslie Platt

Sandhill Children’s Garden

Debbie Thomas

Social Media

Tim Carrier

Turfgrass Demonstration Area

Jim Hightower

Advisory Projects

Historian

OPEN

Historic Pond Trail

OPEN

Special Projects Volunteer Coordinator

OPEN

PHOTO CREDITS

Harriette Edmonds
Peggy Culler-Hair
Lawrence Haselden
Toni Hubbell
Paulette Kindler
Karen McAbee
Robin McClellan
Mary Stepling
Susan Wilson

Invasive Insects

Toni Hubbell

President Val Hutchinson opened our September Membership Meeting Tuesday, September 10, 2024, using her karaoke machine’s microphone to amplify her voice. “It was a present from our children,” she explained, but no one uses it to perform anymore, and it makes a good amplifier, she said. Master Gardeners are great at finding new uses for almost anything!



L-R: Chris Meyer, Bekah Keyes, Dr. Carla Coots, Todd Giager and TyRiq Beasley

Bekah Keyes of the MG class of 2023 introduced the speakers for our program. Not only is Bekah a certified Master Gardener but she also works for the United States Department of Agriculture. She brought four colleagues with her to talk about some of the most destructive and invasive insects.

TaRiq Beasley and Todd Giager described the first in the invasive insect lineup—the Asian longhorned beetle (*Anoplophora glabripennis*) which probably entered the United States in solid wood packing material from China. This very destructive insect has been found in a 76 square mile area near Charleston, in the Ravenel section.

This beetle attacks trees, especially the maples, birches, the Ohio buckeye, elms and willows. The beetles’ larvae tunnel into the bark and girdle the tree stems and branches. These attacks cause dieback of the tree crown and the tree eventually dies. At present the only effective means of eliminating the longhorned beetle is to remove the infected trees and chip or burn them.

This insect has one generation a year; adult beetles are usually present from July to October. The female lays about 35-90 eggs which hatch in 10-15 days. These larvae feed on the living tissue under the bark and then bore deeper where they pupate. The adult emerges by boring exit holes. TyRiq and Todd passed around two logs that showed girdling damage and the exit holes.



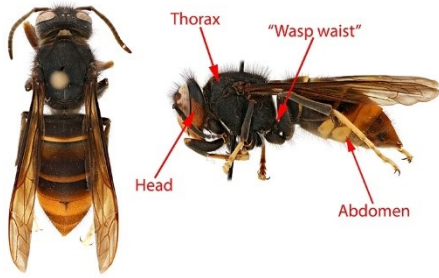
One of the displays the USDA team brought



Top R-L: Adult, 1”, wings closed; early stage nymph, 1/4”; fresh egg mass. Bottom R-L: Adult, open wings; late stage nymph; older egg mass. Image from <https://bit.ly/3z8AOU>

Next in the lineup of murderous insects was the spotted lanternfly (*Lycorma delicatula*) which first appeared in this country in 2014 in Pennsylvania, said Dr. Carla Coots, an entomologist with the North Charleston office. Although it has spread to many other states, it has not yet come to South Carolina, she reported. These insects are very detrimental to vineyards, apple and walnut trees. The lantern flies are small, only about an inch long and spread rapidly by hitching rides on vehicles, wheel covers and trailers. They lay their eggs on trees and other outdoor surfaces, including furniture. The eggs hatch in the spring and begin feeding on a wide range of host plants, sucking sap from the stems and branches. Grape vines and stone fruits are special targets.

(Cont’d on pg. 4)



Yellow -legged hornet. Image from USDA at <https://bit.ly/3XGWL10>

Chris Meyer identified the last of these winged criminals—the yellow-legged hornet (*Vespa velutina nigrithorax*). Members of the *Vespa* genus are known as the “true hornets” and are exceptional predators. These insects hunt in groups and prey on honey bees. They are large enough to overpower other insects and their thick exoskeleton wards off stings. They live in papery nests.

The USDA team brought many handouts with pictures of these invasive insects and with ways to report sightings. Only with knowing where they are can we begin to help control the damage these insects do.

All About Wild Birds

Toni G. Hubbell



Presenters from Wild Birds Unlimited, Jesse Finck, Brooklyn Hoagland, and Maddie

The farm bell in front of Old MacDonald’s Farm was ringing out as adults and children gathered at the Sandhill Children’s Garden Classroom to hear the second educational presentation from the Children’s Garden. Three representatives from Wild Birds Unlimited presented “Save the Songbirds” on a sunny, mild Friday, September 6, 2024.

About 40 adults and children sat on every available bench while others stood to hear representatives from Wild Birds Unlimited, a familiar store in Columbia. The bell kept ringing until finally an adult scooped up the toddler hanging onto the rope, and the program started.

Jesse Finck started by showing pictures of various trees and large shrubs that provide food for birds, either by their berries or seeds or by attracting insects whose larvae are eaten by the birds. These trees range from the lovely serviceberry (*Amelanchier*), whose red berries are delicious to birds as well as humans, to the more familiar tree, the southern live oak (*Quercus virginiana*), whose acorns feed birds such as sapsuckers, mallards, wild turkeys, and provide nesting for several species. Woodpeckers and warblers eat the insects and larvae.

Another interesting tree is the saw palmetto (*Serenoa repens*), whose reddish-black fruit provides food in the fall for cardinals and birds migrating at that time. The flowering dogwood is a genus in the *Cornaceae* family and beloved by robins, brown thrashers, bluebirds, mockingbirds and cardinals—all the familiar backyard birds. The eastern red cedar (*Juniperus virginiana*) provides berries eaten by the cedar waxwings, and its dense foliage makes it good for nests and shelter in the winter, similar to the benefits of the American holly (*Ilex opaca*).



Michael Brown listens to the presenters along with fellow Master Gardeners, L-R- Linda Zanders, Elaine Jeter, Debbie Thomas and Deborah Allen



Young attendees busy coloring bird pictures

Flowering plants such as coneflowers (*Echinacea*), milkweed (*Asclepias*), bee balm (*Monarda*), a member of the mint family (*Lamiaceae*), scarlet sage (*Salvia coccinea*), and Virginia creeper (*Parthenocissus quinquefolia*), all provide food and shelter for birds. Many of these plants attract pollinators such as bees and butterflies, and when they lay eggs on these leaves, the eggs become larvae which become meals for birds. First Priority Nursery Center provided a tableful of these plants for demonstration.

Angela Jones

Toni Hubbell



Meet Angela Jones, whose official job title is Horticulture and Agriculture Assistant at the Richland County Clemson Extension Office. If you have been in the Extension Office, you have probably seen her helping someone identify a problem with a lawn, as she did for a friend of mine, or showing an intern how to label soil sample bags. The following questions and her replies will help you get to know her better.

Q: We know you have experience in landscape design and work with native plants. Were you always interested in plants? Was anyone in your family an influence on you?

A: *When I started my interest in horticulture, I had a focus on indoor plants and tropical houseplants. My sister-in-law Christina Jones had a major influence on me. Christina has a professional business selling and collecting rare plants from around the world. I often accompanied her on errands, picking up shipping boxes or dropping them back off at the Post Office with someone's bromeliad or begonia. Through these experiences, my interest in gardening and landscaping grew, and I eventually started taking classes on various*

horticulture-related topics.

Q: You are currently pursuing a degree in horticulture at Piedmont Technical College. Will this degree be a steppingstone to a particular job?

A: *My ultimate goal is to operate my own greenhouses and sell plants wholesale. While this goal can be accomplished without a degree, I decided to pursue my horticulture degree because I felt I lacked knowledge in operating a greenhouse. Furthermore, my interest expanded from greenhouse management to landscape management through continuing course education classes. Going back to school for my horticulture degree has provided me more options and opportunities in my horticulture career.*

Q: What is a typical day in the Extension Office like for you? Are there any frequently asked questions?

A: *A typical day in the Extension Office is similar to working at a local garden retail store. We often receive frequently asked questions related to turf grass management, such as identifying the type of grass and the best horticulture practices for that specific turfgrass. Other common questions involve urban tree care, soil fertility for crops and ornamental plant growth, and Integrated Pest Management (IPM) for common pests.*

Q: What do you see as your role meeting the public in the Extension Office? What do you hope these visitors will take away from your meetings?

A: *My role in meeting the public at the Extension Office is to provide guidance and information on various horticulture topics. I aim to educate and empower visitors so they can make informed decisions regarding their plants and gardens. I hope that these visitors will leave our meetings with valuable knowledge and resources that will help them succeed in their horticulture endeavors.*

Q: All the Master Gardeners who worked on the plant sale were just blown away by your many trays of beautifully planted vegetables and flowers. How did you accomplish growing all these plants from seed in your home?

A: *I received a lot of help in starting my seeds this year. To begin, I used a seasonal planting guide specific to my zone. This helped me calculate the amount of space needed for all the seeds I planned to grow and sell or donate. In January, I borrowed a germination rack from our Horticulture Agent, Jackie Jordan. She had a few racks available in her office and I thought it would be interesting to compare them to the greenhouse germination chambers. The germination rack was small enough to fit in my dining room. Typically, I would use my laundry room and dryer for the heat and window across from it. This germination process takes about 2-3 weeks.*

I started my perennial flower seeds first at home using the germination chamber and then transferred them to my school's (PTC) greenhouse in Greenwood, where they could be closely monitored. As a horticulture student at Piedmont

(Cont'd on pg. 6)

Technical College, we are allowed to use unused space in the greenhouse. The greenhouses also have a germination chamber that I like to use, as it germinates the seeds within a week. With this setup, I was able to germinate 4-6 flats of seeds in a week.

Once the seeds germinated, I transferred them all into containers that they were sold in, such as 6-pack, 4-pack, 4" pots. I made sure to keep them watered and fed. This was not a process I did alone; my peers and friends from the PTC Horticulture Program helped ensure that my plants were cared for if I couldn't be there.

Q: If you could invite any three people, alive or dead, to lunch with you, whom would you invite? Why?

A: *If I could have lunch with any three people, dead or alive, I would choose Martha Stewart, Laura LeBoutillier, and Dr. Michael A. Dirr. Martha Stewart is an iconic businesswoman known for her expertise in home and hospitality. T Laura LeBoutillier, an internet sensation, has helped me learn about different plants and how to use them in various settings through her YouTube channel, "Garden Answers." Last is Dr. Michael A. Dirr, an American horticulturist and professor who has made significant contributions to the nursery trades. These individuals have inspired me in different ways, and I would love to have the opportunity to learn from them in person over lunch.*

Update: As this issue of *Gardening in Rich Land* was going to press, we were sad to learn that Angela is leaving the Richland County Extension Office and has taken a position at the University of South Carolina.

Latest News From the Carolina Yard

Regina Monteith & Toni Hubbell

The Richland County Conservation Commission has awarded the Carolina Yard at the Cottage a grant of \$10,000 to support the relocation of this project from its original site to a new one in the Sandhill Children's Garden. The grant will fund shrubs, vines and plants to enclose the perimeter of the garden. Coral honeysuckle and Confederate jasmine will twine along the back fence with a swath of pink muhly grass in front. Along the sides Spring Bouquet viburnum hedges will screen the garden from others beside it. Across the front pink Belinda's Dream roses, white yarrow, white society garlic, and white Thalia daffodils will invite visitors into the garden through the arbor, where white clematis and purple aster twine.



As Master Gardeners install this plant material, they will apply appropriate fertilizers, compost, and mulch supported by the grant.



Regina Monteith rakes up old pine straw and cardboard as Isha Kirton helps.

The grant also funds hardscape paths of chocolate gray stepping stones, installed by Scott Coggin of Hoedown Landscaping, and drip irrigation installed by Jackie Jordan of Clemson Extension.

By December we expect to finish this phase of the installation. Yay!!!

On August 11, volunteers Regina Monteith, Pam Robinson, Carla Frantz, Nancy Maseng, Isha Kirton and Robin McClellan, armed with heavy rakes and trash bags, began work on "The Great Reveal," the uncovering of garden beds in the Carolina Yard. Months ago, these beds were covered with heavy cardboard and thick pine straw to suppress the grass and weeds. Now was the time to see how well this system worked.



Nancy Maseng and Carla Frantz load used pine straw and debris.

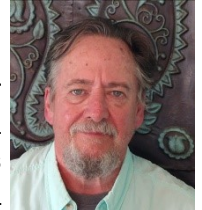
(Cont'd on p. 7)

Rakes bit into the layers, pulling back pine straw and crumbling cardboard, and the work became harder. There were the pale strands of some roots, but the weeds were gone. Workers filled bag after bag with debris and hauled it away so that the outlines of the beds were visible.

The next step will be to cover these areas with compost/mulch, which Lynn Derrick will bring from Todd Townsend's farm, Old Turtle Pond. The compost has been donated to the Carolina Yard, and Lynn will bring it in two loads on September 18 and 25. Then the beds will be ready for planting in mid to late fall.

Cover Crops in a Vegetable Garden

Lawrence Haselden



In the Midlands of South Carolina, we are able to grow vegetables during all seasons of the year. Often when one harvest is over, several months may pass before we are ready to plant another crop. Uncovered soil is subject to erosion which will wash away nutrients and has a detrimental effect on most soil microorganisms. Some gardeners choose to cover the soil with a mulch; others will cover with fabric or a tarp to deter weeds and prevent the sun and wind having a detrimental effect on the health of the soil. I prefer, when possible, to keep roots in the ground to nurture the soil, and so I will plant a cover crop.

Cover crops help maintain soil health, help prevent erosion, suppress weeds, preserve moisture, and limit soil compaction. Mustards, brassicas, and others attract pollinators and other beneficial insects. Legumes like clover, Austrian winter peas, field peas, and vetch support nitrogen-fixing bacteria. Daikon radish and other nitrogen fixing plants send roots deep to penetrate hard soils and bring nutrients up from deeper in the soil. Some call this “nutrient cycling.” Using cover crops may also limit the need for pesticides and herbicides.

There are cover crops that can be planted during every season in South Carolina. I have included a link below to “Cover Crop Resource Guide for Vegetables in Richland County.” I include some herbs and flowers like marigolds and basil when I think of summer cover crops. You can include other flowers that you like as well or a wildflower mix. In winter I use mustard greens as a cover crop, and if I have saved seeds of radish, kale or other brassicas, I will use them as a cover crop. Mustard and radish germinate quickly in the fall which helps suppress the weeds.

The use of cover crops is becoming popular. Some popular practices integrate cover crops such as no till, regenerative agriculture, sustainable landscaping, and edible forest. Cover crops add organic matter to the soil, reduce weeds, improve soil structure, help maintain healthy soil microorganisms, and increase available nitrogen. Microbial biomass (bacteria and fungi) decomposes plant and animal residues, transforming some nutrients to a form available to the plants. A diversity of organisms such as protozoa, nematodes, arthropods and earthworms help keep the soil healthy and porous for vegetables that we would like to plant.



Cover crop acting as a mulch in a raised bed at the Winnsboro Arms apartments

I choose cover crops depending on the season and what I want to accomplish. I often plant field peas, buckwheat, marigolds and basil in the summer. I plant buckwheat between rows of melons because buckwheat attracts pollinators to the melons and also covers the ground until the vines run to fill the area. If I have an area I do not intend to plant until fall, I will plant an area in marigolds. A mass planting of marigolds has a detrimental effect on nematodes and nurtures some beneficial insects. I seed basil between tomato seedlings in late summer so when the tomatoes are exhausted, the basil is thriving. I plant white clover between rows of onions, garlic, collards, and broccoli in the fall. White clover does not seem to be bothered by being walked on, and also, as a legume, it will nurture bacteria that fix nitrogen. The clover also gives me a walkway that does not get muddy when it rains.

(Cont'd on p. 8)

If the soil is compacted, daikon radish roots will penetrate it and when the radish decays, it will naturally loosen the soil. Mustards and other brassicas produce a natural chemical that has shown promise for managing soil-borne pathogens like nematodes. The results are inconsistent and research continues, but last year I bought a variety of mustard Nemagon that is reported to work as a nematicide on root-knot nematodes. I planted tomatoes, peppers and eggplant and okra where I planted the Nemagon mustard last fall, and I harvested more tomatoes than last year and the eggplant, peppers, okra appear to be thriving. (Nemagon mustard is a biofumigant or a plant that, when used as a cover crop, releases a natural plant chemical that suppresses root-knot nematodes. Jackie Jordan).

Several companies sell a mix of cover crops specifically for fall gardens. These mixes include some varieties of legumes like Austrian winter peas, clovers, hairy vetch, and other cool season grains and brassicas and often a root plant like daikon radish.

Most of the literature will say the cover crops should be terminated before the seeds mature to prevent the cover crop from becoming the next season's weeds. I use cover crops for a dual purpose, to nurture the soil but also to feed and nurture the pollinators. When the mustard is blooming, the pollinators are happy and so am I. I often let mustards, radish, brassicas go to seed, some of which I will gather to plant in the fall, but sometimes the crop stays in the garden and self-seeds the next year.



This field of blooming mustard and other brassicas is attracting pollinators.

I experimented planting white Dutch clover in March in raised beds where I would plan to plant with spring crops like tomato, pepper, and eggplant. I planted the seedlings by only removing enough of the clover to plant the seedlings. I planted the clover later in March than I would have liked because this was a new raised bed. Then I planted the tomato, eggplant and pepper in April and some basil a little later. I think the clover is acting as a green mulch around the tomatoes. I hope to do this in other places next year. Last year the tomatoes and peppers I planted in a raised bed of clover had tomatoes until late fall.

Early references to cover crops can be found in oral history, the most famous example being the use by Native farmers who planted the “Three Sisters,” beans, squash and corn. These plants cycled nutrients through the soil and acted as a cover to increase production. It is only recently that farming came to rely on chemical fertilizers, pesticides and herbicides. Today, though, farmers on a large or small scale are beginning to see that using cover crops is more economical and environmentally sustainable.

Clemson University has been researching planting inter-seeded cover crops and cash crops. This research and its results can be found by going to the Clemson site and typing in “cover crops.”

Clemson Study Finds Interseeded Cover Crops Do Not Interfere With Cash Crops

<https://news.clemson.edu/clemson-study-finds-interseeded-cover-crops-do-not-compete-with-cash-crops-2/>

Cover Crops for Weed and Nutrient Management

<https://lgpress.clemson.edu/publication/cover-crops-for-weed-and-nutrient-management/>

Cover Crops in Raised Beds

<https://hgic.clemson.edu/cover-crops-in-raised-beds/>

Cover Crops for The Fall

<https://hgic.clemson.edu/cover-crops/>

Integrating Cover Crops for Agroecosystem Services

<https://lgpress.clemson.edu/publication/integrating-cover-crops-for-agroecosystems-services/>

Cover Crop Resource Guide for Southeast:

<https://southerncovercrops.org/cover-crop-resource-guide/>

(Cont'd on p. 9)

The Saga of the Slope

Mary Stepling

As with much new construction, landscaping plans need to be included. Such was the case in 2008 when we built our house. The lot was a challenge as the house was sited at the top of a plot that rolled down to a small lake. This required a good bit of fill, but we were undaunted. Well, not me, but my husband was undaunted. The house had to be sited at the top adding fill, rather than at the bottom where flooding could be a possibility. 2015 proved that was the right decision! The lot was cleared, keeping as many trees as possible. The front yard was planned and planted as soon as the house was in place. The back yard took a little longer, but that too was completed in short order. But oh, the gully, ravine, rift, gulch... we still did not know what to call it, the natural area beside the driveway remained. The initial thinking, besides not adding to construction/landscape expense, was that leaving a natural border would be ecologically smart. A habitat for wildlife like birds and bees would be a positive environmentally sound move, and that was true. What was also true was it was a place for snakes, poison ivy, all manner of unattractive plants and what I call “dad-gum” sweet gum trees. They are native and have beautiful fall foliage but those pods! A neighbor who regularly walked the neighborhood laughingly called it a sweet gum farm. She was not wrong.



So, after a few years of continually battling the encroachment of all of the above, my sweet, supportive spouse agreed to attempt to clear it. After much investigation and discussion, we decided on goats, yes goats, as our clearing method. We contacted a reputable company that does this very thing, that is, clearing land using goats. We were assured the goats could do the job. In fact, we learned that poison ivy is “candy” to goats. The owner also said for a small fee they would finish the clearing by pulling any remaining roots. We were excited! A small portable electric fence was installed along with a plastic swimming pool to provide the goats with water. When we questioned the method of shocking the animals to keep them contained, we were assured that the goats only needed one small jolt to avoid the fence and that these goats had long ago learned not to go near the fence. Our only job was to count the goats daily and be sure they had fresh water. The goats were mostly quiet and provided a daily show for the neighborhood children to watch. Within a week the space was down to the roots and the folks, as promised, began to pull up roots after removing the munchers.



One goat from the cleanup crew taking a water break.

After they had done about 6 hours of intense root pulling, my husband and I agreed this was more than the owners had bargained for, so we settled payment with a tip for their extra work, thanked them for their efforts and hoped it would be a long time before needing to address the slope again.

Now even the most novice of gardeners reading this can guess what happened next. Yep! The slope/ravine, ditch was greening up at an alarming pace. Next step, bring in the fill.

Again, though I am a Master Gardener, I was not sharp enough at the time to insist on a better grade of fill than sand. Or perhaps not invested enough, although I am retired, there are grandboys, lunches and volunteer activities too! So, it came to be that when hiring a landscaper to bring a crew to plant, we had sandy fill and no real plan other than to plant things with good root systems and fast so as to hold the slope. Yes, we finally settled on “the slope.” Oh and a few natives would be nice.

The goat clearing was in 2017, and the throw-up-our-hands fill and planting began in February/March two years later. So as gardeners reading this, I am sure your question is “Well, what did you plant?”

(Cont'd on p. 10)



Slope in 2020

The area is approximately 70 feet long by 20 feet wide, with shade in part and very sunny in others. The first planting included: a dozen Carolina jessamine, a cotoneaster (never made it), 3 gardenia azaleas, 3 firepower nandinas, 3 breeze grass, 3 hydrangeas, 2 fringe trees, a quince (love it), 3 butterfly bushes, (also gone), 2 *Berberis fortunei*, (formerly *Mahonia fortunei*), 3 daylilies, 3 trailing rosemary, 3 native azaleas, 2 itea and 16 ferns (autumn and holly). The second planting a few weeks later added milkweed, goldenrod, lobelia, mountain mint, salvia, several varieties of baptisia and grasses.

This was an array that did not fill the area but was a great start and miraculously, the fill held. Over the last few years, I have added and continue to divide many perennials, most recently low growing lantana, day lilies, hostas, daisies and black-eyed Susan. I appreciate RCMGA plant swaps, sales and just general sharing of plants to supplement the area.

What have I learned? Well, that is another story altogether. Choosing fill, drawing up a plan, paying attention before plants fade or take over, right place right plant, endless weeding until the desired overtake the undesired, need I go on?

Is it finished? Will it ever be? No, and probably not. I think of it as a dynamic work of art, some sections wilder and maybe a tad overgrown, others neat and more complete. I have never been a gardener who thinks everything must be manicured and trimmed just so. I am grateful to have a life partner who happily mows the lawn and not only leaves me to my pattering but brings in the mulch and supports whatever ideas crazy or sane, I want to implement. But during the process, I'll continue to grow, learn, enjoy and appreciate nature every day. I think the birds and bees appreciate the slope as well!



Slope now

Lexington Tomato Tasting, 2024

Karen McAbee and Robin McClellan



Members of RCMGA attended the annual Tomato Tasting on July 10, 2024, held at the Lake Murray Presbyterian Church in Chapin, SC, and sponsored this year by LCMGV. The event was very well attended, and the food was scrumptious. One of our members said that before she knew it, her whole plate was full! Rob Last, an Extension Agent in Lexington County, led a wonderful Q & A session with the main focus on pests and other vegetable growing challenges gardeners are facing this season.

(Cont'd on p. 11)

L-R: Val Hutchinson, Evelyn Abernathy, Harriette Edmonds, Debbie Thomas, Susan Wilson, Hattie Munson, Robin McClellan. Front: Jan Satcher



One of the many lovely table decorations



Tim Carrier, Patsy Endicott, Peggy Culler-Hair



Lynn and Sophie Derrick

From Our Members' Yards and Gardens

Color in the Garden

Susan Wilson

Oriental lilies (*Lilium*) provide showcase blooms in the summer garden. Four to twelve flowers form on a single stalk that can reach six feet tall. Most oriental lilies have a delightful aroma, but the ones shown here are odorless. They were gifted to me when my daughter and son-in-law put in new landscaping.

Oriental lilies come in a variety of colors, from delicate white to vibrant pink, purple, red, or burgundy. Some are variegated. Although the flowers look delicate, they are quite sturdy, almost leather-like. This year, the blooms lasted a full three weeks, with the first flowers showing up at the beginning of July.



The lily in Susan's garden is *Lilium* 'Scheherazade'.

Oriental lilies are easy to grow. They prefer acidic, well-drained soil and do best in full sun to part shade. Although the plants are tall, their stalks are sturdy and don't generally need to be staked. The plants make offshoots that can be moved or divided in the fall. The foliage can be cut down once it turns brown. Oriental lilies are perennials, so you will be able to enjoy them for years to come!

If you want to add some drama to your garden, try planting this spectacular lily. This glorious lily is an orienpet (a cross between oriental and trumpet lilies, shown as oriental x trumpet) that blooms in mid-summer and grows well from zones 5 through 8. It is very tall, often reaching 6 or 7 feet and has many blooms on a single stem. It is pest resistant and a good pollinator. Butterflies enjoy its fragrant blooms.



Susan Wilson with her lily.

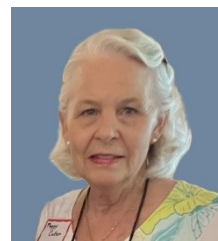
Resurrection Fern

Peggy Culler-Hair



This live oak tree is on my farm in Lexington County. Its limbs are covered by resurrection ferns. I am not sure of its age, but I know it is over 100 years old, or much older. It is just awesome to stand under it!

The resurrection fern (*Pleopeltis polypodioides*) is epiphytic, meaning it grows on top of other plants or structures and reproduces by spores instead of seeds. These spores lie on the underside of the fronds. Although it grows on top of other plants, this fern does not take nutrients or water from the host plant. [To read more about this remarkable plant, consult the National Wildlife Federation at <https://bit.ly/4gqdGQ7>.]



Paulette's Poinsettias

Paulette Kindler

[Earlier this year, Paulette shared her success with these holiday plants. Good information to keep in mind as we draw nearer to the holiday season. Ed.]

I have a success story, maybe one that only an experienced gardener (or one who attempts to be one), might appreciate. It involves three cheap poinsettias that I bought at Aldi's Christmas of 2022, part of about eight that comprised my decorations that year, inexpensive and easy.



When the weather warmed up, I put these eight plants on my back steps and proceeded to forget about them, but once in a while I heard cries for help and watered them. They survived for months until the weather began to cool, and several of them died. I potted up three in one large pot, put them in a sheltered spot between the steps and the house. Lo and behold, a few weeks before Christmas 2023, I spotted tiny red leaves at the tips, and ultimately, I had three lovely poinsettias again that looked like I just bought them. Over the years I tried all the tricks that one was told would allow these plants to re-bloom, none of which worked, and the plants all died. So, the moral of the story—Mother Nature wins all the time.

[Later, Paulette updated us.]

This plant continues to amaze. Internet research confirms that this green bulbous thing is a seed pod. The plant has about four of them so I might have a chance to grow my own! Wow!

I hope to hang in there and see if I can grow one from seed.

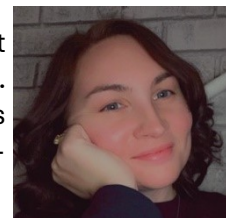


(Cont'd on p. 13)

Growing a Superfood: Microgreens

Gale Housley

It feels as though the term “superfood” is on the news constantly, and we are being told that different foods are going to fix all our ailments. However, the idea of a “superfood” is misleading. Everything we eat, even Zaxby’s Kickin’ Chicken sandwich gives our bodies fuel, but some foods give our bodies more vitamins and minerals than others. Several studies have shown that microgreens are rich in nutrients and can be a good option for our diets.



Let’s define what microgreens are. They are not just small vegetable plants or baby greens as they are harvested before the plant has fully matured. Microgreens are young, edible greens that sprout from the seeds of herbs, some vegetables and grains. They are harvested when the cotyledon leaves have developed. Note that there are a few vegetables that are not edible at the seedling stage because they contain alkaloids which at high levels are toxic; tomatoes, peppers, eggplant and potatoes are examples. Also do not use the seeds of wild plants.

Microgreens are easy to grow indoors. First, decide which seeds you want to grow. You can mix herbs, vegetables and grains in one planting. Get some suitable containers, usually trays of glass or food-safe plastic, and fill with



Microgreens. Image from HGIC
Amy Dabbs 2018

about two inches of potting soil. Spread the seeds over the soil; you do not need to space them. Then dampen the seeds and soil, misting lightly. Next cover the tray with clear plastic with holes. Put in a place with good light, perhaps a windowsill. The seeds should sprout, usually in three days or more, and then you can remove the covering. Once you get about three inches of growth, the microgreens are ready to harvest.

Use clean scissors to cut the greens; you should get about three harvests before you need to replant. Always wash the greens before eating them. These microgreens can be eaten in salads, sandwiches, soups or blended in smoothies. My favorite dish is to use them with sliced tomatoes and feta cheese on top of my grits.

To read more about microgreens, look at HGIC Fact Sheets on growing microgreens. When you are researching any horticultural subject, remember to look for sites whose addresses end in edu, org, or gov.

Newly-certified Master Gardeners

Rita Shipman

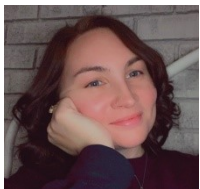


Rita grew up on a small farm just outside the small town of Holly Hill in Orangeburg County. Her parents grew produce, cotton, and later soybeans. She helped harvest the produce for market and remembers using a burlap bag with a shoulder strap to pick cotton. She also vividly remembers the prickliness of the open cotton bolls. She has always had an interest in growing plants and watching them develop to fruition. In her kitchen window, there is always something rooting in glass containers. She attended Winthrop University and graduated early in December 1972 with a major in mathematics and a minor in business. At that time, this was the closest degree to computer science offered at Winthrop. She worked at SCE&G/SCANA (South Carolina Electric & Gas Company/SCANA was the predecessor to Dominion Energy) for 35 years as a mainframe programmer and project manager before retiring in 2008. Her many interests include reading, cooking, handwork (knitting, crocheting, cross-stitch, and needlepoint), volunteering, gardening, and attending church activities at the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-Day Saints. Becoming a Master Gardener was one of her retirement goals, and she is thankful and proud to join this vibrant community for gardening interests. Rita worked hard these past months volunteering with Cathy Beattie in the local Extension Office to earn her current certification status.

Rita’s RCMGA Mentor: Linda Olsen

(Cont’d on p. 14)

Gale Housley



Gale Housley is one of our newly-certified Master Gardeners who completed the Clemson course in November, 2023. Gale's interest in gardening started at a young age and the seed grew, so to speak, from her grandmother's strong influence. During her childhood years, Gale's grandmother ran her own flower shop; this included growing some of the flowers she sold in her business. Personally, Gale married last fall; she and her husband recently welcomed a beautiful daughter into their lives on August 30. Gale is extremely excited to share this love of gardening with her child with an emphasis on experiencing life from farm to table (garden to nutrition). Furthermore, her love of gardening has also expanded into her career of nutrition and dietetics as she pursues her Registered Dietician (RD) credential. Gale's other educational and professional background includes: a Master of Science in Human Nutrition, Bachelor of Arts in Public Health with minor in Psychology, Certified Pharmacy Technician (CPhT), ISSA personal trainer (CPT), prior Certified Nursing Assistant (CNA) with a goal to focus on Pediatric dietetics. She is currently employed as the PSE (Policy, System, and Environmental Changes)/Community Enhancement Coordinator for the SNAP-Education program at Department of Public Health (DPH). She is proud to have served as the lead gardener during the 2024 planting season for the DHEC Community Demonstration Garden. She has a personal goal of growing at least 50 percent of the food her family eats on her own land, and a professional goal of taking what she continues to learn and empowering others to learn more about the food they consume daily.

Gale's RCMGA mentor: Kia Muse

Jettie Hunt



Congratulations to Jettie Hunt on earning her recent certification in large part by volunteering at numerous Ask-a-Master Gardener booth events and volunteering for shifts in the Richland County Extension Office. Jettie Hunt, the youngest of six children and a Columbia native, fully incorporated the love of both countryside and farm life from her childhood largely spent on her father's lower Richland County farm. She returned home in 2020 after a long medical career engaged in practice of surgical and clinical pathology in southeast Berks County, PA, a largely agricultural county imbued with Pennsylvania Dutch and Amish/Mennonite culture. Jettie is an avid gardener and enjoys food preservation techniques (*thank you Faith Israel for your fabulous canning course*), knitting, quilting, (*still a member of Berks County quilters guild*) and all culinary arts.

Jettie's RCMGA Mentor: Elaine Jeter

Gigi Lewis



Gigi grew up in Cayce, SC, and crossed the bridge to graduate from the University of South Carolina School of Journalism in 1982 and the University of South Carolina School of Law in 1985. She is married to Robert Lewis, and they have four children, three grandchildren, and one pet—a black cat named Max.

Gigi has always enjoyed working in her yard and gardening—mostly raising perennials and herbs. She enjoys the challenge of keeping grass, trees, shrubs, and plants alive and the joy of watching it all grow, bloom, and thrive. Gigi's grandmother, Georgia, who she met for the first time in 1985, was an amazing Master Gardener in her homeland of Greece and those skills were shared lovingly with family when she visited in South Carolina.

Gigi happily retired in June 2021 and was excited to participate in the Fall 2023 Master Gardener class. It became clear through Jackie Jordan's tutelage that she had a lot to learn about EVERYTHING: landscaping, grass, trees, shrubs, and gardening, in general! Gigi has been eager to learn and has since earned many of her certification hours at the monthly Ask-a-Master Gardener booth events at Soda City and offered her help often during Wednesday workdays at the Sandhill Children's Garden. In her spare time, she volunteers at her church, streams movies and shows with Robert and visits with children and grandchildren.

(Cont'd on p. 15)

Gigi has enjoyed getting to know and work with the Master Gardeners in RCMGA. She finds everyone so friendly and knowledgeable. She wishes to thank Susan Zourzoukis for being her longtime friend and very helpful Master Gardener mentor and Robin McClellan for all the information shared to help her gain the necessary Master Gardener educational service hours for certification.

Gigi's RCMGA Mentor: Susan Zourzoukis

Jackie's Plant Collection

The beautiful houseplants in this issue's masthead are only a small part of the collection that surrounds Jackie Jordan in her office. Here are pictures of a few of the plants and their names.



L-R: *Anthurium clarinervium* (velvet anthurium); *Asplenium antiquum* (bird's nest fern); *Begonia* sp.; *Pellionia repens* (watermelon begonia, but it is neither a begonia or a watermelon plant)



Zamioculcas zamiifolia (ZZ plant); *Philodendron* 'Birkin'; *Xanthosoma lindenii* syn *Phyllo-taenium lindenii* 'Magnificum' (Angel's wing, Indian kale, spoon flower)

Jackie Jordan holding a *Dieffenbachia* sp. (dumb cane) and *Aglaonema* sp. (Chinese evergreen, silver evergreen)

