



BLUE RIDGE DIGEST

Blue Ridge District Virginia Federation of Garden Clubs

PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

Just before I sat down to write this message, I was looking out the kitchen window at a hummingbird partaking of a quick sip or two of nectar at its feeder before flying off again, and being awe-struck once again by this amazing little creature. Not just by its beauty, but also by the effort it takes for it to maintain its existence. Mother Nature makes things very challenging for her creatures, doesn't she?

Which, obliquely, brings me to this issue's message.

As vexing as things have been for most of us in our gardens this summer- and they certainly have been- we are nevertheless, extremely fortunate to live in what is, in truth, a very benign part of the world weather-wise. In the Blue Ridge, we certainly experience our share of dangerous heat and destructive wind and water, of course, but even one look at the national and global weather news on any given night should make us all extremely grateful for the relatively temperate nature of our little part of the world. It has, so far, spared us the recurrent and deeply destructive weather extremes of- seemingly- everywhere else in the world.

I would never say, "don't complain about the weather." We all complain about the weather, and a good rant can be therapeutic. But a bit of perspective is a good thing, too, as is gratitude for living in this beautiful temperate place.

In District news, there are several events coming up this Fall that you will not want to miss.

On September 12, the District is presenting a flower show entitled "September Interlude" at the Roanoke Council of Garden Clubs. Add the date to your calendar and plan to attend (or even make an entry!).

The Fall District Meeting on October 23 will feature a program on Bonsai. An article on the program and presenter details is in this issue. Again, make sure the date is on your calendar, and that your registration is in by the deadline! Bring a friend or two! It's always a fun event!
As always, Felice

AUGUST 2024 ISSUE

CALENDAR OF EVENTS

2024

- Aug. 26-29 Flower Show School III-Roanoke
- Sept. 12 Blue Ridge District Flower Show
- Sept. 15 Deadline—"Keys to the Future" Youth Grants Projects and Beautify and Restore Grants
- Sept. 23 BRD Executive Board Meeting
- Sept. 25 BRD Board Meeting-Roanoke
- Oct. 23 Fall District Meeting-Roanoke
- Nov. 11-12 Flower Show Symposium-Roanoke
- Dec. 1 Awards applications deadline



"Sowing the Seeds for Tomorrow's Gardeners"

TABLE OF CONTENTS

President's Message	1
Calendar of Events	1
Table of Contents	2
Club News	2
New Members	4
In Memory	4
Grant Resources	4
A Weed or What?	5
Book Review	5
Companion Plantings	6
An Ounce of Prevention	7
Flower Show Judges Council news	8
Fall District Meeting Speaker	8
Fall District Meeting Details	9
Fall District Meeting Registration Form	9



Artwork from public domain websites and personal photos.

WEBSITES

National Garden Clubs Inc.

<http://gardenclub.org>

Virginia Federation of Garden Clubs Inc.

<http://viriniagardenclubs.org/VFGC/>

Newsletter Deadlines: August 1
 send info to: November 1
shirle4858@gmail.com February 1
 540-989-3137 May 1
 Free to members with email
 Subscription if mailed - \$8/yr. or \$16/2 yr.

CLUB NEWS

Sugar Loaf Garden Club members visited the Hahn Horticulture Gardens at Virginia Tech in July.

The heat was on, but **Star City Garden Club** ventured out to Fincastle, VA to visit and learn the ins and outs of running Sarah's Petals Cut Flower Farm. Everyone has a new appreciation for all the hard work that takes place to bring fresh cut blooms grown from seed to the customer.

Sarah shared how she plans each season, weed suppression, succession planting and even the wiggle test for cutting zinnias. She led a quick floral design class and let the members create their own mason jar masterpiece.

Sarah is a florist who can design large scale weddings to her famous "Sarah's Petal Parties." She also sells her flowers every week at either downtown Roanoke Farmer's Market or at the Botetourt Farmers Market.



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The VFGC Convention at Boar's Head Inn in May was attended by a delegation of nine members from the Blue Ridge District, led by President Felice Proctor.

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CLUBS, be thinking about applying for Awards for your club activities. Check out the VFGC Yearbook or website for information.

The **Green Thumb Garden Club** of Callaway recently held their annual picnic at Waid Park, Rocky Mount, VA. Attended by members and spouses, a good time was had by all.



Green Thumb has an excellent program committee who lined up several interesting and educational programs for their monthly meetings this year, including Master Naturalists, local sustainable home farmers and landscapers. And Dr. Jordan Metzgar, curator of the VT Massey Herbarium will be speaking soon.

Roanoke Council of Garden Clubs

PLANT SALE & VENDOR EXTRAVAGANZA

SATURDAY, SEPT. 28TH
9:00AM-1:00PM

A GARDENER'S PARADISE FULL OF GARDEN TREASURES, LOCAL VENDORS, STUNNING FALL PLANTS

3640 COLONIAL AVE.
WWW.ROANOKECOUNCILOFGARDENCLUBS.COM
ANY QUESTIONS: (540) 343-4519

Garden Tool Sharpening \$2.00 Per Tool **FREE Children's Event 9am-11pm**

YOU ARE INVITED TO...

SEPTEMBER INTERLUDE

An NGC Standard Flower Show

Presented by

BLUE RIDGE DISTRICT



Roanoke Council of Garden Clubs
3640 Colonial Ave., SW
Roanoke, Virginia 24018
540.343.4519

Thursday, September 12, 2024

1:00 p.m. - 2:30 p.m.

Open and free to the public

WELCOME NEW MEMBERS

Belmont Garden Club

Julie Smith
Debbie Merritt

Big Spring Garden Club

Nancy Adamson
Betty Painter

Maywood Garden Club

Jeanette Kremer



IN MEMORY

(Please send death notifications
to the BRD Editor)

GRANT RESOURCES

The Grants to Beautify and Restore chairman of the Blue Ridge District is pleased to announce that Town and Country Garden Club of Roanoke was awarded \$450 from the Virginia Federation of Garden Clubs and a \$1,000 PLANT AMERICA Community Project Grant from the National Garden Clubs for the Pocket Park in Old SW City in Roanoke. The project is chaired by Maryann Mather and the grant money is being used to purchase native plants and materials to enhance this newly created park.

These yearly grants are available for clubs in good standing with the Virginia Federation of Garden Clubs and National Garden Clubs. The applications are on their websites and should be submitted by September 15 and October 15 respectively.

I encourage your club to look into applying and using these monies to help with community projects in our area.

If I can help with any direction please contact me at hughes112657@gmail.com

Nancy Hughes, BRD Chairman
Grants to Beautify and Restore



*One of the most delightful things
about a garden is the
anticipation that it provides.*

W. E. Johns, English writer 91895-1968)

A WEED OR WHAT?

The more I learn about plants, the more their properties amaze me. "Plantago lanceolata" or ribwort plantain is an opportunistic perennial herb not a weed. In a recent [Horticulture Magazine](#), Jeff Cox, a Californian gardener, comments on the purported health benefits of ribwort.

A native of Eurasia, "Plantago lanceolata" spread to England and eventually to North America and Australia. American settlers spread the plant across the plains in the West. It grows best in open disturbed areas such as fields where livestock graze and turn up the earth with their hooves. It also grows along untended roadsides.



The familiar looking plant grows flat in a rosette with lance like leaves. Children enjoy the stems in a game called "1 o'clock" where you wrap the bottom half of the stem around the cone shaped seed head and pull it tight until it pops off. The seed head can fly up to 10 feet in whatever direction it is aimed, and can set from 2500 to 10,000 seeds which are wind pollinated.

The potential medical abilities of ribwort plantain are numerous. A poultice of the leaves applied to the skin will relieve an allergic reaction to a bee sting or mosquito bites. A poultice can also be used on blisters and sores. It will staunch bleeding and check infections due to the mucilage, tannins and silic acid in the leaves. A tea from its leaves will relieve itching from rashes or treat coughs due to bronchodilator properties of the plant.

The seeds of ribwort are coated with psyllium,

commonly used in products such as Metamucil. "This compound is soluble fiber, a probiotic that feeds and stimulates the microbiome in the gut. The psyllium fiber can also lower cholesterol and triglyceride levels. It has been recommended by gastroenterology societies as an effective treatment for abdominal pain from irritable bowel syndrome."

Although commonly considered a weed, ribwort plantain has potential medicinal applications and also supports wildlife. Songbirds eat the seeds of the herb and various herbivores such as rabbits, tortoises and deer eat the leaves. The glycosides of the leaves make certain caterpillars who eat them unpalatable to predators.

Never underestimate a plant's value. What appears to be a weed may actually be an herb or otherwise helpful plant.

Gail Trussel, Horticulture Chairman

BOOK REVIEW



There are times when a comprehensive gardening/horticulture reference book is needed such as during a plant sale and curious folks have questions; during a garden club meeting and questions about habitat or cultivation arise; or at home when you are considering adding a new plant to your garden. Following are a few very useful encyclopedias.

[American Horticultural Society A to Z Encyclopedia of Garden Plants](#). This classic, vintage 1997 edition is a heavy weight and one of the most comprehensive. It remains useful for the thousands of color photos and detailed descriptions. It is a core reference.

[Encyclopedia of Gardening](#). DK 2023. A revised edition of the 30 year old classic from the Royal Horticulture Society offers a guide to planning, planting, and caring for your garden.

[Smithsonian Encyclopedia of Garden Plants for Every Location](#). DK, 2014. Expand your garden ideas with this source of over 3,000 plants that focuses on plants for over 30 types of garden sites.

Karen Dillon, BRD Chairman
Book Review

COMPANION PLANTING

I heard about Companion Planting a number of years ago. It has always intrigued me and several times I tried this on a very limited basis. When I came across an article in the Farmer's Almanac (on website) I thought that it was too good not to share with you.

Companion planting is nature's way of minimizing pest damage, boosting soil fertility, reducing weed competition, and increasing yields. A bonus is it tends to look better too!

Benefits of Companion Planting

1. Deters pests
2. Attracts beneficial insects
3. Provides shade for smaller plants
4. Tall plants can support lower-growing plants
5. Improved plant health
6. Improved soil fertility
7. Suppresses Weeds

The benefits can be one way, such as when nectar-rich flowers planted around fruiting crops like tomatoes improve insect pollination, or reciprocal, such as when the famous Three Sisters of corn, pole beans, and squash are grown together for mutual benefit.

Examples of the Best Companion Plants

Knowing which plants grow well together isn't easy. This is a tried-and-tested way to reduce pests, attract pollinators and boost growth! Here are common examples.

- **Basil** and tomatoes, as interplanted basil, repel thrips. Basil also deters moths, which lay tomato hornworms and egg-laying armyworms. Basil also attracts bees, which improves pollination, tomato health, and flavor.
- **Dill** attracts ladybugs, which eat tiny garden pests such as aphids and spider mites.
- **Borage** pairs well with tomatoes, attracting pollinating bees. It also enhances strawberries' flavor and vigor.
- **Garlic and garlic spray** have a strong scent that deters many insects. Aphids can't stand garlic! Garlic also repels onion flies, ermine moths, and Japanese beetles. Plant garlic between rows of potatoes alongside lettuces and cabbages and near fruit trees, together with alyssum, to attract aphid-eating hoverflies.

- **Mint** deters aphids, ants, and flea beetles. Just be careful to plant mint nearby in its own pot or bed, as it is a very aggressive grower!
- **Nasturtiums** attract hungry caterpillars away from brassicas like cabbage, broccoli, and kale, so grow these pretty flowers close to those crops; nasturtium also lure black flies away from fava beans.
- **Parsley** attracts beneficial insects to protect and pollinate tomatoes. Plant these herbs between tomatoes.
- **Sage** is a helpful herb that repels carrot flies. Also, plant it around a cabbage patch to reduce injury from cabbage moths.



- **Sunflowers** pair well with cucumbers and pole beans. They help provide support for climbing plants and shade for crops, which can become sun-stressed in hotter climates.
- **Tansy** draws pest-eating bugs such as ladybugs and predatory wasps. Tansy repels many baddies such as cutworm.

Add more flowers! Growing **calendula** or **cosmos** nearby will attract tiny parasitizing wasps and aphid-hungry hoverflies. **Mari-golds** are great for drawing in pest-hungry beneficial bugs.

For more information, or to order a Companion Planting Chart, you can visit the Farmer's Almanac website at almanac.com/content/companionplanting.

Happy Companion Planting!

Glynis Hopkins, Chairman
Community & Edible Gardening

AN OUNCE OF PREVENTION

Climate change has increased the possibility of wildfires. This summer's news of fires, especially in the western portion of the United States, keeps the subject in the forefront of our minds. Even though we assume the fires occur somewhere else, it is wise to educate ourselves with some safety precautions.

Firewise landscaping can reduce your home's vulnerability. The goal is to use design, plant choice and maintenance to develop a landscape that offers the best fire protection while enhancing the property.

As homeowners we need to create defensible space and surround the house with materials that are less likely to burn.

Virginia Department of Forestry suggests maintaining at least 30 feet of space surrounding your home that is lean, clean and green.

Lean- Keep trees and shrubs well-manicured and pruned. Prune shrubs and tree branches to a height of 6-10 feet from the ground, keep free of dead wood, and prune away from roof and 15 feet of chimney.

Remember mulch helps retain soil moisture but when dry, it can become flammable.

Clean- Remove all dead plant material from around your home, including leaves, dry vegetation, and stacked firewood. Remove more flammable plants such as junipers, hollies, red cedar and young pines.

These plants contain resins, oils, and waxes. Deciduous trees and shrubs burn with less intensity and are a better choice to plant closer to your house.

Green- Plant fire-resistant vegetation that is healthy and green throughout the year. Use less-flammable plants: azalea, viburnum, crape myrtle, spirea, hydrangea, dogwood, redbud, red maple and oak also annual and perennial flowers.

As gardeners we know that this lean, clean, green idea involves thought and work, however we must remember that "an ounce of prevention is worth a pound of cure."

Martha Flora, Chairman
Conservation/Environmental Education

Information from Virginia Department of Forestry (FIREWISE COMMUNITIES FOR VIRGINIA).

BLUE RIDGE FLOWER SHOW JUDGES COUNCIL

More than forty garden club members attended Kathy Ward's exciting program **Thinking Outside the Box** on July 22. Many took notes and lots of photos as they saw how including ordinary items from a big box or hardware store can bring pizzazz and an extra touch of creativity to designs. Four lucky attendees went home with one of Kathy's unique arrangements. This free program was sponsored by the BR Flower Show Judges Council.

This is one of Kathy's designs using fans made from temporary blinds. Notice how she painted some of the blind material to bring out the colors in the container. Gorgeous fragrant white rose lilies complete the design.



Next up is the district flower show called **September Interlude** on Thursday, September 12 from 1:00 p.m. to 2:30 p.m. The flower show schedule is available now! Contact Janice Clem for a schedule and sign up for a design or two.

Your help is also needed to fill classes in the horticulture division of the show. Since we have had some rain, our plants should be looking good once again. There will be classes for annuals, herbaceous perennials, woody perennials, herbs, bulbs, corms, tubers, container grown flowering plants and container grown foliage plants. You do not need to pre-register your horticulture.

All entries will be received at the Roanoke Council of Garden Clubs' Center on Thursday, September 12 from 9:00 to 10:30 a.m. The show is open and free to the public from 1:00 to 2:30 p.m. after which the show will be dismantled.

We are counting on your support to make the show a success!

If you have any questions, please contact me at 540-977-1713 or tchokie@aol.com.

Janice Clem

FLOWER SHOW SCHOOL ROANOKE in AUGUST

For those interested in learning more about designs and horticulture, two excellent National Garden Clubs Flower Show School instructors will be at Roanoke Council of Garden Clubs' Center on August 26 for Flower Show School course 3. Contact Brenda McManaway to sign up soon. Registration forms and program details are online at VFGC's website www.virginiagardenclubs.org.



POLLINATORS' PARADISE

Also known as blazing star or gayfeather, *liatris* produces a basal rosette of grasslike foliage from which 1-5 foot-tall floral spikes emerge in late summer. Each spike features masses of small purple, pink, or white thistle-like flowers that open from the top of the stem downward. This American native adds a vertical element to perennial gardens. Bees and butterflies are attracted to its nectar-rich blossoms. Plant late bloomers to provide migrating monarchs with much-needed fuel for their journey south.



Photo by Mitzi Secrest of Green Thumb Garden Club

FALL MEETING SPEAKER

Rob Lanahan, a member of the Hinoki Bonsai Club, will be the speaker at the Fall District Meeting on Wednesday, October 23rd.

He is a Clinical Psychiatrist by profession but like the rest of us a gardener at heart. He and his wife have a unique Japanese Garden here in Roanoke.

He will be giving a demonstration of creating a Bonsai from a normal tree along with showing a large collection of Bonsai.

He will be donating the tree or shrub he will use in the demo for an opportunity drawing.

The Hinoki Bonsai Club was organized in 1978 for the purpose of bringing together persons who have an interest in bonsai. The Club provides an opportunity for members to develop an appreciation for bonsai and to develop their skills in cultivating bonsai by exchanging ideas, information, and experience with others.

They meet the 3rd Wednesday of the month at 7:30 p.m. at the Roanoke Council of Garden Clubs' building.

CLUBS – DON'T FORGET

Items are requested for the Silent Auction and Projects Tables. Please let Carol Burial know at cburiak@yahoo.com or 540-520-3770, in advance, of what you will be donating.

These proceeds help fund the speakers for the district meetings. Thank you for your support!

**BLUE RIDGE DISTRICT
FALL MEETING**



**Wednesday
OCTOBER
23**

Location: Roanoke Council of Garden Clubs
3640 Colonial Avenue
Roanoke, VA 24018

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All members of Blue Ridge District Garden Clubs are encouraged to attend. The Virginia Federation of Garden Clubs President Val Story will be attending.

There will be a special **Bonsai Program** presented by Rob Lanaham, a member of the Hinoki Bonsai Club. Some lucky person will go home with a newly designed Bonsai!

Schedule:

9:00-10:00 a.m.	Registration check-in Project Displays Vendor Booths open
10:00 a.m.	Business session & Program
Noon	Lunch—check your selection on the registration form.
12:45-1:00	Business continues Announcements Door Prizes & Silent Auction

If your club wishes to have a sales table (\$20 fee) contact Carol Buriak at cburiak@yahoo.com

**BLUE RIDGE DISTRICT
FALL 2024 MEETING
PRE-REGISTRATION FORM**

Name _____

Address _____

Phone _____

E-Mail _____

Club _____

Check all that currently apply:

- Blue Ridge District Club Member or a GUEST
- Club President (current)
- BRD Board Member
- Past District President
- VFGC Board Member SAR NGC
- VFGC Life Member
- SAR Life Member
- NGC Life Member

Lunch Choice from McAlister's Deli (check 1):

- Savannah Chopped Salad
- Pecan-berry Salad
- McAlister's Club
- Turkey Club Croissant
- Veggie Box on 9-Grain Bread
- Black Angus Club

Includes a beverage and a cookie or brownie.

Registration & Lunch: \$25.00
Registration (no lunch) \$10.00

Please make check payable to:
Blue Ridge District, VFGC

Mail registration form & check to:
Nancy Powers, Registrar
5211 Hawkbill Circle
Roanoke, VA 24018-8626
540-797-8420 or charminglysew2@gmail.com

Deadline:
Mailed by October 14





September 22
AUTUMNAL EQUINOX



Shirley Edillon, Editor
4858 Glenbrook Drive SW
Roanoke, VA 24018-2800

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