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***“Message from Mariah”***

The first day of Summer is June 20<sup>th</sup>. It is almost here! We have had a busy spring. Please keep checking your inboxes for updates about Master Gardener activities this summer. And as always, please be thinking of the next edition of the vine in the back of your mind when you're doing gardening activities! Many topics can be covered with newsletter articles. Be creative and have fun with them.

The 2024 basic training class is officially completed. The class did awesome and I want to congratulate them on doing so! We had 23 students: Olga Dewey, Charlotte Stone, Liz Walter, Carla Wilson, Jerry Frank, Becky Ironmonger, Gena Wade, Kitty Zacchetti, Jim Zacchetti, Michelle Johnson, Mary Friesen, Sheila Milburn, Donna Voithoffer, Christopher Stone, Darcy Hanrahan, Angela Haak, Ronla Henry, Naomi Tinsley, Jen Hooton, Sandy Witham, Nora Humm, Marsha Adamo, and Suzanne R. Trosclair. Please welcome them at various volunteer sites and activities.

We had our project night and quarterly meeting combined on May 14. It went well. Thank you to everyone who attended. I agree with what a few said, I think it was a record attendance. We also had another meeting at the Lexington Park Passive Park Community Garden on June 4 which also went well. Thank you to everyone who attended and brought a friend for Ben Beale's talk on drip irrigation!

Thank you to everyone who is volunteering at the plant clinics this year. If you are interested in volunteering at one please reach out to me via email.

Thank you to Michelle Johnson, Patrice Hopkins, Charlotte Stone, and Sandy Witham who volunteered at the Early Childhood Advisory Council family nights this spring! Also thank you to Louise Snell, Patrice Hopkins and Titus, Sara Everheart, Deb Pence, and Michelle Johnson who helped at the Earth Day festival! Thank you also to Patrice Hopkins, Michelle Johnson, Ronla-Henry Reeves, and Sandy Witham for volunteering at the Cherry Blossom festival which was a nice day and included the ribbon cutting ceremony for the new Lexington Park Passive Park Community Garden.

Keep an eye out in your inboxes for some upcoming volunteer and education events this summer!



## *Pictures From Mariah*



I may not always get the best pictures, but I do try to get some!

Top left: a chickadee enjoying the Front Yard Garden at the Leonardtown Library, which many Master Gardener volunteers help to maintain

Top right: Patrice being a rockstar at the Cherry Blossom Festival! People walked all the way across the park and lined up to visit her at the table to learn about seed starting!

Middle left: The Barns at New Market after a clean up evening with Courtney Antemann and Penny Shissler.

Middle right: some cabbage at the LMPPCG

Bottom left: Michelle at the ECAC evening



## ***Soil pH and Hydrangeas in Maryland***

***By: Sara Beth Everheart***

Hydrangeas are a very interesting plant. They have the ability to showcase a particular soil condition (pH) by displaying the color of their blooms.

I currently have two bigleaf hydrangeas on my property. I have one adjacent to my front porch on the west side of my house, and another one in a separate flower bed adjacent to the north side of the house. The hydrangea on the west side of my house is currently pink, while the hydrangea on the north side of my house is blue to blue/purple. What do these colors mean? Is there something wrong with my plants and/or soil?

According to information provided by The University of Maryland Extension website (<https://extension.umd.edu/resource/hydrangea-identify-and-manage-problems/>) soil acidity affects the flower color. "Acidic soils (low pH of 5-5.5) will produce blue flowers. Slightly acidic or alkaline soils (pH of 6-6.5) will produce flowers in the pink range." It is the presence of aluminum (or lack thereof) in the soil that changes the pH, thus affecting the flower color. Acidic soils will contain more aluminum than the slightly acidic to alkaline soils. This would explain the difference in color between my two plants.

I decided to perform a thorough visual inspection of the hydrangeas and surrounding vegetation. I did not see any evidence on these hydrangeas or any of their surrounding plants, of any indication regarding poor plant health. These hydrangeas are thriving on their own and require only a little maintenance (trimming) from time to time.

I have concluded that the hydrangea on the west side of my house has a slightly acidic to alkaline soil pH (less available aluminum content - blue in color), while the hydrangea on the north side of my house has a more acidic soil pH (more available aluminum content - pink color range). Please see the photos below for the visual details.



Photo #1: North side of house hydrangea. Blue coloring, with some purple hues.

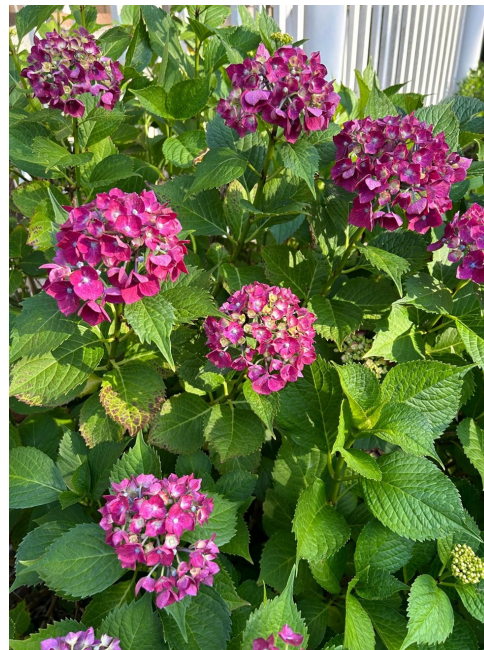


Photo #2: West side of house hydrangea. Pink coloring.

## ***Food Forests: Fact and Fallacy***

***By: Janet Marks***

Over the past year, I have heard much talk about food forests, so I signed up for a UME continuing education course. The course was a walking, talking tour of the food forest at American Chestnut Land Trust (ACLT) in Prince Frederick. It was led by Birgit, a Calvert County Master Gardener, who enthusiastically explained the concepts, planning, installation, and maintenance of the food forest, along with a few “sea stories.” Many of my preconceived notions of food forests were uprooted on that warm June morning.

My first notion was food forests were just a recent fad. The fact is, food forests have been grown by cultures all over the world for thousands of years.

My second notion was food forests were just about the trees. In actuality, food forests are an entire ecosystem consisting of seven layers - ground covers, vines, roots, herbaceous plants, shrubs, understory, and overstory. A food forest mimics the composition of a natural ecosystem that is in transition from meadow to forest.

My third misguided notion was that food forests were planted in the forest. The fact is, food forests need sun. The Master Gardeners at ACLT carefully chose their site, taking into account sun exposure, water availability, and drainage. They chose a sunny 2/10 acre piece of a field on the edge of the mature forest. A season was spent improving the soil with a lasagna method on the first half and buckwheat cover crop on the second. Being in Southern Maryland, they also had to fence the food forest or else it would have been deer food.

My fourth notion was that food forests had to contain only native plants. However, while all natives could have been planted, the ACLT gardeners wanted popular produce varieties to donate to a food bank. There were cultivated varieties of natives, such as blueberries, blackberries, and persimmons as well as apples, pears, figs, peaches, almonds, and English walnuts. All the varieties were carefully chosen to do well in local conditions. Other plants such as comfrey and smooth alder were chosen for their benefits to the soil.

My final notion was that food forests required no ongoing care once planted.

The truth is, while the premise of a food forest is a self-sustaining ecosystem, a human hand is needed for optimal success. Plants need to be watered until established, thinned or mowed when they get out of control, and pruned to prevent disease. While harmful pesticides are not used, fruits such as apples and pears were treated with organic solutions to address disease.

While food forests have a lower yield than conventionally farmed monoculture orchards, they attract and support all the organisms within the ecosystem. The food forest gate is open for self-guided tours during ACLT hours if you want to see the ecosystem in action. <https://www.acltweb.org>





## ***Flooding at Waterfront Park Sign Gardens***

***By: Cary Braun***

I maintain three park sign gardens in the county – Seventh District Park, Chaptico Wharf, and Robert Pogue Park/Bushwood Wharf. I've been maintaining the Bushwood and Seventh District parks for almost 20 years. Over the past three years, I've seen a lot of changes at Bushwood Wharf.

Twenty years ago, I was planting sun-loving perennials, sedum, mums – everything would thrive. About three years ago, I noticed that high tides were taking some of the mulch. Fast-forward to this spring: in early March, every perennial I had planted over the years was GONE (with the exception of a Scaevola that I think started as a division from the Extension Service), and the bed was covered with reeds from the marsh behind the bed (about three feet behind the park sign; the marsh empties into the Potomac River). In addition, there was virtually no "soil" there – it's all dirt. That seems to indicate that the mulch isn't decomposing; it's all washing away.

I also noticed something green there that I did not plant! According to the "Picture This" app, it's Seaside Goldenrod, which is encroaching from the marsh. I dug it out, although that was probably an exercise in futility. The Scaevola is huge, so I'll divide it at the end of the season and fill the bed with them. (Daffodil bulbs still come up in the spring, but I'm pretty sure they'll survive a nuclear bomb.)

Are any other Master Gardeners experiencing similar problems with beds that are close to the water? If so, I'd love to brainstorm with you! Rising sea levels are not going away, so we need to figure out the best ways to keep these park signs as beautiful as possible.



***Seaside Goldenrod***

## ***Garden Updates***

***By: Amy Henderson***

Over the years, my husband and I have tried a variety of methods to keep our vegetable garden plants upright and healthy. After fiddling around with tomato cages (which are mostly too short have small openings in the wire, and fall apart quickly), and other staking options, we landed on trellises made of 5' x 10' steel reinforcing mesh with 4"x 4" openings. They are a bit of an investment to start with, but after 20 years of gardening they are still doing the job!

We plant just about everything along trellises now: tomatoes, pole beans, butternut squash, sweet potatoes (so the vines go up, not all over the garden), cantaloupes, cucumbers, peas, etc. They save space and keep vegetables clean and off the ground. To keep tomatoes upright, we simply tie the main branches to the wire. Beans and squash vines weave themselves around the wires.

The first photo, below, shows a trellis with peas on it. Later, when the peas are done, we'll plant pole beans.

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*We use two posts, placed about 8 ft apart, and attach the trellis to them with metal fasteners. You can get more height by placing the wire mesh a foot or two above the ground.*

#### SUPPLIES FOR GARDEN TRELLIS

1. **LOWES**  
(2) T-POSTS - RECYCLED METAL  
\$7.83 ea.
2. **LOWES**  
GARDEN CRAFT 4-in METAL FASTENERS (25pk)  
\$4.18
3. **DEAN LUMBER**  
10 ga. WIRE MESH - 5'X10' SHEET  
\$23.38



### ***Notes from Waverly Gardens*** ***By: Joanna Rooney***

My family just moved into a new home last year where we have a little over two acres of land that we consider a blank slate. In our previous house, we had square foot gardens in our backyard that was shady and with no threat of deer. Now we are in full sun and can have herds of deer passing through nightly. Therefore, we had a little learning curve to climb before actually putting seeds in the ground.

First thing was first, decide how big of a veggie garden we wanted and then build a deer fence around this area. We went with a 25x25 space where we laid hardware cloth on the ground to prevent moles and moles from digging up into the space. Then we put up a 7 ½ tall deer fence and then lined the bottom with 3 feet of chicken wire to prevent critters from climbing up into the area.

Once this was completed, we decided to make a switch to metal square foots instead of using wood like we did in our last house. The switch was basically due to the 10 year old wood at our old house was starting to deteriorate. We figured, what the heck, lets try metal. So far so good.

The one didbit about the metal or just concerning the height of the square foots. We ordered some 2-3 foot high beds and then some 1 foot beds. I can already tell that the 2-3 foot depth beds provide more nutrients and will yield much better results than the 1 foot deep beds. Additionally, the deeper beds are obviously much easier on the back. Therefore, I believe the deeper beds are worth the extra cost.

So after we built square foots, we used logs/branches to fill the bottom of the beds, then added a layer of shredded hardwood, and then put in the good stuff... 1/3 compost, 1/3 vermiculite, and 1/3 coco coir.

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I am finding I will need to top off the beds after the summer season due to the decomposing logs/branches and shredded hardwood.

One word of caution that I never even thought about, when adding shredded hardwood and wood from the yard, I introduced cut worms into the square foot which was very frustrating when trying to grow anything from seed. I first thought it was mice so I put out the peppermint rodent deterrent balls which did not help the problem. Then I figured out it was cutworms. I treated the soil with BT every 5 days for a month which, I believe, has helped with the problem. I will most likely keep treating and add nematodes in early spring.

I had a lot more success with cold sowing and putting the more mature plants in the garden when they were big enough to not be impacted from the cut worms. I had some jugs and then, because we are in a high wind area, I decided to use containers with pots inside weighted down with rocks. I must say, I had a significantly higher success rate sowing in the containers than in the jugs. This just may be due to harsher conditions out here on the flat high wind full sun area.



With the hotter weather here, I just removed all the cool weather veggies. As I removed these plants, I planted the tomatoes, beans, cucumbers, etc. I will have more to post on my experiences with this next season in the next edition of The Vine, but I have included a picture of the one square foot that is good to go (minus the cauliflower that I have since harvested) for the summer. Also, you will see one of the containers of cold sown plants that I am still planting around the landscape.



## *The Season of Cherry Blossoms*

*By: Thao Nguyen*

Every spring, it is a ritual in my family to drive to the Golden Beach Park & Ride in Charlotte Hall on a weekday, board the last morning commuter bus no. 715 to the District, get off at the last bus stop on 19th St. & E St., N.W. and walk down to the Tidal Basin to spend a day strolling among and admiring the cherry blossoms. This year, it was a bittersweet stroll: we said goodbye to the bedraggled cherry tree nicknamed Stumpy that was still able to bloom every spring despite its physical challenges. Stumpy survived the last 25 years or so until Stumpy and a number of cherry trees along that section of the Tidal Basin were taken down in May as part of a seawall reconstruction project. Japan has made a gift of 250 cherry trees to the United States for this reconstruction project just as it had made the first gift of 3,020 cherry trees in 1912 to plant on the White House Grounds (20 trees of “Gyo-i-ko” variety) and along the Tidal Basin (1,800 trees of “Somei-Yoshino” variety and the rest of 10 different varieties).

This spring, in addition to our annual spring visit to the Tidal Basin, our family decided to travel to the country that made the gift of these cherry trees that we so admire and love for their symbol of friendship between countries and for their transient beauty. We closely watched the forecast on peak bloom issued by the Japan Meteorological Corporation just like we watch the forecast from the U.S. National Park Service every spring for the Tidal Basin. This year, the trees reached peak bloom on March 17, 2024 (the second-earliest on record) around the Tidal Basin while it was around April 4 for Tokyo. We were fortunate to be visiting both the Tidal Basin in the District and Tokyo, Japan during peak bloom of the cherry blossoms (known as sakura in Japanese). Sakura viewing is a national obsession in Japan; locals as well as tourists dressed up in colorful kimonos stroll and enjoy picnics under the blossoming cherry trees.

One of my most memorable visits is to the Nabana-no-Sato Flower Park located in Kuwana, Mie Prefecture. The Park spreads over about 56 acres and showcases spectacular seasonal flowers and displays of lights throughout the 4 seasons. The colorful tulips and the weeping plum blossoms and Kawazu cherry blossoms (flowers last longer than the Yoshino variety for about one month) were in full bloom when we visited.

Finally, a journey to the Land of the Rising Sun would not be complete without a visit to a garden on the shore of Lake Kawaguchi in the foothills of Fujisan in the Fuji-Hakone-Izu National Park.



*Continued on pg. 8*







## *Dynard Elementary Garden Update*

*By: Debra Pence*

Dynard Elementary 4th grade garden club winding down! 12 fall gardens for 21 students & 27 spring gardens for about 54 students, 3 teachers and 5 volunteers! Looking for a few more volunteers to have a bit more support & flexibility. We meet weekly for about 2 hours. Please email Mari-ah at [mrdean@umd.edu](mailto:mrdean@umd.edu) who will get you in touch with Deb about getting involved at Dynard!





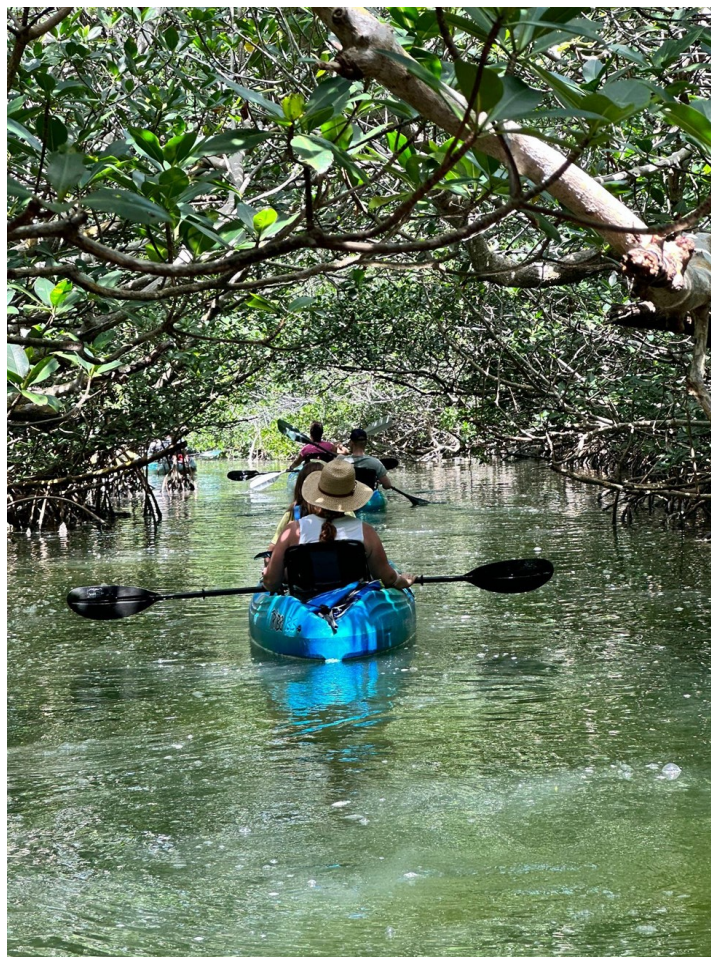
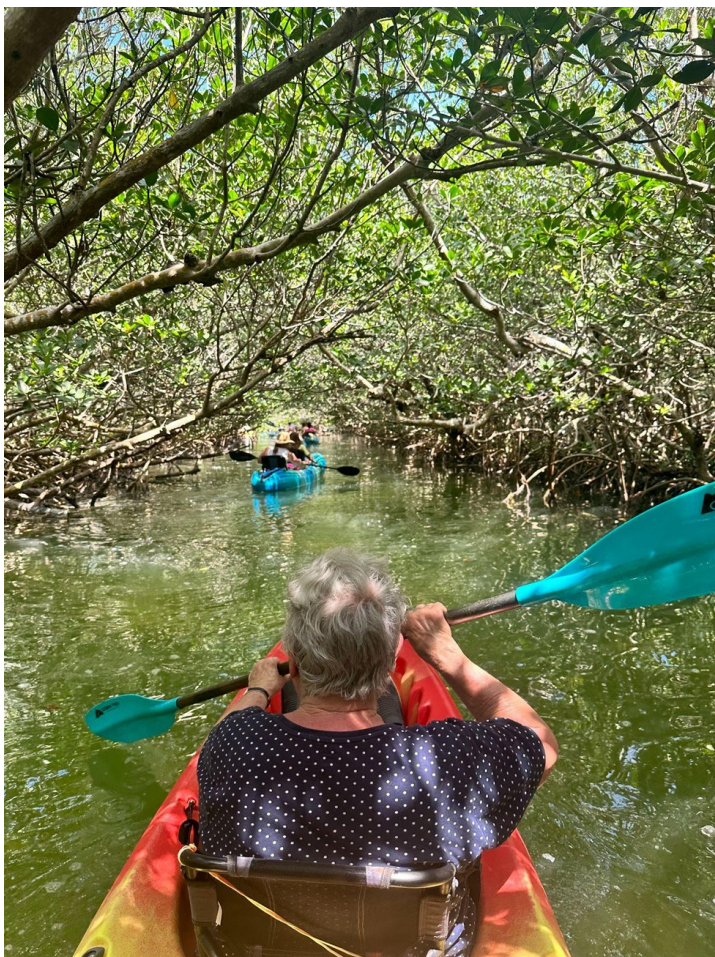
## ***Everglades***

***By: Fran Beale***

In March, I had the opportunity to visit the Everglades in Florida. This is the first time I have ever been south of Richmond, Virginia!

While there, our family went on a kayaking trip through the mangrove forests which I found particularly interesting. Not only do the mangroves provide protection from erosion from strong storms (hurricanes, etc.), but they can absorb as much as 10 times the amount of carbon dioxide from the atmosphere as opposed to other types of forests. The mangroves' unique root system (which can be very challenging while kayaking!), not only anchors the trees in the soft, muddy soil, but also absorbs oxygen through cell-sized ports called lenticels. These lenticels close during high tide, thus preventing the trees from drowning.

Mangrove trees live in salty water, and our enthusiastic guide (Amy) told us that the trees filter as much as 90% of the salt from the water through their roots. The tree deposits this salt on the surface of certain leaves; those leaves die and then drop to the water's surface. You can actually taste the salt if you lick the leaves. Fascinating!







***Updates from Lexington Manor***  
***By: Liz Ward***

The LMPP Community Garden is flourishing! Our rented beds are filled and we have a waitlist of potential gardeners. In the public section, we are regularly harvesting greens and our warm weather crops are taking off. We recently revised our public hours to Thursdays from 5-8 pm (to avoid the heat of the afternoon and take advantage of longer days) and Sundays from 8-11 am. The planting subcommittee is meeting this month to create a fall planting plan and are welcoming interested MGs to join June 13 9-11 am. Congratulations to our dedicated and hard-working garden manager, Carla Wilson, for completing her Master Gardener training!!!



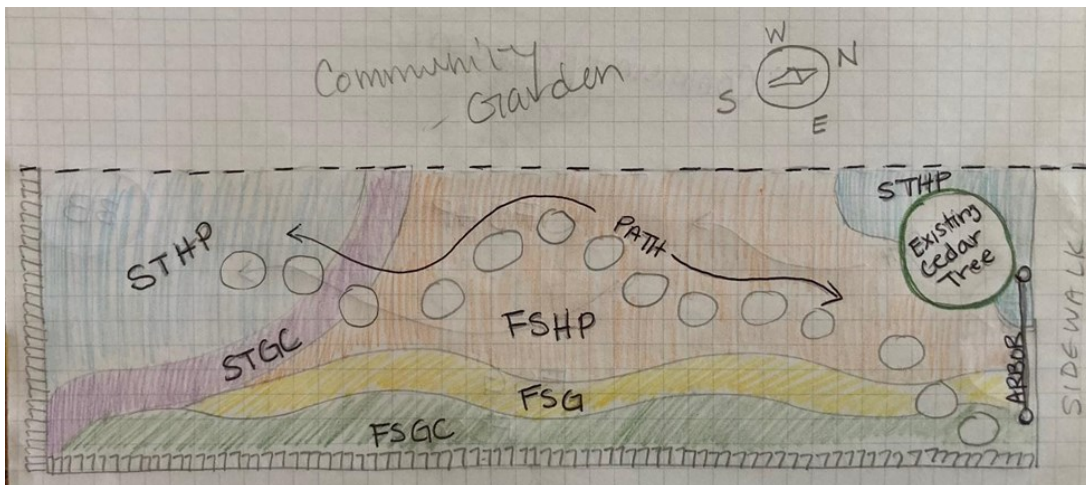
***Continued on pg. 12***



We are offering gardening classes and story times each month. Immediately following our quarterly MG meeting at the garden, Ben Beale presented a class on irrigation systems. Be on the lookout for information about our July class "Food Safety: From the Garden to the Kitchen". If you have or know little gardeners, we are hosting a garden-themed story time June 28th from 10-11 am.



Additionally, both the Southern Maryland Sierra Club and the Southern Maryland Audubon Society are planning for fall planting of native plants and will be looking for enthusiasts to volunteer with installation, planting, and care of our natives. Both groups are submitting requests with St. Mary's County Recreation & Parks and, pending their approval, will be adding nearly 9,000 sq ft of native plants within the park.



If you would like to participate in any of the upcoming or on-going projects at Lexington Manor as an occasional volunteer, a committee member, or by donating plants, please contact Carla Wilson [carla.wilson@stmaryscdc.org](mailto:carla.wilson@stmaryscdc.org) /301-857-9065

## **Grumpy's Review**

**By: Karen Doherty**

"Grumpy" the Gardener's real name is Steve Bender, and he's been writing gardening advice columns for Southern Living magazine for decades. Here's a recent "Tip of the Week".

"When you buy plants from a garden center that are right now in pots, but you are planning on putting them in the ground - it can be any size pot, 4" or 2 gallon - it doesn't make any difference. One tip is before you plant them, when you get them home, be sure that you water them while they're still in the pot and water them thoroughly so that water is running through the drain hole. And the reason you'll want to do that is because all their roots are confined into that pot, and if the roots dry out, the plant dies. So, if you, if you just take them straight out of the pot, put 'em in the ground, and then you water the dirt around them, you think maybe you've watered all the roots, but it could well be that the only dirt around the root ball itself is dry. And you'll find out very quickly. So, always water the plant well before you put it in the ground. Then, after you plant, water it again from the top so you wet the dirt around it. And that way, you'll make sure that your plants get off to a good start."

## **Banneker Green Club**

**By: Olga Dewey**

Back in April I received an email (via Mariah) from St. Mary's County 4H educator, Susan Vallandingham. The email provided information volunteering at Benjamin Banneker Elementary School with their 'Green School' club. In her email she explained "*They have had the Green club for several years with an emphasis on recycling and beautification of the flower beds around the school and the court area in the school. This year they would like to do some vegetable gardening too!*"

My children all attended BBES, so I was definitely interested in helping out. I was also pleased to find that the teacher in charge of the club was my daughter's 3rd grade teacher, Mrs. Goldsmith, who I also subbed for over several years.

The first day I participated was April 9th, and I got to meet Ms. Vallandingham as well as Master Gardener Ruth Yates who also was volunteering with the group. That day the children made garden beds from wooden warehouse pallets and bagged raised-bed mix. This was all in the inner courtyard of the school. I helped them to open and spread the soil, and also helped with weeding - to include pointing out which plants were weeds! The adults all brought seeds and some plants, and the children planted seeds for a variety of lettuces, carrots, peas, radishes, turnips, spinach, cilantro, squashes and cucumbers. There were also bell pepper and strawberry plants.

On April 16th the club met again, this time to monitor the progress and see how the seeds had germinated - with excellent results! They had been watering the beds regularly and it showed.

**Continued on pg. 14**



On May 21st the students had their first harvest of lettuce greens and the earliest of the radishes. I pointed out to them that they could harvest the lettuce leaves from the outer rim of the plant (instead of pulling up the entire plant), to keep a supply growing, whereas the radishes got pulled up at the base.

June 4th was the final meeting, and there was still plenty of lettuce to be harvested, along with strawberries, sugar snap peas, spinach, and turnips. They saw that the squash and cucumber plants were flowering, but not yet producing their fruit (though we did spot the tiniest of cucumbers at the base of a flower). I was also able to explain to them the concept of a plant 'bolting' on one of the spinach plants, which had lots of pollinators taking turns on the forming seed head.

With it being the last week of school, they children dug up some of the squash plants with the hopes of successfully transplanting at home. I talked to a few of them about how a plant experiences 'shock' when it gets moved, and noted how important it will be to water consistently over the next few days/weeks.

I had a wonderful time with the students, and look forward to working with the new group in the fall. I chatted with Mrs. Goldsmith about trying Winter Sowing as a project the students could do to get a head start on the next spring garden. Stay tuned!

## BACKYARD STREAM STEWARDS PROGRAM

Do you have a **stream** in your backyard or community? Have you noticed **erosion** problems? Are you interested in preventing erosion and keeping your backyard stream healthy? **We are here to help!**

Please use the link or scan the QR code to fill out the survey explaining your issue and we will contact you about Backyard Stream Stewards. You are not obligated to participate in the program if you submit an erosion issue.

Our upcoming programs are designed to give you the knowledge and resources you need to ensure a healthy backyard stream! Everything is completely free of cost and based on your level of interest, availability, ability, and knowledge.

We understand that these problems are overwhelming to tackle alone and do not want anyone in our community to feel like they do not have support. Contact us!



Your stream might  
be in your backyard,  
but we all benefit  
from a healthy  
watershed!

@somdrctd  
somdrctd@somdrctd.org  
240-577-6413  
www.somdrctd.org

Report your erosion issue here  
<https://forms.office.com/r/rBNCnZa2Q2>



LMPP COMMUNITY GARDEN  
LITTLE  
BOOKWORMS  
STORYTIME

Friday, June 28th

10am-11am

Lexington Manor Passive Park Community Garden

21741 Coral Pl, Lexington Park, MD 20653

Parking available just past the post office, across from  
Three Notch Theater



All ages are welcome!  
Bring your own blanket/chair  
to sit on

Please RSVP here:



[tinyurl.com/lmpp-storytime](http://tinyurl.com/lmpp-storytime)

Questions? Email [carla.wilson@stmaryscdc.org](mailto:carla.wilson@stmaryscdc.org)





## ***Zucchini Italian***

***Recipe Submitted By: Janet Marks***

This is a quick and easy solution to the zucchini and oregano overrunning your garden. Use small to medium zucchini - not the cricket bat size. I prefer a regular yellow onion over a sweet onion for this recipe. Of course, if you have the time, you can cook down your Roma tomatoes for the sauce. Do not use marinara or other spaghetti sauce since they contain a large amount of sugar which will ruin the savoriness of the dish.

2 zucchini, sliced  
 1/2 onion, chopped  
 1 8oz can tomato sauce  
 Olive oil  
 Pepper  
 1 Tbs fresh oregano, chopped (or 1 tsp dried)  
 Shredded cheddar cheese (optional)



In a large tall-sided skillet, heat olive oil and sauté zucchini and onion.

Once zucchini has barely started to brown, add the can of tomato sauce. Turn heat down to medium and cook for 10 minutes or until zucchini and onion are tender.

Add oregano and pepper (and salt if you must). Cook for another minute or two. Serve topped with shredded cheddar cheese.

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 GARDENER** 

Check out MG Web site and the Facebook,

<https://extension.umd.edu/st-marys-county/home-gardening/master-gardener-program>



<https://www.facebook.com/St-Marys-County-Master-Gardeners-University-of-Maryland-Extension-111823550482511>