

March, 2026

Meetings at 7 pm at West Main Baptist Church Fellowship Hall

First Monday of the month

6:30 pm Socialize and enjoy refreshments

News & Notes

Happy Spring to everyone! Yesterday was the vernal equinox so it's officially the astronomical start of spring. My phone's weather app says we'll have warm temps for the next 2 weeks. But is it a false spring? A false spring is a meteorological phenomenon where an unseasonably warm period in late winter or early spring is followed by a sudden return to freezing temperatures, according to weather.com. It "tricks" plants and trees into breaking dormancy and blooming early, only for the new growth to be damaged or killed by subsequent frosts. It also tricks people into thinking winter is over—only for the cold to come roaring back. That very warm day followed by snow and sleet earlier this month comes to mind. Gotta love a good old false spring. We're all eager to get into our gardens and start planting. However, we need to keep in mind that the last frost date for Danville is April 15th, according to <https://www.almanac.com/gardening/frostdates/VA/Danville>. Until then, we can enjoy the warm days and extra hour of sunshine.

2026 is off to a great start for the Danville Master Gardeners Association! We welcomed Jessica Driver as our new Extension Agent. She brings such a breadth and depth of experience, and kindly shared her knowledge of native and honey bees at Spring to Green. Speaking of Spring to Green, wasn't it fabulous? Our speakers, Jessica, Elizabeth Tomlin and Peggy Singlemann, were all so informative and entertaining. Big shout out to the Spring to Green Committee lead by Debra Bailey and Bonnie Hill as they were very effective in planning this event and making it happen so smoothly. The committee just met on March 26th to evaluate this year's event, review the evaluation forms submitted by attendees and consider changes to continue to improve the processes for this event. Thank you to everyone who participated in making STG such a big success! And, in 2026, we have a large group who will start master gardener training this spring, and you can read more about the trainees in this newsletter.

Want to help with a project? Want to get some service hours? Opportunities to participate in various DMGA activities are listed on Volunteer Space in Better Impact.

Also, sign-up sheets will be available at the monthly meetings or call or email to sign up!! If you wish to find out how many educational and volunteer hours you have, go to your main page in Better Impact and click on reports. Go to bottom of page and click on Hours and Feedback. It separates your hours by category.

Submitted by Deb Henderson, Editor

2026 EXTENSION MASTER GARDEER TRAINING CLASS

Welcome to our new training class! Our sixteen trainees met for Orientation on March 7 and 9 with an introduction to the class course, labs, VCE and DMGA. They will be working on the class modules and attending labs March-September, along with attending DMGA meetings and possibly some volunteering, with a December graduation to Intern status.

New Training Class members are: Bryn DeBass, Judi Fleming, Maya Hairston, Jesse Houston, Laura Jones, Arlene Kramke, Trish Ladd, Aidan Lawrence, SueEllen Lawton, Christy Marlowe, Donna Martin, Lesly Martin, Faith Nettnin, Diane Pagen, Sherri Wright, and Denise Wyatt.

With over 100 people expressing interest in the EMG class (!), planning and program set-up required much collaboration and communication. Many thanks to Kelly Adcock, Cindy Bailey, Debra Bailey, Brannon Blount, Jessica Driver, Nene McWilliams, Dana Reagan, Barry Reagan, Carrie Rogers, Elizabeth Tomlin for serving on the Training Committee plus reviewing applications, conducting interviews, planning the labs and leading the orientation sessions.

Additional DMGA members are serving as mentors to trainees – Judy Hodnett, Robin Loftis, Mitzi Marlow, Pat Morgan, Sandy Pruitt, Ann Sylves, and Gayle Thomson. And behind the scenes is Mary Beth Holley, sending lab notices and preparing, distributing and collating lab evaluations.

Any DMGA member is welcome to serve as a lab monitor and get to know the class members, have some fun and learn more about the wonderful world of gardening. Our knowledgeable instructors include our “Greenhouse Gang”, Pat Morgan, Kelly Adcock, Elizabeth Tomlin, Jessica Driver, Sonya Wolen, Jessica Smith, Jim Revell from the Bedford Master Gardeners, and Kameron Kilday from the Virginia Tech Pathology Lab.

The 2026 Training Lab Schedule is available on Better Impact (“Files” on the Home Page) and sign-up for lab monitors is on The Volunteer Space (link on BI Home Page-News).

Submitted by: Bonnie Hill, Training Committee Chairman

Aiden, Faith, Judi, Lesly, Diane, Arlene and Denise, some of the members of our 2026 class, are pictured below.

Photo by Dana & Barry Reagan



Wild Bergamot (Monarda fistulosa)

By Mitzi Marlow

A beautiful native plant that is also known as bee balm and horsemint, it is named in honor of a Spanish physician and botanist Nicholas Monardes who recognized the plant could be used for medicinal purposes, and used the leaves and flowers to accomplish this. Being a perennial member of the mint family, it is found in zones 4 to 8. Growing 2-4 feet high, with many groups of square stems growing from the rootstock, it has bluish green toothy leaves, with 2-to-4-inch lavender pink shaggy blooms, bordering the sides and middle of the cluster with a slight tip in the center. All parts of the plant (stems, leaves and flowers) have soft hairs attached to them making them a very showy plant with “minty” smelling leaves.

Not a fussy plant, it will grow quite well in sandy clay to a light soil in a well-drained, sunny or part shade location. It does have medium drought tolerance and watering or fertilizing too much will overwhelm the plant. It is recommended to water in the early morning as they are very prone to mildew and the plant can dry out before evening. Spacing well (18-24” apart), allows good air circulation to also fight mildew.

Beebalm will self-seed and can be aggressive in invading adjoining beds with their rhizomes. Deadheading the flowers will help minimize self-seeding. They may also be pruned in late spring or early summer to allow them to be bushy and delay bloom time. Their clumps on the soil top will at times die in the centers so dividing them every 2-3 years to stop crowded conditions is helpful.

Wild Bergamot blooms throughout Virginia from July -September. Bees, butterflies and hummingbirds cluster around it. In the garden it is very pleasing to the eye when used with purple cornflower, lavender, and asters. Combined together, they make a beautiful background. Plant them close to walkways where you can smell their aroma when passing by. They are also very deer and rabbit resistant. Please note that the Virginia Native Plant Society requests that this native be purchased and not taken from any natural habitat.



Photo taken by Mitzi Marlow

https://www.wildflower.org/plants/result.php?id_plant=mofi

<https://www.inaturalist.org/taxa/85320-Monarda-fistulosa>

<https://vnps.org/1993-wild-bergamot-monarda-fistulosa/>

<https://plants.ces.ncsu.edu/plants/monarda/>

What's in a (Plant) Name?

By Isla Wiles

Juliet in Shakespeare's *Romeo and Juliet* notes, "What's in a name? That which we call a rose / By any other name would smell as sweet." Recently while reading the March 2026 issue of *Better Homes and Gardens* magazine, I came across what I thought was a typo (in a national magazine no less!). See photo below. Before striking it out with my red pen, I did a bit of research into the naming of plants.



As we learned in high school biology, botanical names follow the Linnaean binomial system, but since Latin is a dead language, pronunciation of the Latin name may vary from country to country, language to language, and even speaker to speaker (Oregon State University). For various reasons, common names for plants are frequently used. Unfortunately, common names of plants can be confusing, pejorative, and many faceted. Common names of plants can be used in different regions of the country to refer to different plants. Several plants with "cedar" in their names are not cedar according to the Linnaean system; for example, of the Japanese Cedar, Port Oxford Cedar, Western Red Cedar, Eastern Red Cedar, and Deodor Cedar, only the last is a "true cedar" of the genus *Cedrus*. (Oregon State University) The common name "daisy" can refer to at least eighteen different species, so the scientific or botanical name is best used to different one from another (Extension, Penn State). The *Asclepias tuberosa*'s common name of milkweed can be a bit negative. It is a native, but some people prefer not to associate with plants that have "weed" in their names!

Let's "wander" back to the plant which caught my attention in the magazine, the variegated trailing plant many of us refer to as the "wandering Jew." Other common names for it include zebra plant, inch plant, or the somewhat recent close-but-not-quite the-same pronunciation of "wandering dude" plant. Its scientific name is *Tradescantia zebrina*, and it's in the spiderwort family. ("*Tradescantia zebrina*") Little information about the wandering dude plant common name exists in .edu or .org. websites (our preferred sources), but .com websites offer various explanations for the name change. Judging by its use in the noted magazine, using wandering dude is a choice made to erase negative connotations. Regardless of its common names, its purple and differing shades of green leaves and its tough and easy-to-grow characteristics make it a favorite summer hanging plant.

Work Cited:

Extension, Penn State. "Nomenclature." Penn State Extension, Penn State University, extension.psu.edu/nomenclature.

Oregon State University. Scientific Plant Names (Binomial Nomenclature). Landscape Plants, Oregon State University, 14 Jan. 1998, landscapeplants.oregonstate.edu/scientific-plant-names-binomial-nomenclature.

Tradescantia zebrina Wisconsin Horticulture University of Wisconsin Madison Division of Extension. Wisconsin Horticulture. <https://hort.extension.wisc.edu/articles/tradescantia-zebrina/>. Accessed 21 March 2026.

Just Rip it Out!

By Elizabeth Tomlin

As Master Gardeners we are usually thinking about planting as much as we can in our gardens, especially as spring rolls around. How many of us have come home from the garden center with more plants than we have space for, started more seeds than we can ever plant? Do you feel seen? What I want to talk about here is the opposite. Tearing plants out!

This is something that I really struggle with. As we all know, gardening is always a work in progress and sometimes we regret planting something in a particular spot, or a plant gets out of control, or we just decide we don't like it anymore. I have the hardest time pulling the trigger on plant removal. Over the last week though, I decided that the lemon balm that is taking over my garden has to go. All of it! To the right is a picture of my garden from this past summer and the location of a big lemon balm plant behind the hydrangeas is circled. What you can't see, is how much lemon balm is growing between all of the plants, and this is only one of many spots. For years I have told myself "it is holding the slope, I will make tea out of it, I will prune it back aggressively" and find myself fighting it all summer, everywhere!



To the left is what my lemon balm currently looks like. It is sprouting up everywhere. Since we have had some rain recently, the ground is nice and soft, and I got a big shovel and started digging. I filled a couple wheelbarrows with lemon balm plants and then put them under a tarp to die. I haven't got it all out yet, so if any of you need a plant to start your own lemon balm infestation, please hit me up!



On the lower right is my blank canvas, with the lemon balm removed. I am a realist and know I will be plucking it out for some time to come, but my other plants will at least have a fighting chance now. I feel really good about this destruction and encourage you all just dig up what you don't like anymore!

to



Photos by Elizabeth Tomlin

Sandy's Favorite Easy Climbing Rose: Zephirine Drouhin Climbing Rose

By Sandy Pruitt

Introduced in 1868 and a favorite ever since, Zephirine Drouhin Climbing Rose is a romantic, fantastically fragrant, old-fashioned rose that is still one of the most popular climbers today. No modern rose has been able to exceed it for sheer performance, rich raspberry scent, and generous season-long bloom, and if you make Zephirine Drouhin Climbing Rose part of your landscape, you will treasure its beauty and generosity of bloom.

Peaking in late spring and early fall, the loose, double blossoms of vivid cerise-carmine provide outstanding mass effect. Each bloom is about 4 inches across, opening from a long, pointed bud and made up of 20 to 24 richly colored petals that are infused with a strong, evocative raspberry scent. Just one flower is a delight, so you can imagine what a vaseful looks and smells like.

This old French Bourbon rose grows vigorously to 15 to 20 feet high and 4 to 6 feet wide and, remarkable for any rose, performs well in part shade. Zephirine Drouhin Climbing Rose is an excellent choice for north-facing walls and areas with little sunlight. Zephirine Drouhin Climbing Rose will continue to bloom in summer, but its heaviest showing will usually be in the cooler temperatures of spring and fall.

The rich, medium-green foliage (coppery-purple when young) is very mildew resistant, and the canes are nearly thornless, making Zephirine Drouhin Climbing Rose great for planting where traffic is heavy or children are nearby. This classic, time-tested climbing rose is the perfect choice to train over a trellis or porch, or trim into a formal hedge. Plant in moist, well-drained, loamy soil. It will grow well in sun or shade.

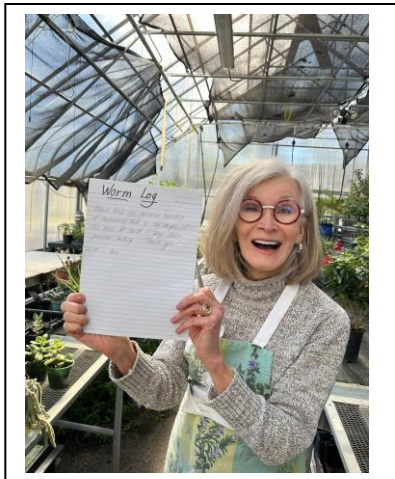
But here is the best news: Though it is a hard-to-find rose, this thornless climber was spotted at Danville Lowes outside at the store front display of roses, on the bottom shelf. I bought yet another one! This rose sends up occasional shoots and they will be true to the original since it is not a grafted rose.

BUTTERFLY HELLO PLANT SALE APRIL 18 12-3PM

By Sandy Pruitt

The Butterfly Hello event at the Danville Science Center invites us again this year to hold our annual Plant Sale fundraiser at the steps of the Train Station, 677 Craighead St. on April 18th from noon til 3pm. Butterfly Hello is a free event to celebrate the seasonal opening of the Butterfly Station. This new time slot may encourage more sales.

Hopefully, you've already started your cuttings & seeds, and dug up your tree and shrub shoots so they're ready for the sale. We are known for our great prices and unusual plants so spread the word to your friends and folks looking for Mothers' Day presents. If you need pots, contact Sandy 434.250.0996 or Anne Sylves from the Gibson Greenhouse. Plants should be in place by 11:30am, labeled but not priced. Prices will be set by color coded label system. Frequently requested plants include hosta, tomatoes, veggie, shrubs, hydrangea, hellebores, forced bulbs, and ready to display pots of herbs, bulbs or moss. Please remember to label your plants. For labels, we have often used cut up miniblinds with pencil or grease/china marker for writing. We will need volunteers for the plant table and at the butterfly greenhouse door so watch for this opportunity thru our handy volunteer signup link. It's always a fun day and only pouring rain would cancel the event. If you have questions please contact Sandy.



The Gibson Greenhouse volunteers have been very busy propagating plants, quarantining sickly plants in the 'plant hospital' and teaching young students. They completed all their formal classes for this school year. Their most recent classes were on soils, composting and worms. Ever the entrepreneurs, they tended and sold succulents to The Wednesday Club.

Big thanks to all the Greenhouse Gang for all their good work!



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All members are encouraged to write an article for the newsletter that would be of interest to the group. Please include reference to sources used in preparation and credit for photos. Send articles, reminders and photos related to your DMG activities to Debhenderson674@aol.com or text 434-489-8612. Thank you.

Many thanks to all who have contributed to our newsletter.

Useful QR Codes for Better Impact, DMG Facebook & website & Volunteer Space

