

SHENANDOAH SHARINGS



Shenandoah District

Virginia Federation of Garden Clubs, Inc.
Member,
National Garden Clubs, Inc.



Edition 68

General News

Sept/Aug
2023

President's Notes

I am honored to be your new President for the Shenandoah District. For those of you that I did not get the chance to meet at the March District meeting or at the Organizational meeting in July, let me tell you a bit about myself. My background is in the Defense industry, owning a satellite engineering firm supporting the Pentagon. After selling my company seven years ago, I was able at last to retire and pursue my true passion – gardening, of course! My other interests include golf, Civil War history, animal rights, travel and service to my church.

My theme for the coming years is: **“My Garden ... My Refuge”**.

Webster defines *Refuge* as “*a place that provides shelter or protection from distress*”. A garden also offers peace, tranquility and just plain joy. My own garden is the focus of my morning ritual. I prepare a latte, enjoy a leisurely stroll around all the beds and plan my day. I hope to inspire everyone to stop and consider how our garden provides comfort and an opportunity for quiet meditation. This is sure to resonate true for many of us. I find weeding to be especially therapeutic - a mindless exercise that provides instant results and gratification.

My hope is that we can all help others to appreciate this healing place and to promote the sheer joy of gardening. Tell all your friends that gardening is the best form of therapy and it's free for the taking! Spread the good news and tell everyone to find and join a Garden Club!

I look forward to meeting many more of Shenandoah's garden enthusiasts at the initial Board meeting in Harrisonburg (14 Sep) and at the Fall

District meeting (11 Oct) in Culpeper. Save these dates and share your stories. So whether your passion is flowers, natives, herbs or vegetables, remember the words of John Lennon and ... “Give peas a chance”.

Maureen

CALENDAR OF EVENTS

Shenandoah Board Meeting: Sept 14 Harrisonburg

VFGC Grants Due: Sept 15

Shenandoah District Meeting : October 11
Best Western: Culpeper

SD Judges Council Meeting: Oct
Harrisonburg

ODG Deadline: November

Awards Due: December 1

SHENANDOAH SHARINGS
Editor.....Val Story



IN MEMORIAM

Our Deceased Members



Beverley GC
Carol Wiggins
Vivian Lake

Luray GC
Fran Gregory
Karen Baughn

Hill and Valley GC
Fran Gregory

Glenn Burnie
Mary Lou Mulvey
Thelma Cameron

Nelson County
Sally O'Neil

Colonial
Tess Klimm



WELCOME NEW COMERS

Lake of the Woods

Wendy Withersoon
Carleen Delio
Marcella Capozzi
Karin Koarik
Jackie McMahon
Noel Lowery
Cristina Blanco
Joan Black
Gail Sihilling
Karen Espinoza
Deborah Baird
Melanie Rykena
Carleen Delio

Hill and Valley

Denie Smith

Nelson County

Pat Saunders
Bina Swink
Kristy Kobylinski
Lyn Saunders
Leslie Brock
Michele Picou

Academy of Gardeners

Sylvia A. B. Caldwell

Luray

Susan Finlay
Marcelline Miller

Beverley

Sherry Campbell
Sophie Berquist

Order your Shenandoah District Tote Bag Today!



\$15 per bag

Name: _____

Address: _____

Phone Number: _____

Email: _____

Quantity: _____

You can pay with a check or use the website to pay with PayPal

Shenandoah District Fall Meeting

October 11, 2023

at

Pepper's Grill/Best Western Inn

791 Madison Rd., Culpeper, Va 22701

District Meeting Information

Registration Begins at 9:15 a.m.

Club Presidents Meeting at 9:45 a.m.

Meeting Begins at 10:15 a.m.

Registration Cost: \$28.00

Deadline - October 3, 2023

Post marked after this date add \$10.00 to registration

Please send a form for each person attending

Programs

Morning Program - Presentation of District Club Projects

Afternoon Program - "The Gourdfather" - Mike Connolly

Turning produce into works of art!

Pam Lambourn, Chaplin, will conduct a Memorial Service for deceased club members. Please email Pam with the names at pamlamborne@yahoo.com

Board Members & Clubs: If you are interested in having a vendor table please contact Valerie Vaughan: vrvcolours@hotmail.com



Registration Form

Name _____

Phone _____ Email _____

Name of Club _____

Name of District if other than Shenandoah _____

Make checks payable to Shenandoah District - VFGC

Mail form and check to:

Denise Gorsky

3147 Glasgow Hwy

Buena Vista, VA 24416-4918

mrschief@hughes.net

540-258-1252

Credentials (please circle all that apply)

Club Member Club President SD Board Members Past District President

District President VFGC Board Member Guest Other

Diet Allergies: _____

Registration Fee \$28.00

Deadline: October 3, 2023

Post marked after this date add \$10.00 to registration

Please send a form for each person attending

Registrar Use Only

Check # _____

Amount _____

Date Rec'd _____

NGC AND SAR NEWS



NGC President Brenda Moore

Brenda Moore, of Oak Hill, West Virginia, is honored to serve as the 48th National Garden Clubs, Inc. President, and to promote her theme of “Go Green – Plant America.”

Brenda was born in Morgantown, WV and grew up in Fort Washington, MD. She attended West Virginia University and there met her husband, Ron, while obtaining her degree in Family Resources.

While home caring for their children, Rebekah and Andy, volunteerism became an important way to connect with others and give back to organizations she cared about. As her children got older, she taught in the Fayette County, WV Public Schools and later worked for Fayette County, WV Public Library. Brenda is a gammy to seven perfect grandsons.

Although the daughter of an agriculture engineer and married to a forester, Brenda’s love for all things outdoors began when she first joined a garden club in 1994. Never did she dream, by accepting an invitation to join a garden club, she would become a club president, a district director, the West Virginia Garden Club President and now the National Garden Clubs’ President.

Brenda has a special passion for unusual and native plants. The Moore’s have a certified West Virginia Wild Yard, a National Wildlife Federation Certified Yard, and a Certified Monarch Waystation. Being a good steward of our Earth is very important to her. As a four-star member becoming a five-star member is one of her goals. The four NGC Youth books were authored or co-authored by her.

She looks forward to meeting, communicating with, and working with National Garden Clubs’ members and potential members to make our organization an even better one.



South Atlantic Region Director, 2023-2025 Carcille Burchette Theme: “Go Green...Plant America Plant Seeds for New Clubs”



Welcome to the South Atlantic Region...Kentucky, North Carolina, South Carolina, Virginia, and West Virginia! Our state clubs, federated with National Garden Clubs, Inc., are committed to embracing the NGC mission statement.

Join us in our concerted efforts to make our region become more beautiful and more inviting to pollinators, birds and other wildlife. We emphasize the planting of native trees, shrubs, grasses, and flowers. We continue to beautify our communities with projects that benefit those who are passing through **and** especially those who live there.

And join us in our quest to provide educational resources that promote good stewardship of our land, air, and water. If you have never attended Environmental School, Flower Show School, Gardening School, or Landscape Design School, take the leap! These are for anyone wanting to increase their knowledge of what is in our world and how to take care of it. And you don’t have to be a club member to attend any of these schools. We just want to educate you! Everyone will benefit.

VFGC REPORTS

Val Story, VFGC PRESIDENT

“Every Person Makes a Difference”



Hello Shenandoah District,

Thank you so much for allowing me to be the VFGC President for the next two years. Not only does every person make a difference, every club, every district makes a difference. Without you, we would not be what we are today. Thank you.

With NGC, SAR and VFGC we have a lot of goals and objectives, which I know we can accomplish. Mary Owen wanted VFGC to be more visible and I certainly agree and want VFGC members to work further within each of your communities.

This administration, including VFGC Chairman, District Presidents and clubs will work together to express their objectives and goals. I know, I look forward to meeting, communicating and working with VFGC members to make this an even better organization. We must support each other.

The list below are important objectives:

- Increase VFGC social media presence

- Create a Zoom educational program for member's

- Revitalize the VFGC Web, making it more attractive, easier to navigate with a wealth of information

- Work on different methods for ODG circulation in order to reduce cost.

- Decrease printed material in the yearbook (placing more information on the Web)

- Review and update the Bylaws and Standing Rule as well as board member "Job descriptions"

- Support NGC's National Garden Week and Plant America programs

- Continue participation in the TREX program

- And, very importantly, work together to increase clubs/districts/councils having flower shows: working towards a coordinated state wide flower show month!

VFGC is a wonderful organization, which can do even more, please help us to meet our goals by sending any thought/ideas you have as to the best way to accomplish our goals and objectives.

Blue Star Memorial Byway Marker Dedication

After years of planning by Mary Owen and Barbara Hollister, VFGC finally saw the dedication of a Blue Star Marker at Lewis Ginter Botanical Garden. The event was held on Friday, August 4, 2023, under cloudy skies with a crowd of garden club members, men and women of the armed forces, Lewis Ginter employees and other community members in attendance. The moving ceremony included tributes and remarks from former members of the armed forces as well as members of VFGC sharing the history of the Blue Star memorial and how the relationship with Lewis Ginter evolved so that this memorial could happen. We were also honored to have Bob Henkel lend his voice to patriotic songs throughout the ceremony. The service ended with the playing of taps followed by a reception in the Education Building



Former VFGC President, Mary Owen, with Brian Trader, President and CEO, Lewis Ginter Botanical Garden



Val Story, VFGC President



Barbara Hollister, Blue Star Memorial Marker Chairman



Barbara Hollister and Bob Henkel

Submitted by Pat Carswell

SHENANDOAH DISTRICT NEWS



Awards

Despite what the thermometer says Autumn will be upon us in no time. It is time for your club to be thinking about submitting your award applications for this year. Shenandoah District has a fine history of competing for and receiving ribbons for its many and varied projects around the Commonwealth. So, let's keep the tradition going strong. Here are some deadlines to keep in mind.

Youth Contests Y-1 and Y-2 are due by Nov. 1, 2023.

Youth Poetry Contest is due Nov. 1, 2023.

All other Awards are due by Dec 1, 2023.

Applications for awards can be found on the VFGC Shenandoah websites. Please read instructions carefully.

*Awards can be submitted electronically to me at Rebecca@comcast.net (Newsletter's must be submitted by email) or by good old snail mail.

More detailed information will be available for club presidents at the District meeting.

My committee looks forward to seeing your submissions.

Rebecca Yates



SMOKEY BEAR/WOODSEY OWL POSTER CONTEST – 2024

Smokey Bear is recognized both nationally and internationally as the symbol for wildfire prevention, with his motto being "**Only You Can Prevent Wildfires**"! Since 1944, Smokey Bear has taught people how to help prevent wildfires and how to be careful with campfires, barbecues, matches, and more.

It is hard to believe that Smokey Bear is celebrating his 80th birthday! To honor this special occasion, the 2024 poster contest will feature only Smokey Bear. Woodsy Owl will return in 2025.

I will be sending an email to all the club presidents in August to request the name and contact information for their poster contest chairman. I will then communicate with the chairman on the contest rules and timeline throughout the contest period.

To view the 2023 National contest winners, go to:

National Garden Club web site

Click on Youth & Scholarships

Click on Youth & Scholarships again to Smokey Bear/Woodsy Owl winners, see winning posters for each grade

I believe we can work together to make this a truly successful contest year!

Toni Shreve, Chairman
Shenandoah District Smokey Bear/Woodsy Poster Contest

A NOTE FROM YOUR DISTRICT TREASURER

Your District Treasurer has changed for 2023-2025

Denise Gorsky

mrschief@hughes.net

540-258-1252

3147 Glasgow Hwy

Buena Vista, VA 24416

District Garden Club Dues are \$1.25 per person. **Due before May 31st** of each year. Include number of members on check memo line and the dues form, which be provided around March 1st of each year.

Make all checks payable to **Shenandoah District, VFGC** and send to the District Treasurer. This includes dues, registration forms, luncheon checks, donations and any other remittances to the District.

“Shenandoah Sharings” is the District Newsletter sent to all Garden Club Presidents and should be forwarded by your President to all your Garden Club members. It is important for all members to be informed of District events. Registration Forms for District Board Meetings, Fall and Spring District Meetings, Call Letters of Meetings and events will be included in Shenandoah Sharings.

Registration forms and checks for meetings must be sent to the Treasurer **before the “due” date**. Do not wait until the due date to mail. Number “Counts” for people attending these meetings is needed by the due date to be supplied to the venue or caterer for the lunches.

Please complete your Registration Forms and always include the form with your check. Please note the meeting name and date on the check memo line. The Scholarship Fund and the Blue Star Memorial Fund are all funded by the generous Garden Club donations. Donations are accepted at any time for these funds through the Shenandoah District Treasurer.

Birds and Butterflies

Birds in My Yard by Betsy Waller

As the summer draws to a close I like to reflect on the different birds who have made my yard their home. I have read that if birds can successfully raise their young in a location, they and their offspring will return year after year. I have one cat, but she is an indoor only cat not even interested in looking at birds from the windows, so she poses no threat at all. I think the birds feel quite safe here.

I have a feeder outside the kitchen window that attracts birds from dawn to dusk. This year we have had beautiful yellow goldfinches. They are feisty little birds that fight with other birds and often with each other. Occasionally a blue jay will visit, and they will give that bird a wide berth. We also have black capped chickadees, sparrows, tufted titmice, cardinals, nut hatches, downy woodpeckers and red bellied woodpeckers. The feeder is a busy place and I have to fill it often. Mourning doves hover under it for leftovers.

Of course, there are birds that do not feed on seeds. We have robins that seem to like people; they will come quite close when looking for worms. We have a nest that is in a bush close to the back door. She did not mind us looking at her eggs.

We have had many generations of wrens who have raised their young in a Williamsburg bird bottle under the roof of our front porch. These pottery bottles were made in colonial days and hung under the eaves to attract birds for insect control.

Blue birds visit each year and have two broods. We had a blue bird house on a fence post and while not glamorous they seemed fond of it. However, after they were gone a marauding bear came along and tore it down and ripped off the roof. We have put up a new house (not in the same location) so we will see if they will find that acceptable next spring.

Cat birds love my strawberries and sit on the garden fence and sing their many songs while waiting for me to leave. They nest every year in the burning bushes in the front yard that provide them with thick growth for camouflage.

I also have a hummingbird feeder and I see them daily flitting about, plus they like the blooms on the mandevilla vine.

I encourage everyone to provide a safe space for birds to raise their young so that our bird will grow plus provide your family with hours of pleasure.



Catbird: A mimic with a mew



Bird Bottle, hang sideways

Community Gardens

Greetings fellow garden club members! I am the returning chair of this committee for 2023-25 and the 2023-25 President of the Hill and Valley Garden Club, Luray. Any gardens, private or public, that you would like to share, please contact me and I will disperse to the Shenandoah District club presidents or in upcoming newsletters.

Places to Visit:

The Luray Garden Club recently visited gardens at the **Benedictine Sisters of Virginia** located in Bristow. The Place of Peace Columbarium also offers a labyrinth and prayer silos among the gardens. Prince William Master Gardeners have their teaching garden on the grounds. <https://osbva.org/>



The National Botanic Garden located in Chantilly is currently holding 10 weeklong events from spring through autumn. Self-guided tours allow visitors to explore 40 acres of gardens. Tickets can be ordered at nationalbotanicgarden.org. The property also includes **Amazing Farm Fun** that has picnic areas, barns, and shelters for corporate events, school field trips, and family gatherings. Activities include hillside slides, play structures, and Noah's Ark replica.

Harmony Harvest Farm in Weyer's Cave was planned as a fieldtrip for our club but plans changed. It sounds like a wonderful place to visit and pick your own flowers. Guided tours are also available. <https://www.hhfshop.com/pages/about-us>

Glen Burnie Gardens @ MSV in Winchester is a must see. The Nature Connects exhibit made with LEGO bricks by artist Sean Kenney is there until September 4.



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Hill and Valley GC members Julie Edmonds (also Treasurer) and Will Daniels (Secretary) volunteer with the Page Alliance for Community Action (PACA). They have both been active in helping to plant and maintain three vegetable gardens in Stanley, Luray, and Shenandoah. Produce is offered to the public on Free Market Fridays, to local schools and food pantries.



Julie Edmonds (kneeling) and husband Jim far right with other PACA volunteers

Submitted by Katie Sokol
hillandvalleygardenclub@gmail.com

Virginia Federation of Garden Clubs Life Membership And Book of Honor

There is always a member or members of your club deserving of recognition for the VFCG LIFE MEMBERSHIP or BOOK OF HONOR (if the membership recognition has already been presented to that individual). Each are available for a \$50 tax-deductible donation that contributes to the VFCG Scholarship Fund. A Life Membership receives a life membership pin and card and the Book of Honor recipient is gifted a card.

Submitted by Denise Henderson

The Blue Star Memorial Program has been in existence through the garden club movement for more than 70 years. National Garden Clubs, Inc. is committed to placing Blue Star Memorial Markers on our Highways and Byways in honor of our nation's Armed Forces.



Shenandoah needs to keep this wonderful tradition going. Clubs, Councils, do consider placing a makers in your area. Polly, would love to have members submit location for Blue Star Memorial Markers. Club can get help, so don't be put off with the pricing.

Submitted by Polly Gable, Shenandoah Blue Star Chairman

Beautification, Litter Prevention, Recycling

Plastics pose a huge problem for waste management around the world. According to a 2022 report by NPR, “Waste management experts say the problem with plastic is that it is expensive to collect and sort. There are now thousands of different types of plastic, and none of them can be melted down together. Plastic also degrades after one or two uses. Greenpeace found the more plastic is reused the more toxic it becomes. New plastic, on the other hand, is cheap and easy to produce. The result is that plastic trash has few markets—a reality the public has not wanted to hear.”

One of the biggest culprits is those ubiquitous jugs of laundry detergent. But now there’s an alternative, and it’s effective and affordable: detergent sheets. They’re easy to find (Google “detergent sheets”), and easy on our ailing planet. Give them a try!

Submitted by Barbara Nordin

DO NOT FORGET

TREX

START ANYTIME,
SO WORTH-
WHILE TO YOUR
COMMUNITY
AND LAND-
SCAPE!

What can be recycled?

All plastic must be clean, dry and free of food residue.



What is a Native Plant?

Native species are those that occur in the region in which they evolved. Plants evolve over geologic time, adapting to the climate, soils, timing of rainfall, drought, frost and complex interactions with other species. In North America, plant species are generally described as native if they grew here before European settlement. (Definition courtesy of the Virginia Department of Conservation and Recreation.) Thus, native plants possess certain traits that make them uniquely adapted to local conditions, providing a practical and ecologically valuable alternative for landscaping, conservation and restoration projects, and as livestock forage. In addition, native plants can match the finest cultivated plants in beauty, while often surpassing non-natives in ruggedness and resistance to drought, insects and disease.



Some native plants that you probably have in your garden already are: Butterfly weed, cardinal flower, black-eyed Susan, red columbine, purple coneflower, blue false Indigo to name a few. Shrubs: American beautyberry, elderberry, arrowwood viburnum, and many more. Trees: eastern redbud, flowering dogwood, American hornbeam, White fringe tree to name a few trees that are common throughout Virginia.



With weather patterns changing, especially rainfall, it might be in our best interest to put more native plants in our landscape to ensure we have gardens that survive these changes and look good at the same time.

Donna Courtney

Native trees and Heritage plants

JAPANESE BEETLES – Fight Back Now!



The best strategy in eliminating or reducing the damage done by Japanese Beetles is through learning the beetle's life cycle and applying control measures at the appropriate times. Here we are at the end of August. Is it too late to fight back? **NO!** Follow these steps; some as suggested by Meadows Farms Nursery and most from personal experience.

1. As gross as this may seem, handpick the beetles off the plants and put the beetles into a jar of soapy water. Beetles don't bite. Better yet, just pinch off their little heads and move on. The more you handpick, the less egg laying will occur, thus reducing the population and damage for now and in the future.
 2. Although this works best when the beetles first appear, you can still spray your plants now. Try *BONIDES Captain Jack's Dead Bug Brew*. The main ingredient is Spinosad, which is an environmentally friendly certified organic product. It is toxic to a wide variety of chewing insects and relatively non-toxic to mammals and beneficial insects, such as bees, ladybugs, and praying mantis.
 3. Don't trust the 'relatively non-toxic' products? Want a do-it-yourself remedy? A natural spray control is to mix 4 tablespoons of soap with a gallon of water and give all your plants a good, soapy bath. Also, since Japanese Beetles do not like the smell of garlic you can make a mixture of garlic powder and water in a sprayer.
- Beetle traps – Don't do it. While this is touted as a method of natural control, you will end up attracting every beetle for miles around.

Do This Now!

Come September, apply a product called *Milky Spore* to the soil. Any Japanese beetle eggs laid in the soil will pupate into larvae stage which is the white grub worm. While this larvae is on top of the soil, it will ingest the milky spore and die. Milky Spore is a very environmentally friendly product. Your strategy is to have the Milky Spore kill as many of these grubs in September before they go down deep into the soil for the cold winter months.

Do This in February/early March

Reapply Milky Spore for further control of the white grub worm. When the soil begins to warm, the grub works its way to the surface and feeds on grassroots, thus damaging the turf.

Be diligent with these steps and your effort will go a long way in reducing future generations of beetles.

Kathy Mercier

Chairman, Organic Gardening & Herbs

Four Star Membership

This represents a significant individual accomplishment and entitles the eligible member to be recognized by NGC and their state garden club for having successfully completed all four of the National Garden Club Schools. These members are recognized and honored as a small minority of garden club members who have completed these demanding requirements.

To follow: The journey of one such member in Shenandoah District.

My love of all things gardening began at three years old. Yep, that's what I was told. My paternal and maternal great grandmothers were present for much of my youth and were both avid gardeners who were way ahead of their time in their stewardship of the land and the importance of soil and composting. I have so many memories of being in the gardens alongside my family and our neighbor, Mr. Wiggert, whom we lovingly called Mr. Wiggy or Wiggy. We lived in an idyllic wooded haven in Queens, New York, called Woodhaven, and the name is a proper fit. Wiggy worked at the Brooklyn Botanic Garden and showed me how to garden and always used the scientific/botanical names. All of you who tease me about using the scientific names can blame him, but I thank him. He showed me how to properly plant and water and went so far as to show me how to prune on my great grandmother's beloved roses. He was a brave man! Such hands-on learning really stays with a person. He was the second person I thought of when I opened the envelope and saw the beautiful certificate. My beloved father was the first. My dad was a natural at everything and especially gardening. I wish I could have achieved this honor a little sooner because he would have been proud of me.

Jump forward many years from pruning with Mr. Wiggy and a newly married bride moves to Warrenton, Virginia with space to grow a family and gardens. My father suggested I might want to contact the local extension office and sign up for their Master Gardener program in order to learn about my new surroundings. Smart man!

I took my four-year old daughter to the class with me and she sat off on the side quietly coloring. By the way, she and her two sisters are all good gardeners who use the scientific names of plants. Wiggy would be love it. Gardeners are usually very congenial and generously share their plants, as a result my two acres became full of trees, shrubs and perennials. The girls and I had a blast. When we moved many years later, I took many of my plants with me and Kathy Mercier kindly helped me. I cried as I walked out, already missing our home and my gardens I could not take with me.

Whilst living in Fauquier I was introduced to Ruth Rider which led to a long friendship. Ruth asked me to be a docent for a home tour that her garden club was hosting and I agreed. After it was over as some of us were hanging around drinking wine, wink, wink, they asked me to join their club and I happily said, "yes". I knew a number of the members already and knew it would be a good fit for me. Welcome to Francis Fauquier Garden Club!

I had been a member a number of years when I heard people saying the words Flower Show School. I loved school. I love learning and it piqued my interest. I wanted to know more about this school and lucky timing for me I had recently "retired" from ten years teaching high school Geometry and Algebra.

I attended a Flower Show School course and enjoyed it but during a break an attendee in the back of the room announced he had registration forms for Landscape Design School and I jumped up and picked up a form. From that moment on I was in my happy place. I took my first course at the lovely Lewis Ginter Botanical Garden – pause for a plug for LD school! Sign up, you will love it! When I returned home after the course ended, I immediately went online to the NGC website and searched for more courses. This is when the fun began!

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I took my second course in Maine and met many lovely ladies. One of them has become a friend. She is an amazing gardener and invited me to see her gardens which were featured in *Down East* magazine. While I was attending the Landscape courses, I noticed the Gardening Studies School on the NGC website – that's what the school was called back then. I started traveling for the Gardening courses and heard about Environmental Studies School. Yes, you guessed correctly. I happily traveled to Maine, Connecticut, Pennsylvania, Maryland, Virginia, North Carolina and National Capital Area (NCA) to complete all four courses in each of the four schools. I have many memories from those years and even more important than the learning are the friendships I made along the way.

The traveling made the whole experience better. One classmate I met in Gardening School heard me saying that I was going to Connecticut for the next course and she said "let's go together". We did and wow did we have fun. Susie and I antiqued and ate awesome Italian food in New Haven. Susie Middleton is now State President of the Federated Garden Clubs of Maryland. She is a dear friend and one of my biggest supporters who encouraged me to attend Flower Show School and become a Judge. I had completed the other three NGC schools and was attending a Refresher course on my way to becoming a Master Consultant in said schools when she said "why not try Flower Show School". I gave it a try and by my third course I was hooked.

Along the way I learned a great deal and was blown away by what I didn't know about our environment. I must admit the Environmental courses were wonderful but I always felt a bit down afterwards. One night at a group dinner we all discussed how we felt the weight of what we had learned. Learning isn't always easy and fun.

Now for the technical part: to become a four star member one must complete and pass all four courses and exams in each of the four NGC schools. They are: Environmental School, Flower Show School, Gardening School and Landscape Design School. Regarding Flower Show School one must complete all requirements to becoming a Judge. I highly recommend it!

What's not to like about learning, fellowship, traveling, eating, garden tours, (especially those not open to the public), floral design, becoming a steward of the land, and using one's brain?! We have heard over the last few years how important it is for our mental well-being and overall health to use our brain, to walk in the woods, to meditate or to work in our gardens, and to enjoy healthy friendships, etc. I can say that I have very gratefully done all of the above with old and new friends that I've made throughout this incredible journey.

I've met so many people and learned as much from them as from the courses I took. I am fortunate to have become friends with three special women who will be in my life forever, as well as other meaningful friendships and acquaintances. At the recent NGC National Convention at The Greenbrier, it really hit me how many people I knew as a result of attending these four Schools. It was like a college reunion but way more fun, and no hangover. Well, not for me at least.

I am truly honored to be added to the list of four star members. It was pointed out to me that I am number two representing the Commonwealth of Virginia. I hope to see many more members added to the list and if I can help in any way I genuinely want to do so.

"Our mind is a garden, our thoughts are the seeds, you can grow flowers or you can grow weeds"
Ritu Ghatourey

By Jamie Nick

TICK-ING Time Bombs?

Ticks have been associated with 16 different diseases in the U.S. Here's how to protect yourself. (And if you develop any of these symptoms, seek medical help immediately.) It began in the mid 2000s as a mystery:

More and more people began developing rashes, hives and GI distress three to six hours after eating red meat. The Culprit: Lone star ticks, common in the southern and eastern parts of the country, were picking up the molecule by biting animals, then spreading it to humans. Once introduced to this otherwise harmless molecule, our bodies interpret it as a threat, and our immune systems attack. The only way to treat this new disorder is to avoid red meat, dairy and foods that contain gelatin or other animal products. Typical symptoms include hives, rash and itchiness, but extreme cases could result in full-on anaphylaxis. While red meat is the obvious threat, there are certain drugs that are derived from livestock, and even some cosmetics and gelatin-coated capsules could cause issues. The immune reaction response may last up to five years.

Take Rashes Seriously

Most of us are familiar with the circular bull's-eye rash that's a hallmark of Lyme disease. Another tick-borne illness, Rocky Mountain spotted fever, carries its own distinctive rash--blotchy redness starting on hands, arms and feet two to four days after infection. Most common among people 55 to 64, the disease moves fast and considered more likely to lead to severe symptoms than other tick diseases, including coma, respiratory failure, tissue death in extremities, organ failure and death.

Pay attention to Lingering Colds

As many as 476,000 people may contract Lyme disease annually after a bite from a black legged (deer) tick, says CDC. And the erythema migrans rash--the telltale bull's eye--occurs in just 70 to 80% of patients. The rest have to figure if their fatigue, headache, fever, chills aches and swollen lymph nodes warrant seeing a doctor. The difference is that Lyme disease is bacterial, not viral, and unlike a cold, it will get worse. After a month, flu-like issues, can evolve into severe headache, neck stiffness, facial droop on one side, joint pain and swelling, and inflammation of the brain and spinal cord. A two week course of antibiotics will stop this! See your Doctor!

The CDC recommends that you treat yourself and your clothes with an insect repellent with DEET or picaridin. Pretreat clothing with permethrin. Stay out of tall grass. Shower within 2 hours of being outdoors especially after being in tall grass or around deer areas. Condensed from an article in AARP by Mary Ann May



