



Brunswick County Master Gardener  
Volunteer Association

# NEWSLETTER

December 2005

## A Message From Our President:

While here visiting in New England, it is very plain to see that Winter is just around the corner. Most of the trees are bare, Thanksgiving preparations are in full force, and hints of Christmas are everywhere. Another year has gone by all too rapidly!!! MGVs have been evident everywhere throughout 2005, and plans and budgets are under preparation for the coming year, already under the full guidance of Richard Boland and omnipresent Shirley...with Charlie doing his imitation of several different elves.

I thank you all for your contributions to the 2005 projects and join you in looking forward to 2006.

I especially look forward to increasing our presence in and around the schools of Brunswick County as we help to spread the word to our young people about the benefits and joys of work with the soil and what it can produce. So, until I see you at one of those projects or maybe at the Holiday party, best wishes to you all for a joyeux holiday season and the coming Noel.

Signing out.....  
Dan Sokoloski

## Promote the 2006 Extension Master Gardener Class!

Encourage your friends and neighbors to apply for the 2006 Extension Master Gardener Class. Classes will meet 9 a.m. – 12 noon each week from February 8 to June 6, at the Cooperative Extension Service. Most classes will be on Wednesdays with a few Tuesday classes. The cost of the course is \$110, which covers the cost of an Extension Master Gardener Volunteer Reference Notebook and other class materials and expenses. **An application must be completed and returned to the Cooperative Extension Service by Monday, January 2, 2006, to apply for the course.** Applications are available from our office.

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## *Congratulations!*

MG Ann Duke's husband, Bill, won a Blue Ribbon for Peach Preserves at the NC State Fair October 14 - 23, 2005 in Raleigh. The award winning preserves were made with Freestone Caro-gem peaches. The recipe - which uses peaches, spices and sugar - was first used by Ann's mother, Jennie Griggs Brock, in the 1930s and 1940s and later by Sue Brock, Ann's sister-in-law.

The preserves were critiqued by Edwina Shaw, a noted gourmet cook in Raleigh.

These award-winning peach preserves are for sale at Cat on A Whisk in Southport.

## *It's time to pay dues again.*

Your \$5 annual dues payment is due by January 1. A form to use when you send in your payment is printed on the back page of this newsletter.

## And Congratulations to Shirley, too!!

We all know Shirley Waggoner-Eisenman – she's one of the more active members of the MG program, and has been a major force behind the very successful *Gardening by the Month*. In recognition of all her contributions, **Shirley has been granted the North Carolina Award for Outstanding Volunteer Service**. Here's a brief overview of her contributions.

She completed the Master Gardener course in May 1993, the first in Brunswick County. Since then she has logged more than 3,000 volunteer hours. She and MG Brenda Holmes established the filing system for all the MG publications. She chaired the first fund raiser, a 1996 calendar, which put the MGs in the black for the first time. She co-chaired the 2<sup>nd</sup> calendar printing in 2004, and served on the cookbook committee. She chaired a number of committees and projects, including the *Gardening by the Month* fund raiser, the first holiday social, the first budget committee, the landscaping of a house for Habitat for Humanity (with assistance from the Hort. Agent), and two Southeast District all-day seminars. She also has worked as editor of the newsletter, worked the Hotline, was President of BCMGVA for 2 years, helped coordinate landscaping of Hope Harbor – with Union Elem. School, which won for them 1<sup>st</sup> place in a statewide competition – taught MG classes at the extension building and on Bald Head Island, gardening courses at the community college, conducted seminars on various gardening subjects, and wrote articles that appear in 5 local papers. This is all just what she does here at Brunswick County! Let's look elsewhere in the state.

She also has been involved with the North Carolina MGVA, as our Liaison/Delegate since 1994, and thus as a member of the Board of Directors. She has attended training sessions in Raleigh, all State Conferences since 1994, chaired the State Conference in Brunswick County in 2000 and has acted as liaison for the Board to host counties since 2001. She was President of NCMGVA for 2 years and is currently President-Elect. She has chaired the bylaws and nominating committees and served on a committee that developed guidelines and a timetable for the state conference.

Shirley served the maximum of 6 years with the Extension State Advisory Council (SAC), attending meetings in various part of the state 3 to 4 times a year. She represented the Southeast District at various District meeting and planning sessions, and met with state legislators. She attends State Extension Conferences in Raleigh, represented SAC at a conference to give SAC's happy birthday to Extension. She chaired the Nominating Committee, attended a Leadership Forum, met regularly with the Dean and Executive Director for Agricultural Programs, Associate Dean and Director of Cooperative Extension, Associate Director and Director of County Operations, District Director, etc. and met with NC Senators and Representatives in Washington re the Federal budget and on "back home visits: re state budgets.

Gosh – does anyone wonder why Shirley won this award? Well done!

**When you multiply tiny pieces of time with small increments of daily effort, you will find you can accomplish magnificent things.**

## Master Gardeners Board

### Elected Officers:

President

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Vice president

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In December 2004, there were 46 calls to the Hotline. The breakdown of these calls is as follows:

**General:** 23. The majority of these calls were for requests for Newcomer Packets, Soil Sample Kits and Soil Sample analysis information.

**Lawns:** 4. Most calls concerned problems with weeds. The weed that prompted the most questions was Florida Betony.

**Trees:** 4. The calls were for information on palm and cedar trees and pruning "how to."

**Shrubs:** 1. Hollies gave the caller problems.

**Pests:** 3. The pests were moles and fire ants.

**Vegetables:** 2. The callers wanted information on growing beans and berries.

**Flowers:** 7. Questions concerned houseplants that needed to come in for the winter and pruning Lantana.

When you work on the Hotline, write down as much information as possible about the problems and their solutions on the Hotline forms. The

back of the form has some questions to help you clarify the caller's problem.

Reminder from Charlie: **DO NOT** diagnose disease or pests over the phone! You need a specimen to make a proper diagnosis. All turf problems should go to Charlie, David, Al or Matt, in that order, other problems to Dave or Charlie.

## A Tribute to Kathy

Kathy Walters has accepted a position as Administrative Assistant to Brunswick County Director of Public Utilities, starting Dec. 1. Kathy received her Associate Degree in Secretarial Science from Robeson Community College in May 1978 and was an Extension Secretary II for more than 27 years, 20 in Robeson County and the balance here in Brunswick County. She provided support to David Barkley (Ext. MG Program, Urban Horticulture, Pesticides, Aquatic Weed Mgmt., Beekeepers), Charlie Spencer (Ext. Master Gardeners), Billy Privette, Lindsay Hewett (4-H Youth Development), Al Hight (Livestock/Waste Mgmt, Forestry, Field Crops, Commercial Horticulture) and was the Extension Web Site Manager. She's earned some kudos along the way: South Central District Secretary of the Year – 1992, Southeast District Secretary of the Year – 2001, Extension Director's Award of Excellence for Acquisition & Utilization of Computer Skills/Technology – 1989, 1999 and 2000, and the Extension Director's Award of Excellence for Special Leadership Skills – 1989.

*I would like to take this time to personally thank Kathy for all her hard work here in Brunswick County. Kathy without a doubt has been one of the best secretaries that I have worked with. She has helped me become a better Extension Agent. Without her, our programs would not have flowed as smoothly as they have and much of our success in the master gardener program starts with Kathy. She is one of the first and main contacts that many of our master gardeners see and she has been very instrumental in assisting our volunteers with information to pass along to our clients. I am very proud of the way she has handled our clients with the care and sensitivity that all of us should strive for. She has been a blessing to me in the short three years that I have worked here. I wish her the best in her new job. We will all miss you. Thanks, Dave*

And from Charlie: Kathy has provided the glue that has helped hold our group together. She ensures that our rosters are correct, edits and mails out our news articles, is always available to help out any Master Gardener, works closely on any of our projects and trips, even cleans the office for us, ensures our plaques and awards are that the right place at the right time, and too many other things to list. We will really miss her and her activities involving the Master Gardener Program. Best to you on your new job! Don't forget us!

## ***Gardening Tips for December*** ***From David Barkley:***

**“It’s Beginning to Look a Lot Like Christmas”** Holiday plant care is very important now if you want to preserve the beauty of poinsettias and other Christmas plants. Remember, they are actively growing plants unlike many of your other house plants that have been brought in to rest after their peak growing season. Keep them watered (moist to touch) and provide them with enough light to continue their growth. Avoid cold or hot air drafts.

Christmas trees can be used as landscape trees after Christmas if they are properly cared for while in the home during the holidays. Too much or too little water are common problems associated with "Christmas Tree Shortlife." Also, keeping the area near the tree too hot will cause the needles to dry out and fall off. Try having the decorated tree in the house for only a minimum time and plant it as soon after Christmas as possible.

### **December Gardening Chores**

Landscape plantings still can be made at this time of the year. The one major consideration is the soil condition. Wet soils, especially wet, clay soils, are rather unforgiving. Find something else to do until it dries off. If you have purchased plants and are waiting for the soil to dry, be sure the plants don't dry out in the meantime. Keep them watered and consider winter protection if necessary. Keeping them in a barn or garage for a few days to protect the root ball from freezing should be considered.

- Draw up a landscape design that can be installed in the spring while the winter takes you away from outdoor activities.
- Order supplies for the coming spring gardening plans.
- Repair, maintain, and store equipment needed for the coming season. Now is a good time to shop around and bargain for some good prices on equipment you will need later.
- When the weather is bad bring out your notes from gardening last year and devise strategies to overcome problems you faced last year.
- Don't have notes? Try to summarize your garden's performance and make yourself a note that you need to keep detailed notes of plant performances for the coming year. Sit down to a computer and enter your notes for fast retrieval for next year.
- Enroll in classes! Read and study up on ideas you would like to achieve for next year. Don't forget to include your New Year's Gardening Resolutions...Thou Shalt Not...
- Tip pruning can be done this month. Many evergreens are used in various Christmas decorations. Both the foliage and the berries of many favorites including the holly species, nandina, pines and cedars are popular for decorating the house. Remember not to make heavy "renovative" type pruning cuts until late winter.
- Continue to plant spring flowering bulbs.
- Think water garden and have it ready for spring. There are numerous sources of information and construction materials for these type projects. Garden centers and mass merchandising garden stores are handling pool liners, pumps, and aquatic plants.
- Give gardening tools and subscriptions to landscaping magazines as gifts.
- Order fruit trees adapted to your area now and designate shipping dates that avoid hard frozen ground problems when planting. Order now, plant later philosophy.

- Continue mulching and composting chores. Your plants will love the added benefits and mulching landscape plants now may help them survive the winter. Along with the mulching, you will need to watch out for animal damage to the trunk base. Voles love to feed on the bark of plants and may become a pest in the winter.
- The dead tops of many perennials can be removed. Frost has killed back the top growth of most of our favorite perennials. This includes Mexican Bush Sage, Pineapple Sage, Cannas, Coneflower, Rudbeckia, Peonies, and Veronica.
- The tops of others are still green, and they don't need to be completely trimmed back. These might include Liriope, Daylily, Tansy and Hollyhock. Just a general cleanup of any brown foliage is necessary at this time. Some perennials, although dormant during the winter, offer winter interest. Don't cut the tops back until the early spring cleanup. This list includes Sedum, and the many ornamental grasses we're now growing.
- Apply broadleaf herbicides to control winter annual and perennial weeds. Watch for dry, windy conditions with low relative humidity that can damage turf. It may be necessary to irrigate periodically to help the grass survive.
- Coastal lawns if not already dormant will soon be. Continue to mow, rake leaves, and water during dry spells.
- Good soil preparation is essential for winter annuals and spring flowering bulbs. Try to till as deep as possible to eliminate any compaction problems, incorporate topsoil, organic matter and lime before planting, and finish with a 2-3 inch layer of mulch.
- Continue planting container grown ornamentals this fall; be sure to loosen the roots and the media before backfilling. For slightly pot-bound roots: Cut on 3-4 sides, shake the roots and media to a loose

condition and then plant.

**What kills plants?** Answer: Mostly planting too deep, underwatering, overwatering and overfertilizing practices. Sometimes new plantings are sensitive to cold damage in the winter. Extra care may be needed to get the newly establishing plants through a cold winter. Mulches help and so do some of the wraps. Better yet, make sure they are planted in the right location.

### ***Something from Charlie:***

**Don't forget to respond to the Christmas Party invitation.** We need to know the count so we can plan properly. Want this one to be exceptionally well planned since it is Kathy's going away party.

More info on the joint efforts to provide programs for Supply Elementary School will be forthcoming.

For you who work the Hot Line, please Do Not put rubber bands around wet soil samples. It ruins the boxes and they will never dry. Thanks.

Thanks to everyone for a GREAT year, the best one in our 12 year history. Now a new year is starting. Hopefully we can do even better this year than last. Lots of exciting things are in the works. It looks like we may be able to get the inmates back so we can continue our projects.

Hope to see you all at the Christmas Party. Have an especially joyful holiday season and a Happy New year.

Again, thanks for all you do.

***Mark your calendar for January 26 and 27. Dr. Blazich and his wife April will be here to provide an herb and a propagation seminar on those two days. We will sell tickets for both events.***

# 2006 Dues Notice

**Dues are payable by January 1 each year.**

Make checks payable to: Brunswick County Master Gardener Volunteer Association (BCMGVA)  
\$5.00 per Individual

Name \_\_\_\_\_

Address \_\_\_\_\_

Email \_\_\_\_\_

Mail checks to: Linda Lemieux

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If you have an item for the newsletter, be sure to submit it to both Becky Dus  
([rcd@nfcexperts.com](mailto:rcd@nfcexperts.com)) and Lisa Miner ([lisaminer@mac.com](mailto:lisaminer@mac.com))

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