

The Compost

Spring 2020

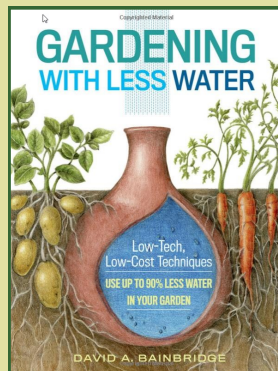
UNIVERSITY OF
MARYLAND
EXTENSION

MASTER
GARDENER

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GARDENING WITH LESS WATER



I was looking for a low-cost way to provide continuous water to my vegetable garden. The garden is at least 100 feet (a long hose) away from my house, I have a full-time work schedule, and I do not like getting up at 5:30 am to water. I researched the Internet on what people did before piped, municipal water and I discovered this book: Gardening with Less Water: Low-Tech, Low-Cost Techniques; Use up to 90% Less Water in Your Garden by David Bainbridge.

Bainbridge teaches different ways to water inexpensively and "low-tech." One is with an oya or olla, or a partially buried terracotta pot that uses osmosis to move molecules from the less "concentrated solution" (water) to a more "concentrated solution" (the soil) to equalize conditions. The origin of this method is thought to have originated in Africa about 4,000 years ago.

The website <https://www.permaculturenews.org/2010/09/16/ollas-unglazed-clay-pots-for-garden-irrigation/> shows what oayas look like, how they are formed and how they are used.

I used 8-inch terracotta pots from Lowe's. I (actually, my husband) filled the drain holes with plumbing connectors and washers, and covered the tops with the saucers. I painted the rims and the saucers white so sunlight would be reflected and not absorbed to keep water from evaporating during hot days. When the soil is dry, water moves from the pot. When the soil is wet, water does not move. I had great success with eggplants and tomatoes.

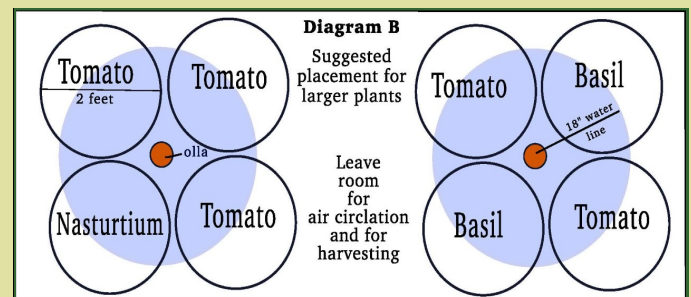


Photo by
CC MG Tina Bailem

Images from Amazon (book):
<https://drippingspringsollas.com/wordy/>, and <https://lovelygreens.com/how-to-make-diy-ollas-low-tech-self-watering-systems-for-plants/>.

Article and photos courtesy
of CC MG Tima McGuthry-Banks

COORDINATOR'S CORNER

As I write this, I look out the window at my home. At the beginning of the year, I would not have believed if someone had told me I would be teleworking starting the middle of March and that we would have to cancel most of the planned spring Master Gardener events that many of you already put time and hard work into. I know that this has been an especially difficult time for some of you as COVID-19 disruptions have directly hurt the income and physical health of your family and the schedules and mental health of many more. Although we can't meet in person at this point, I hope you are encouraged by our twice monthly Zoom calls, 'Inspiring Garden Photos' Google Photo album and keeping in touch with fellow MGs individually.



Thanks to everyone who helped out with facilitation of the 2020 Master Gardener class. Although the in-person sessions were cut a bit short, we were able to complete the class. Please continue to make the MG Interns feel welcome and encourage them to join in various projects, especially once we are able to start resuming activities, whenever that may be.

In this time, people are turning to the outdoors and gardening as a way to get exercise, fight cabin fever and feel empowered to beautify their surroundings. We grow food even as many other aspects of life are outside of our control. I think there is growing recognition in the public that gardening is a great way to get exercise, be a bit more self-sufficient and connect with nature. We don't know all of the ways that the world will change or what exactly our "new normal" will look like, but gardening – and teaching others to do so – will always be crucial.

Thanks for all that you do!

Luke



By Luke Gustafson, CC MG County Coordinator

BEL ALTON MG DEMONSTRATION GARDEN

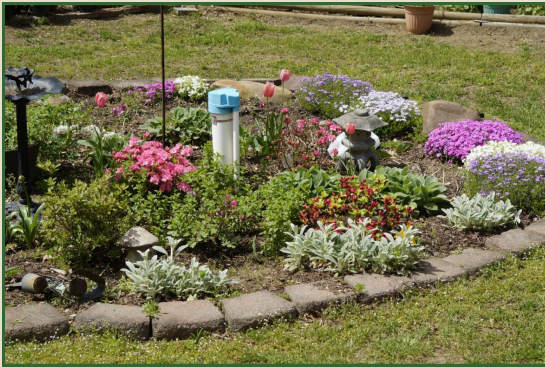


Photos courtesy of CC MG Harriet Beck

MY GARDEN OASIS



We live in a rural area on three acres of land in Charles County Maryland. Our backyard borders on woods which our grandsons call "the forest". There is also a pond which I have seen only three times since living here for more than 20 years. Every year new plants are added to the landscape and some type of project is started. We grow lots of perennials throughout the garden. I prefer them to annuals because they return each year and multiply in size. I then move them to another area in the landscape or share them with friends. We also buy annuals or grow them from seed because they provide color and I use them in places where perennials have died out.

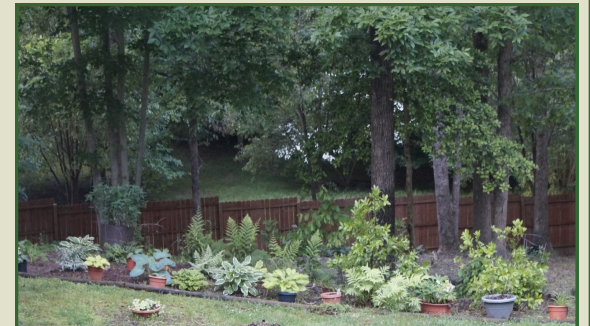


My yard provides an interesting array of color spring to fall. Beginning in the spring the front yard burst with color from flowering trees. There are two pink Magnolia trees, three Japanese Cherry Trees (a gift from our son), Japanese Maple Trees, a Rose Bud Tree and five wild Dogwood Trees that were on the property when we built the house. We have lots of Bradford flowering Pear Trees that line the edge of our property along with yellow Forsythia. The Camellias bloomed during the winter months. They remind me of my mother. She loved the Camellia Shrubs and there were several in her front yard. Some are still standing and blooming at our family

home in Savannah, Georgia. She always referred to them as her Georgia Camellias. The Crape myrtles provide color during the fall.

My garden is a peaceful place for me. Each morning I walk there with a cup of coffee in hand observing all the bulbs and flowers that have returned. I am always surprised to see flowers I planted sprouting up in the spring that I forgot about. My garden is a place where I go to meditate and give thanks to God for my many blessings. Obviously, there is a Godly presence as I watch the butterflies, the bees (even though I am allergic to them), the birds and the many bulbs, and flowers that come back each year. This ritual I look forward to each morning; however, due to the Coronavirus I follow guidelines and stay inside and watch my garden from the inside. I miss walking in my yard.

When we feel safe about going outside and working in the garden my two projects for this year are planting fruit trees in an area dedicated to a fruit tree orchard and adding more Hostas to my Hosta Garden along with a variety of Ferns. This garden is on a hill that slopes down under some trees. It offers lots of shade for shade loving plants. Last year I bought a Peach tree, planted it and bought four more fruit trees; two more Peach trees, a Cherry and Plum tree. I plan on adding to this assortment. Please enjoy the pictures of the garden!



Article and photos courtesy of CC MG LaVerne Madison

OF BIRDS, SQUIRRELS AND GROUND HOGS



Chestnut-sided Warbler



Red-bellied Woodpecker



Article and photos courtesy of
CC MG Terry Thir

Mike and I have enjoyed photography for a long time. I've always had a passion for taking pictures of nature, landscapes, butterflies, flowers and, of course, grandkids.

I received several great bird feeding systems for Christmas. We have had so much excitement watching all the birds visiting our feeders and identifying our visitors for the cold winter months.

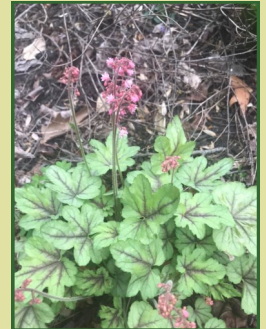
My greatest joy was finally having squirrel-free bird feeders. The first day they were installed three squirrels came to check them out. First they circled the base, then one tried climbing the pole and couldn't get past the baffles!! Jumping up at the pole didn't work either!! Success!!

Now, some of you are probably feeling sorry for the squirrels. Well, we bought a fun bungee cord to put on corn cobs. The curious squirrels got their exercise jumping up to grab a hold of the corn. This provided us with yet another source of entertainment and food for the squirrels at the same time. I call it a win-win! The squirrels are also very happy to eat any seeds dropped on the ground.



We also have an unwelcome critter who took winter habitat under our deck and shed. The groundhog was very happy to find kernels of corn that the squirrels dropped to the ground.

Now that spring has arrived, I am enjoying watching the perennials pop up in my gardens. Much yard work to do and now I've got the time. Today I put out my hummingbird feeders. I miss working at Melwood and the greenhouse and all my MG friends. Be well!



Perennials blooming -
Top right - Coral Bells Crevice Alumroot - heuchera micrantha;
Top left - Common Columbine, Granny's Bonnet - aquilegia vulgaris;
Left - Spanish Bluebells, Wood Hyacinth - hyacinthoides hispanica.

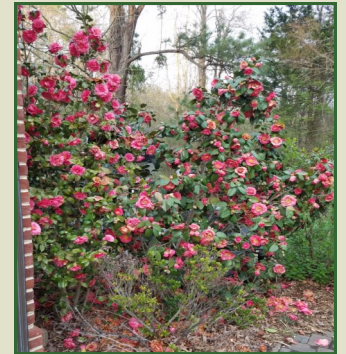
HOPE GROWS



Daffodils/photo by
CC MG Harriet Beck



L.-r.: Daffodils and Peach
tree/photos by CC MG
Jan Lakey-Waters



Top to bottom: Camellia,
newly planted Strawberry
Pyramid and Lilacs/
photos by
CC MG Dave Lewis



Single, hydroponically
grown tomato plant at
Disneyworld, FL/photo by
CC MG Linda Ivko

Hope Grows

(by CC MG Ellen Gustafson)

Schools close, flowers open,
Plans cancelled, garden grows,
Life is different, nature the same,
Hope sprouts.

At home you must stay,
still plants come out to play.
A space of six feet,
Petals dance in the street.
You should now wear a mask,
but in the sun you can bask.
When you miss going out,
Plant seeds and watch them sprout.
Hope spreads.

Someone has died or been hospitalized,
Another's strength has been tested and tried.
In rubble and ash, new plants will push through,
the darkest of nights can still be renewed.
Go wash your hands and sanitize
but also take time to look to the skies
plants are like arrows for you and I
pointing our hearts to the One Most High
Hope survives.

It's tempting to complain and blame and sulk,
but new life you'll see if you go on a walk.
new leaves emerge, spring colors on display,
faithfully growing day after day.
Help someone that has a need.
It doesn't take much to plant a seed.
Worries and fears, you must weed,
see how nature takes the lead.
Hope climbs.

The Creator forever has a plan
nature sustains in His hand,
Look at your garden and can't you see,
There is still hope for you and me.
When the current stresses bring you down,
Think of the roots growing underground,
Each seed that dies brings a whole new plant,
Nature remembers even when we can't.
HOPE GROWS!



SOUTHERN MD FOOD BANK'S COMMUNITY LEARNING GARDEN PROJECT UPDATES

The Charles County Master Gardener project starts its second year at the Southern Maryland Food Bank "Seeds of Hope" Community Learning Garden.



Entrance to Food Bank Garden - July 2019

During February 2020, Brenda DiCarlo, Director, Southern Maryland Food Bank & Outreach Services, met with CC MGs Brent Burdick and Inette Furey in a planning session for the 2020 season. The Food Bank was looking forward to another successful year and asked for the CC MGs continued assistance in the garden and help with expanding their agricultural outreach activities.

The Food Bank has not renewed the lease at their current location in Waldorf, MD, which will expire in January 2021. Although they service the entire Southern Maryland area, they have been looking for a suitable location within Charles County and are trying to ensure that their new home can support a garden with ample outdoor space,

sunlight, and watering facilities. They will be moving their raised beds and pallet-fencing to the new location when they relocate in January 2021.

Director DiCarlo said Food Bank staff would be rebuilding their existing raised beds this spring to make them deeper. The size and small depth of the existing beds limited crop production last year to only about 90 pounds. While the new beds would not increase the overall footprint of gardening space, they would be the foundation for a (hopefully) larger garden at a new lease location next year.



The Food Bank had been harvesting broccoli and spinach that 'wintered over' in the garden. In early March (before all MG volunteering was suspended), CC MGs Brent Burdick, Inette Furey, Tina Bailem and Kathy Davis transplanted the broccoli and spinach into pots so that the plants would not be in the way when the Food Bank rebuilt the existing raised beds.

Food Bank staff had been planning on replacing the old beds with new ones before the end of March. The new beds were to be twice as deep, and some beds were to be combined to form 8'x4' planting areas. Like the existing beds, the rebuilt ones would be set atop the ground, which would facilitate their move come January. After repotting the spinach and broccoli, the team started preparing the old beds for replacement. The soil was mounded up in the center to facilitate frame replacement.



Article continued next page

SOUTHERN MD FOOD BANK'S COMMUNITY LEARNING GARDEN PROJECT UPDATES CONT.

Everyone was overcome by current events, even the Food Bank staff. Their workload increased with trying to distribute more food to even more clients, so they were not able to build the new frames. We will have to wait and see what happens.

Earlier, another CC MG group supporting the Melwood Project volunteered to start growing seeds for later transplant into the Food Bank garden. While early season broccoli and kale plants did not make it to the Food Bank garden before the cessation of all MG activities, everyone is hopeful that some plants may make it into the garden before mid-year.

In February, CC MG Brent Burdick started growing sweet potato slips from a sweet potato harvested from the Food Bank garden last year at his home. (Paisley helped grandpa with the process and got to practice gardening first-hand. However, she will not be able to see the results until travel restrictions are lifted.)



Paisley

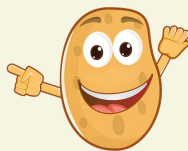


Last year, four laundry baskets with red potatoes were grown for demonstration purposes with the potatoes provided to Food Bank clients. The Food Bank wanted more red potatoes this year, so it was planned to purchase another 12 baskets to bring the total to 16. CC MG Brent Burdick picked up red seed potatoes in February and started the four baskets on hand from last year. All four baskets are off to a good start, but the Food Bank was unable to purchase the additional dozen baskets before the MGs moratorium was set in place.

We will have to wait and see what the garden brings this year, but the CC MG work crew is ready and anxious to get started on another successful season!



Red Potatoes in Demonstration Baskets



Article and photos by CC MG Brent Burdick; Cameo by Paisley.

SPRING TICK FACTS & TIPS

Tick Facts:

- ◆ Adult ticks have eight legs (like all arachnids), but the nymph stage ticks have six legs.
- ◆ There are 5 main tick species in Maryland, but blacklegged tick (*Ixodes scapulari*) is the only species known to transmit the Lyme disease-causing bacteria *Borrelia burgdorferi*, along with other pathogens.
- ◆ Lone star ticks are one of the most common ticks in the area and can transmit different diseases. The adult females have a characteristic white dot in the center of their (unengorged) body.

Prevention Tips:

- ◆ Treat your gardening clothing with a permethrin-based clothing treatment available online and in-store. Reapply treatment every 6 weeks or so depending on product or purchase InsectShield treated clothing, effective for up to 70 washes.
- ◆ Apply repellants such as those containing DEET to skin or clothing, especially around cuffs of pants and pant legs.
- ◆ Keep your pets up to date on either oral or topical tick prevention products.
- ◆ If you've spent time outside off of hard surfaces, do a daily tick check before you shower. Use a mirror because ticks often hide on the body in places you don't often look.
- ◆ Dry used clothing in the dryer on high heat for 15 minutes to kill possible lingering ticks.
- ◆ To remove attached ticks, grasp the tick as close to your skin as possible and slowly pull upward with a very fine tipped tweezers, lasso of fine thread or specialty tick removal tool.
- ◆ Save the tick in a small re-closeable bag for later ID and consider submitting tick to a place like UMass Amherst's tick testing lab to test for pathogens.

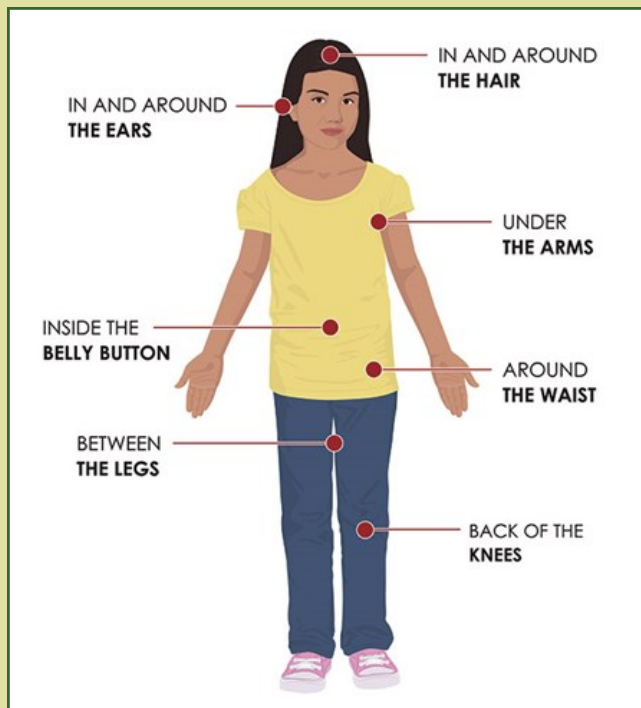


Image from CDC

Visit the University of Rhode Island's Tick Encounter website for more info:
<https://tickencounter.org/>

Learn about UMass Amherst's tick testing lab:
<https://www.tickreport.com/>

BOOK I REVIEW

Nature's Best Hope: A New Approach to Conservation That Starts in Your Yard

Douglas W. Tallamy
Timber Press, 2019

Review by Kathleen Jenkins, CC Master Gardener, Class of 2014

First, I need to warn the reader of this review that I am not an unbiased reader. I first heard Doug Tallamy speak at one of our Maryland Master Gardener Conferences, and I bought his and Rick Darke's book, *The Living Landscape*, Timber Press, 2014. Since Tallamy teaches at the University of Delaware and lives in Southeastern Pennsylvania, his ideas had both regional and global rings to them.

Reading his latest book, *Nature's Best Hope*, has been slow going because Tallamy offers such mind-boggling ideas, at least to me. Richard Louv, author of *The Nature Principle*, and *Last Child in the Woods*, calls Tallamy "a quiet revolutionary and hero of our time, taking back the future one yard at a time."

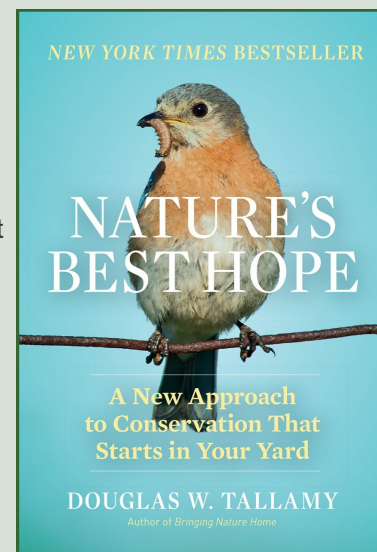
After every chapter I had to put the book aside so I could digest Tallamy's suggestions before I could tackle new ones. I have read and reread certain chapters and read some chapters aloud to my husband, who would nod his head in awe and often comment "I didn't know that..." The book is filled with known facts with surprisingly, little known and unique insights.

Tallamy's writing is not full of scientific jargon that is dense and hard to follow, but his ideas are so revolutionary, I was gob-smacked! He cites numerous scientific studies to back his claims even as he explains each study in plain English. Many of his observations are gleaned from his own and that of his graduate students' research. He demonstrates how certain keystone genera can provide habitat for hundreds of insects to give the biggest bang for our planting buck.

In short, Tallamy wants us to build a Home-Grown National Park to provide wildlife and pollinators with connecting tracts of land that run from one coast to another and from our northern to southern borders. This is an amazingly simple, but complex idea. He builds his plan from the well intentioned, but limited concepts of national parks and preservation areas that are so disconnected they cannot fulfill the needs of non-migrating and migrating animals and insects. Urban and suburban developments: including housing tracts, business centers, fueling stations, roads, railroads, even university campuses created this disjointed problem. We are encouraged to landscape with an eye to aesthetics, only, not to the needs of the carrying capacity of the human and nonhuman inhabitants of the land. Growers catered to the aesthetics of landscapers and eventually, the public replaced native plants with more exotic imported introductions; plants that could not offer the feeding or breeding needs to many animals and insects in our local and regional ecosystems.

In Chapter 8, "Restoring Insects, the Little Things that Run the World," Tallamy takes us through the food webs that support life systems on Earth. He writes, "Insects are the primary means by which the food created by plants is delivered to animals. Most vertebrates do not eat plants directly; far more often, they eat insects that have converted plant sugars and carbohydrates into the vital proteins and fats that fuel complex food webs... Insects, then sustain the earth's ecosystems by sustaining the plants and animals that run those ecosystems. And the more plants and animals, the better. As you've learned, ecosystems with many interacting species are more productive, and better able to support huge human populations than depauperate ecosystems with few species." (126) He points out that even the smallest balcony container garden can contribute to support interacting species.

Tallamy offers us ten steps to build the Home-Grown National Park in Chapter 11, "What Each of Us Can Do." As Master Gardeners, most of us know many of these ten steps from our initial training and on-going educational hours. I list them here with no explanations, but suggest they should be read as he provides new insights to why they are important.



Article continued next page

BOOK I REVIEW CONT.



Shrink the Lawn
 Plant Keystone Genera
 Plant for Specialist Pollinators
 Build a Conservation Hardscape
 Do Not Spray or Fertilize

Remove Invasive Species
 Be Generous in Your Plantings
 Network with Neighbors
 Create Caterpillar Pupation Sites Under Your Trees
 Educate Your Neighborhood Civic Association

Finally, Tallamy offers these concluding remarks: “Extinctions inevitably occur when the world changes faster than species can adapt. Humans have been changing the world ever since we became humans – but now with our numbers and technologies, these changes easily overwhelm the ability of most organisms to adapt. For species that are specialized within the environment in which they evolved (which are nearly all of them), this is a deadly problem, but if we can destroy habitat with blinding speed, we also have the intelligence, knowledge, and ability to restore it. It remains to be seen whether we have the collective wisdom to do so, but I for one, believe we do!” (213)

His final two sections of the book provide answers to frequently asked questions and references to organizations, research, and books. I hope you will read this book, enjoy, and learn as much as I did. In fact, if you read this book, let me know so we can discuss what we learned and how we may be able to support building the Home-Grown National Park.

Article and photos courtesy of CC MG Kathy Jenkins

BOOK II REVIEW



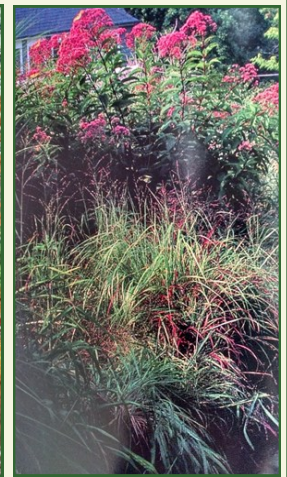
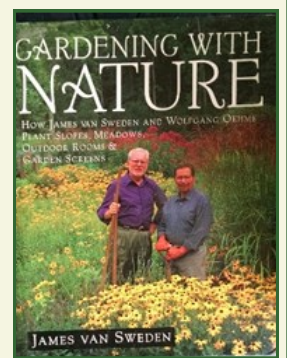
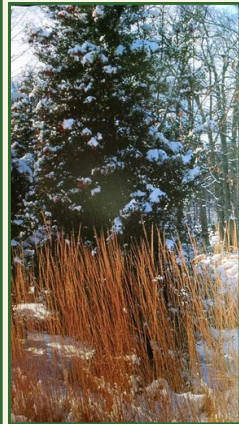
Gardening with Nature by James Van Sweden
 How James Van Sweden and Wolfgang Oehme plant slopes, meadows, outdoor rooms and garden screens

“Do gardens need to be so tame, so harnessed, so unfree? What’s new about our new American garden is what’s new about America. It vividly blends the natural and the cultured.

The book is divided into three sections. In part one van Sweden describes and outlines his concepts of asymmetrical plant groups with a concept that is related to the reverence for the site with low maintenance and attention to seasons. Part two he takes you on tours of gardens to illustrate design strategies. Part three is devoted to the nuts and bolts of a step by step tutorial on planting your garden with a following plant by plant glossary photographed in a garden setting.

Van Sweden is known for his interpretive concepts for the Chesapeake Bay areas in designing gardens, especially windblown areas near salt water. He is also known for his landscape design of the WWII memorial in DC. The photographs in the book are sensational, they illustrate its value.

Article and photos courtesy of
 CC MG Harriet Beck



REVIEW OF SOME EARLY-SEASON WEEDS

Posted on April 13, 2020 by Aaron Hager Integrated Pest Management at the University of Illinois
Department of Crop Sciences
Illinois Natural History Survey

Ample soil moisture and warming temperatures are promoting rapid growth and development of many early-season weed species. Most weeds currently growing in fields emerged last fall and successfully overwintered (winter annuals, biennials or perennials), but several early-season summer annual species recently have emerged. Existing weed vegetation should be controlled before planting by utilizing tillage, herbicides, or a combination of tactics so the crop can become established under weed-free conditions.

Field scouting to identify the weeds present and their relative densities will provide the information needed to tailor a burndown herbicide program for any particular field. Many different weed species can be present in any particular field, and accurate identification sometimes can be challenging.



Common chickweed often forms very dense mats of vegetation that can make planting difficult. Common chickweed has a shallow, fibrous root system and a stem that branches extensively and often roots at the nodes. Leaves are small, opposite and pointed at the tip.



Purple deadnettle -
Fall-emerging horseweed (a.k.a. marestalk) plants form a basal rosette that represents the plant's overwintering stage. In the spring, the main stem elongates rapidly. Leaves, very numerous and hairy with toothed margins, alternate around the stem and become progressively smaller in size toward the top of the plant. The leaves on mature plants lack petioles, and have entire or slightly toothed margins. As the plant matures, leaves toward the base of the plant deteriorate and fall off the stem.



Dandelion



Shepherd's Purse



Henbit

MELWOOD PROJECT UPDATES

Greenhouse Vegetable and Herb Plants Update – Horticultural Therapy Program
Melwoods Recreation Center - April 2020



Plants are started from seed in the Recreation Center Greenhouse or in more stable temperature conditions on a Grow Lab Light Rack indoors at the Recreation Center



Once the seedlings develop their first set of “true leaves,” they are then “stepped up” or transplanted into into 4 or 6-cell packs or pots. All plants are grown on in the greenhouse.



Tomatoes and peppers awaiting transplanting



Tomatoes that are much larger than desired at this point in time. Obviously they have are very happy in the conditions presented recently to them on the pretty summer days. They will be “stepped up” one more time into a larger pack or pots in order not to get stressed before planting in early May.



Cool and warm season vegetables and herbs recently seeded/emerging and some older plants growing larger. Once large enough and when appropriate temperatures they will be moved outside to be “hardened off” to be ready for conditions in their new garden home locations.



Article continued on next page

MELWOOD PROJECT UPDATES CONT.



Sweet peppers doing well, too. Thankfully slower growers than tomatoes...so hoping that "stepping up" won't be needed for these warm season favorites.



Red Russian Kale, Dwarf Blue Kale, Collards, and Brussels Sprouts happy "hardening off" outside next to the greenhouse.



Spring plants hardening off. These plants were originally grown for HT Programs and UME Master Gardener community garden projects in both Charles and Prince Georges County that were all donating produce to non-profit organizations who provide emergency or supplemental food to food insecure individuals and families.



Other seasonal greenhouse updates: Melwood is working on seasonal pressure washing of the polycarbonate greenhouse covering and repairing its torn shade cover and cleaning it, too, before putting it on the greenhouse to reduce summer heat.

Due to COVID-19 closures of HT and UME Master Gardener Programs for an unknown period, these plants were donated to the Capital Christian Fellowship (CCF) Food Pantry -- a member organization of the Capital Area Food Bank. The plants will be planted in the CCF Food Pantry Garden and in the gardens of volunteers who grow for the Pantry -- and to Food Pantry Patrons with gardens able to plant them for harvesting fresh at their homes.



Looking ahead:

Right now, I am working on preparing for the summer garden season into the fall this time--working on plant propagation for plantings requiring starting indoors before planting outside sometime after early May and beyond--and working in both the Pollinator and Learning Gardens as time allows.

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Find us on the Web at:

<http://extension.umd.edu/charles-county/home-gardening>

Submit articles, photos, reports, events, and other items for publication to Tina Bailem at nicholas8555@msn.com by July 15, 2020 for the Autumn 2020 newsletter. If you send a photo, please include a brief description of the activity and names of persons included in the photo, as well as the photographer's name. If you send a photo of a plant, please include the scientific name.

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Check out the new Charles County Master Gardener page on [Facebook](https://www.facebook.com/charlescountymastergardeners/)! If you haven't already, please like us and share with your friends. This will be a great way to expand our reach into the community!

<https://www.facebook.com/charlescountymastergardeners/>