

Celebrate the Season!

Here in April we are celebrating, as the Song of Solomon puts it, “The flowers appear on the earth; the time of the singing of birds is come, and the voice of the turtle is heard in our land.” While I am not sure what a “turtle” sounds like, I do know the sound of turtle doves is a welcome reminder that winter is over. Overnight, those flowers I thought were dead from a difficult winter are blooming exuberantly. So there is much for gardeners to celebrate right now.

And speaking of celebrating, the Heart of Virginia Master Gardeners is celebrating its 20th year with a party on Saturday, May 22nd. You are invited to join in the fun from 10 a.m. to noon at the Prince Edward Extension Office,

If you have an interest in using native plants in your landscaping, there will be tours of the Bayscape garden. The Bayscape garden surrounds the Extension office building and showcases a concept of gardening called BayScaping. This is a landscaping approach that generally uses less fertilizer and pesticides – and cuts down on mowing. It advocates conversion of lawns to meadows or gardens and the use of rain gardens and rain barrels to cut down on water runoff during storms. The garden was started in 2001 so you will be able to see the plants in their mature sizes in the landscape. Nearly all the trees and shrubs have fragrant flowers followed by berries or seeds that provide winter food for birds. All the plants are native to and flourish in the Chesapeake Bay region. A Master Gardener will conduct the tours and identify and explain the uses of the plants. There are trees, shrubs, grasses and wildflowers. Among these are Fringe tree, River birch, Beautyberry, Buttonbush, Oak-leaf hydrangea, Rhododendron, and Witch hazel. There are also butterfly weed, coral bells, monarda, coreopsis and columbine, along with many others, that easily fit into a flower garden setting.

A highlight of the celebration will be a plant sale. Here you might find a plant that will become a favorite in

your garden for years to come. The plants for sale are from the gardens of master gardeners and you sometimes find a rare or unusual variety. A favorite of mine found at the plant sale a few years ago is the Edgeworthia Crysantha, an early blooming, deciduous shrub that grows happily with azaleas and blooms before they do. For a couple of weeks in early spring its fragrant yellow blossoms brighten even rainy days. To add to your perennial beds, you will find many native plants to attract and nurture bees



Coralberry (*Symphoricarpos*) is a native shrub with bright pink to purple berries eaten by wildlife and used in flower arrangements.

and butterflies. Many of these are the same ones growing in the Bayscape garden. And among the vegetable and herb plants, you are sure to find something different, perhaps a chocolate mint, lemon basil, or an heirloom tomato variety. You just never know what treasure lurks in a Master Gardener plant sale.



The Edgeworthia Chrysantha blooms early and enthusiastically.

Of course, master gardeners will be present to answer your questions about planting and growing your new plants, or taking care of your old ones for that matter. They will also guide you in getting soil tested.

There will be refreshments, historical exhibits, and lots of informational materials. Please do put the Heart of Virginia Master Gardeners 20th Anniversary Celebration on your calendar and join us on Saturday, May 22, from 10 a.m. to noon at the Prince Edward

Extension Office, 100 Dominion Drive in Farmville.

It seems that Spring is really here but if you have already put in your tomatoes and other tender vegetables, like peppers and eggplants; do be prepared to cover them up if nighttime temperatures drop into the thirties. Better yet, wait until the beginning of May to plant them. Meanwhile, if you are itching to get into the garden, get the ground ready for all the new plants by removing weeds, dead plants from last year and digging compost into the top few inches of the bed. Then when the ground is warmed up, you can just pop your new plants into their places and get out of their way.

But while you are preparing the garden for new plants, please do not cut the foliage from the daffodils and other early spring bloomers. They need those leaves to grow flowers for next year, so wait until they turn brown before cutting. After they flower is the time to cut back your forsythia, quince, lilac and spirea. While it is too early to put in gladiolus and dahlias, this is a good time to put in some stakes where you plan to plant them, so there will be support for the heavy flowers during our summer storms.

As always, Master Gardener and Cooperative Extension activities are open to all.

If you are a person with a disability and desire any assistive devices, services or other accommodations to participate in any of our activities, please contact Shelda Daniels 434-392-3434 during business hours of 8 a.m. and 5 p.m. to discuss accommodations 5 days prior to the event. We look forward to seeing you on May 22nd. Meanwhile, fellow gardeners, keep on growing!

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