

Virginia Cooperative Extension

Master Gardener College

Featuring: Doug Tallamy, Debra Freeman, Heather Holm, Megan Pullin, Ira Wallace, Emilee Weaver, Kevin Folta and more!



June 5-9

Virtual

Via Zoom Events



**Extension
Master
Gardeners**



**Virginia
Cooperative
Extension**

Virginia Tech. • Virginia State University



Look for special sessions on invasive species!

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If you are a person with a disability and desire any assistive devices, services or other accommodations to participate in this activity, please contact Devon Johnson at 540-231-9325/TDD* during business hours of 9 a.m. and 3 p.m. to discuss accommodations 5 days prior to the event.

*TDD number is (800) 828-1120.

About Virginia EMGC 2024

Extension Master Gardener College 2024 will be held virtually via Zoom Events. We have planned a five-day conference: two days of virtual sessions, one day of virtual and in-person tours, and two more days of virtual sessions. We are planning some special “fun” activities like virtual challenges for attendees to participate in as well!

Virginia Master Gardener Association (VMGA) annual meeting: VMGA has planned a day of education and socialization at Brent and Beck’s Bulbs in Gloucester, VA for the following **Saturday, June 15**. This event supports Master Gardener College by providing another opportunity for in-person programming! Stay tuned to register for the VMGA annual meeting.



About Zoom Events

If you’ve ever attended a Zoom meeting, you are already familiar with our virtual conference platform! Each session will be a regular Zoom meeting organized and accessible in a list via Zoom Events.

If you already have a Zoom account, make sure you use the email address associated with your account when you register. If you do not have a Zoom account, you will be prompted to make one when you are added to the Zoom Events platform.

Zoom events offers a few ways to socialize with other attendees:

- You can “chat” and mingle in the virtual lobby chat box
- You can direct message other attendees
- You can enter our virtual “expo” space and go in and out of booths, as well as message other attendees in the “expo.”

If you attended virtual EMGC in 2020, Zoom Events is MUCH easier to use than our previous virtual conference platform!

The Zoom Events “lobby” with options to chat, message event staff, join sessions, etc.

Schedule

Wednesday, June 5

11:00 am
- noon

Practice Session

Zoom events is a very easy-to-use conference platform, but if you are not yet feeling comfortable, join us for this practice session to get oriented in Zoom events.

12:30 -
1:30 pm

Welcome Plenary: EMGC Planning Team

Welcome to Master Gardener College! In this session we will cover conference basics, introduce our planning team, and go over fun challenges and opportunities for socialization throughout the conference.

1:30 -
2:30 pm

Concurrent Session 1

Small Tree (and Large Shrubs) for Urban and Small Gardens | Kathy Jentz

Join Kathy Jentz, editor and publisher of Washington Gardener Magazine, host of the GardenDC Podcast, and co-author of The Urban Garden, as she explores the possibilities of what small trees and large shrubs you can plant in small urban and suburban lots. Tailored to the Mid-Atlantic region and what grows best here, the choices will cover natives, edibles, and nonnative ornamentals that withstand heat, pollution, and urban stress -- from full sun to full shade. For every place, there is a tree that is a perfect fit. Even if you only have a few pots to plant in, a tree can be part of your urban life.

Creating Effective Extension Presentations | Fred Whitford

Dr. Fred Whitford has given more than 6,000 Extension presentations during his career and he wants to teach YOU the most important lessons he's learned. In this interactive session, Dr. Whitford will help us understand what makes an engaging presentation and how to leave audiences with a clear message. Come with a presentation topic in mind to think through during the session!

Introduction to Indoor Vertical Gardening of Vegetables and Herbs | Kaylee South

Ever wondered about growing veggies indoors using a home hydroponics system? Dr. Kaylee South, Assistant Professor from Virginia Tech's School of Plant and Environmental Sciences and a member of the Controlled Environment Agriculture Innovation Center, will show you how!

Forest Carbon Sequestration | Christopher Gough, Lisa Haber, Ariel Johnson

Forest management, preservation and sustainability are important to the reduction of carbon dioxide in the atmosphere; forests are a key piece in the climate change puzzle! Dr. Christopher Gough, Associate Professor of Biology at VCU, and members of his lab will join us to explain how forests can effectively sequester carbon and why this matters for the future!

What's Wrong With My Shrub!? Diagnostics for Woody Plants | Forrest Brown

Questions about shrubs or trees in decline are some of the most common help desk requests, but they can be among the most difficult to answer. In this presentation, Forrest Brown will cover common problems with woody plants and how you can diagnose them. Forrest Brown is a PhD candidate in horticulture advised by Dr. Alex Nimeria.

What are Invasive Species? | Blue Ridge PRISM

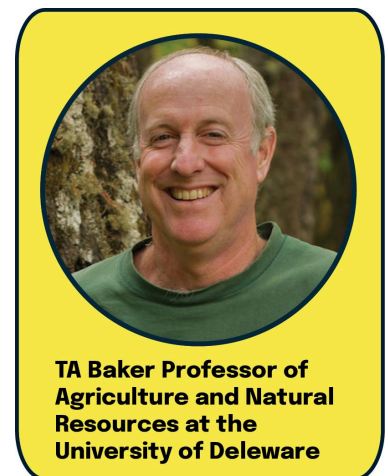
In this session learn about invasive species and the work of Blue Ridge PRISM--an organization that reduces the impact of invasive plants on the ecosystems of the northern Blue Ridge Mountains and surrounding areas through regional and statewide advocacy, landowner support, implementing control measures, and public education.



Keynote 1: Doug Tallamy

I know You're Very Busy but... I want to learn more about nature gardening. | Doug Tallamy

Nearly every day I get emails from people who have read my books and heard my talks and yet still have questions about ecological landscaping. These are good, thoughtful questions about ecology and evolution, biodiversity, invasive species, insect declines, native and non-native plants, conservation and restoration, residential and city landscapes, urban issues, oak biology, keystone plants, Homegrown National Park, monarchs, supporting wildlife at home, and more. In this talk I address as many of these queries as I can with hope that my answers will further motivate people to help restore ecosystem function where they live, work, play, worship, and farm.



3:00 -
4:30 pm



This session is sponsored by the American Horticultural Society.

Thursday, June 6

11:00 am
- noon

Coffee Break: American Horticultural Society

Sponsor Highlight: AHS Informational Session

Underwriter Sponsor American Horticultural Society will discuss their travel program and opportunities for Extension Master Gardeners.

Noon -
1:30 pm

Roundtable 1: Volunteering

Volunteering: Fulfillment and Growth | Laurie Fox

This is an opportunity to discuss volunteerism with fellow EMGs from around the commonwealth. How does your unit recognize volunteers? Why do you volunteer? And more. Led by Dr. Laurie Fox, Research Associate at the Hampton Roads AREC.

Concurrent Session 2

Heirloom Collard Project | Ira Wallace

"The Heirloom Collard Project is working for the recognition and respect of collards as a key component of American food culture so their seeds and stories will never be forgotten." Join the amazing Ira Wallace of Southern Exposure Seed Exchange to learn about this collaborative seed-saving project!



This session is sponsored by Fairfax Extension Master Gardeners.

Public Speaking Basics | Brandi Quesenberry

What are the most important things to know before you take the stage at your local library presentation or lead your next workshop? How can you manage pre-speaking nerves? Dr. Brandi Quesenberry from Virginia Tech's Department of Communications will cover the basics in this introduction to public speaking.

1:30 -
2:30 pm

Ant Party | Scotty Yang

Virginia has multiple species of invasive ants, including the Asian needle ant and the imported red fire ant. Their painful bites make them a dreaded garden visitor. What can be done? Dr. Scotty Yang of Virginia Tech's Department of Entomology will cover ant basics with a focus on Virginia's invasive species.



AMAZING Insects: Identification and Conservation | Amada Whispell

Beloved speaker Amanda Whispell of the Colonial Soil and Water Conservation District will share her passion for insects. If you don't already love bugs, you will after her talk!

Gardening as You Age | Laurie Fox

It's hard to admit that you can't work as long or as hard in the garden as you used to. So, you just have to work smarter! Dr. Laurie Fox, Research Associate at the Hampton Roads AREC, will share some frustrations and fixes for gardening with the challenges that come with age.

Birds, Bees, Flowers, Trees: The Phenological Impacts of Climate Change | Jeremy Hoffman

Spring seems to come earlier. You didn't notice your favorite bee species this year. Your favorite flowers bloomed much earlier. Is it climate change?! What other things is climate change affecting? Climate scientist Jeremy Hoffman will share trends and ideas for a warming future in this easy-to-understand presentation.

Keynote 2: Debra Freeman**Gardens of Resilience | Debra Freeman**

Gardens of Resilience explores the fascinating history and relevance of traditional African-American crops including fish peppers, watermelons, sweet potatoes, collards, peanuts, and other legacy vegetables that still endure today.

This session is sponsored by the American Horticultural Society.



**Food Anthropologist
and Writer**

3:00 -
4:00 pm

Friday June 7

Day of *optional* in-person tours; see "Tours" section for more information. If you do not attend an in-person tour, everyone is welcome at our virtual tours!

**Virtual
Tour 1:**
9:30 -
10:30 am

What is Therapeutic Horticulture? | Emilee Weaver

This session with Emilee Weaver of North Carolina Botanic Garden will cover an introduction to therapeutic horticulture governed by principles of inclusivity and Universal Design. Then we will "tour" some real therapeutic horticulture sites including a psychiatric hospital, public garden, and assisted living community.

**Virtual
Tour 2:**
11:00 am
- Noon

National Arboretum Trials | Margaret Pooler

Dr. Margaret Pooler, Research Leader at the National Arboretum, will provide a virtual "tour" of the research trials underway at the National Arboretum in Washington D.C.

Virtual Tour 3: 1:00 - 2:00 pm	D'Esopo House Chrissie D'Esopo Take a virtual "tour" of this jaw-dropping private garden located in Avon, Connecticut. Please view the slideshow beforehand and come prepared with questions.
Virtual Tour 4: 2:30 - 3:30 pm	Hahn Garden Virtual Tour Scott Douglas If you've never visited the Hahn Garden at Virginia Tech, here's an opportunity to "tour" the grounds and learn about the plants highlighted at Virginia Tech's only on-campus garden. Scott Douglas is Director of Hahn Horticulture Garden.
Saturday, June 8	
11:00 am - noon	Coffee Break: Virginia Master Gardener Association <hr/> What is VMGA, the Statewide Master Gardener Association? VMGA leadership will explain what they do and how membership in VMGA can help you and your unit!
Noon - 1:30 pm	Roundtable 2: Steward Programs <hr/> Steward Programs: Opportunities for Further Growth Ed Olsen This roundtable discussion will cover advanced Master Gardener Steward training. Breakout sessions will focus on each Steward program: tree, land, and water.
1:30 - 2:30 pm	Concurrent Session 3 <hr/> Johnson-Su Bioreactor Patrick DeSimo Similarly to how humans have interdependent relationships with the gut microbiome, many plants have interdependent relationships with the soil microbiome, especially with aerobic microbes. In this presentation, you'll get an introduction to the recent body of scientific literature documenting plant-microbe interactions, with a focus on the work of pioneering researchers Dr. David Johnson and Hui-Chun Su-Johnson. Patrick DeSimo is grant writer and Chief Strategy Officer at Cruces Creatives in Las Cruces, New Mexico. <hr/> Welcoming Fireflies Alyssa Ford Morel Are you charmed on summer evenings by the tiny bobbing lights of amorous fireflies? Many non-human creatures share the property we call our own, and we can improve the quality of their lives and support the environment by the way we garden. This talk by Northern Virginia Extension Master Gardener and Master Naturalist Alyssa Ford Morel looks at fireflies, hummingbirds, lady bugs, and other creatures with whom we share our yards, and suggests practices to welcome and support them. You will learn ways to start addressing the biodiversity crisis at home.

Regenerative Soil Management for the Backyard Gardener | Mark Schönbeck

This session will outline the principles of soil health management and the central role that living plants play in supporting soil life and enhancing the functioning of healthy soil. We will discuss cover cropping, intercropping, organic amendments, minimum tillage, nutrient management, and several effective soil management strategies that are particularly suited to the home garden scale. Mark Schönbeck has worked for 31 years as a researcher, consultant, and educator in sustainable and organic agriculture. He has participated in on-farm research into mulching, cover crops, minimum tillage, and nutrient management for organic vegetables.

Creating Engaging Displays Roundtable | Christy Brennan, Devon Johnson

How do you set up a vibrant, interactive, and attractive display for your next event? In this roundtable, we'll see examples of effective displays and learn from EMG volunteers with experience organizing event displays. We will also explore how the State Office can offer support for your next great display! Come with display ideas to share with the group during our brainstorm session. Christy Brennan has years of experience coordinating the annual EMG display at the Virginia State fair.

Overview of Invasive Forest Insects Pests in VA | Olivia Andrews

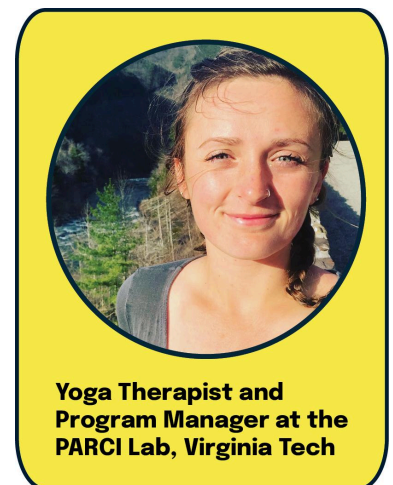
Love Virginia forests? Worried about the increasing number of threats to our trees and natural areas? Olivia Andrews, PhD candidate in entomology (research focused on biological control of the hemlock wooly adelgid) shares her work on invasive forest insect pests in this engaging talk.



Keynote 3: Megan Pullin

Flourishing in the Garden: What, How, and Why | Megan Pullin

There is no doubt that gardening provides physical activity, stress relief, joy, and connection to the earth. What is less known is that it also provides a space to increase our community belonging, mental health, and wellbeing through empowerment. Inviting curiosity in a garden setting, we can offer adaptable and holistic offerings that meet the multiple needs of our participants. This kind of approach is not new, but rather it borrows concepts and ideologies from ancient lineages like yoga (practices to cultivate connection which originated in India), and the agriculture of our ancestors based in holistic ecosystems. These approaches are now backed by neuroscience, psychology, and systems engineering.



**Yoga Therapist and
Program Manager at the
PARCI Lab, Virginia Tech**

3:00 -
4:00 pm

This presentation will provide listeners with an educational and experiential space for engaged attendees to build confidence in sharing permaculture and yoga practices in a garden setting. The power of observation resonates in our internal and external landscapes and can serve as a catalyst for intentional and empowering change in our approach to growth. These practices and principles will guide us towards flourishing, both with our garden and participants.

Sunday, June 9

Roundtable 3: Leadership

Noon –
1:30 pm

Making More Effective Units Through Leadership | EMG Volunteer Panel

Based on a highly-successful leadership roundtable session at EMGC 2023, this roundtable will provide an opportunity to brainstorm leadership within EMG groups.

Concurrent Session 4

Insect Invasions: How Plants Pave the Way to Success or Failure | Katlyn Catron

Will a new invasive insect thrive in your community? Katlyn Catron, PhD candidate in entomology at Virginia Tech, will cover the role plants play in the establishment of invasive insects in a new range.



What is the National Germplasm Resources Laboratory? | Gary Kinard

USDA funds have been dedicated since 1898 to collect, maintain, document, and share plant material related to food and agriculture. This is one of the oldest continuous scientific activities of USDA. This mission is even more critical than ever today to help meet the global challenges of safe and secure production of food, feed, fiber, ornamental, industrial, and medicinal plants. Dr. Gary Kinard of the National Germplasm Resources Library joins us to share the vital work of his agency.

1:30 –
2:30 pm

Creating a Well-layered Landscape | Elaine Mills

Many gardeners are looking to bring both beauty and support for wildlife into their garden designs. One important way to do that is through creating a well-layered landscape. Join Northern Virginia Extension Master Gardener Elaine Mills to learn some techniques for introducing diverse layers of vegetation in a variety of garden contexts, from reestablishing forest edges and planting around trees to refreshing foundation plantings, creating perennial beds, and rethinking front yard designs. Elaine shares ideas and lessons learned from her own garden and those of several Master Gardener colleagues.

Hello Purple Tomato: Common Questions and Answers About the World of GMOs | Kevin Folta

The first commercially-available home garden GMO vegetable seed is here: the purple tomato! Do you have questions? Want to know how to explain the subject

when working with the public? Dr. Kevin Folta, professor of Horticultural Sciences at the University of Florida is a national expert on GMOs who will share his experience in the field!

Soil Your Undies | Mary Sketch

How long does it take cotton underwear to decompose in your garden and what does that mean for soil health? Mary Sketch, Coordinator of the Virginia Soil Health Coalition, will share this “soil your undies” decomposition project with us.

Meet Ed Olsen: State Office Updates | Ed Olsen

Ed Olsen, the new Consumer Horticulture Specialist and Extension Master Gardener Program Director will cover program updates and changes after a year of position vacancies. Join this session to learn about our ideas for the future and share your suggestions too!

Keynote 4: Heather Holm

Specialist Bees | Heather Holm

The monarch butterfly is probably the most famous insect specialist (the caterpillars feed only on milkweed), but did you know that many native bees are also specialists? Female native bee specialists or oligoleges, collect pollen from a narrow range of native plants; this could mean just one plant genus or species, or many genera that belong to one plant family. Heather will highlight many of these native plant-bee specializations as well as the overlapping habitat requirements of the bees and plants. The presentation will also include the threats to specialists such as habitat loss and climate change.



This session is sponsored by Prince William Extension Master Gardeners.

3:00 -
4:00 pm

Closing Session: EMGC Planning Team

We will wrap up college and award winners of challenges.

4:00 -
4:30 pm

Tours

June 7: Optional Day of In-Person Tours

These add-on tours must be selected during registration. Please choose only one in-person tour. (They all occur at the same time, so you can only go on one).

An in-person element to EMGC 2024 was highly requested as a way for volunteers to socialize and get to know EMGs from different counties. If you are able, our EMGC planning team recommends you choose to add an in-person tour! *Please note, spaces for in-person tours are limited. If you want to go on one, plan to register early.*

Virginia Beach

Hampton Roads AREC

Behind the scenes tour of the Virginia Tech Hampton Roads Agricultural Research & Extension Center (AREC) in Virginia Beach. Learn about the AREC's history and meet the faculty. The tour includes the entomology, water and horticulture labs, greenhouses, current research projects and demonstration gardens. Tour is 2 hours with moderate walking of about 1.5 miles.

Blackstone

Southern Piedmont AREC

Erin Small, VCE Goochland will cover floral design. Please pack a lunch and we will eat prior to our departure to the farm tour location. Then we will head over to Karli Tucker Farm located at 2323 Pleasant Hill Lane Kenbridge VA for a tour of her cut flower operation. We will learn about cut flower production, selling at local markets, and wholesale distribution. We will tour her farm. Please wear appropriate shoes you may also need bug spray and sunscreen. Bring a bag lunch.

Critz

Reynold's homestead AREC

Take a hike with the Reynolds Homestead AREC director! The Reynolds Homestead, once known as the Rock Spring Plantation, is the birthplace of tobacco magnate R.J. Reynolds and his brother A.D. Reynolds, whose son founded Reynolds Metals. Today the historic Patrick County, Virginia, property acts as part museum, part community gathering place, and part educational and cultural center dedicated to lifelong learning and community engagement.

This tour includes a moderate 2-hour hike, time for lunch and socialization, and a tour of the historic home. Moderate hike and walking required. Wear appropriate footwear and protect yourself from ticks (seriously, Deet and tuck your pants!). This is a moderate hike. Bring Water bottles, bug spray, and a bag lunch.

Halifax

Southern Virginia Botanical Garden

Learn about the history of Southern Virginia Botanic Gardens and their research on daylily varieties and grafted fringe trees. Enjoy a tour led by local Halifax County Extension Master Gardeners. Walking required. Bring a bag lunch.

Winchester

AHS Jr. Agricultural Research and Extension Center

The fruit tree AREC! Take a tour of the exciting research going on at the AHS JR AREC, including cool plant science, tissue culture, breeding projects, and fruit tree research. If you love home fruit production and want to learn more about Virginia's Agriculture Research and Extension centers, this tour is for you! Includes tour of the AREC and time for lunch. Walking required. Bring a bag lunch.

Leesburg

Loudoun Learning Garden

Loudoun EMG volunteers will host this tour of their Demonstration Garden. Developed by the Master Gardener class of 1992, their goal was to create a practical organic garden for growing vegetables and fruit where the public could visit and learn about synthetic-free chemical gardening. Located within Ida Lee Park, this organic garden includes fruits and vegetables as well as many small themed gardens. Included among the many areas of this approximately 1/3 acre garden are raised beds and small space vegetable areas, a Heritage garden highlighting some plants from Virginia's past, a Children's garden featuring child-friendly plants and activities, a Shade garden created under beautiful pine trees, a newly fashioned "Wedding Garden" perfect for special pictures, a Butterfly garden and a fruit tree area. Walking required.

Upperville

Oak Spring

Oak Spring's "Biocultural Conservation Farm" (BCCF) stewards the cultivation of heirloom vegetables and fruits, and conserves them as living plants and/or as seed, in order to illustrate, save and share the biological diversity of the edible plants that underpin our food system. Tour includes a tour, activity, and time for lunch and socializing. Walking required. Bring a bag lunch.

Williamsburg

Williamsburg Botanical Garden

Freedom Park has a rich historical background dating back to the 1650s. This park is the site of an 18th Century cemetery, the Revolutionary War Battle of Spencer's Ordinary (1781) and a 17th Century domicile which is revealing much archaeological research of the early colonial period (1680-1730). Freedom Park was also home to one of the nation's earliest Free Black Settlements in America from 1803-1850. Three historically accurate recreated cabins are located in the park, and are furnished with items authentic to the period.

The tours include the Williamsburg Botanical Garden and the Hotwater Settlement /Arboretum. The Williamsburg Botanical Garden is located at Freedom Park. Master Gardeners and Members of the Garden develop and maintain the area which features more than 800 species of native vegetation. The Hotwater Settlement/Arboretum is also located in Freedom Park. Various Tree Steward projects are on-going and will be discussed and highlighted. These are Walking tours. Wear comfortable shoes. Paths are not paved.

Alexandria

River Farm

Spend a relaxing morning at River Farm, the American Horticultural Society's 25-acre historic site along the Potomac River. This morning tour includes a half-hour tour of the history of River Farm and an hour of guided bird watching over the Potomac River. Bring your binoculars and a chair to relax with a beautiful view!

Richmond
Maymont

Two hour tour; one hour to explore the grounds on your own and one hour guided tour. Walking is required, including uneven stairs, walking on grass, slopes, etc. Wear comfortable shoes and bring water and sunscreen."



June 15 - Virginia Master Gardener Association (VMGA) Annual Meeting

VMGA has planned a day of education and socialization at Brent and Beck's Bulbs in Gloucester, VA for the following Saturday, June 15, hosted by the Gloucester Master Gardener Association.

This event supports Master Gardener College by providing another opportunity for in-person programming! Stay tuned to register for the VMGA annual meeting.

Register separately for the VMGA annual meeting; registration forthcoming.



Thank you!

EMGC Advisory Team Joe Kelly, Georgi Hall, Barry Hall, Tonya Harper, Mary Ann Kincaid, Jill Lewis, Tim Ohlwiler, Leslie Paulson, Nelda Purcell, Pat Reilly, Jim Revell, Sarah Rutherford Wendy Silverman, Stacy Morgan Smith, Megan Tierney & State Office: Devon Johnson and Ed Olsen. Additional thanks: Traci McCoy, VCE Programs. Dan Yaffe, TLOS. Tiffany Brown, VMN Program. Everyone who submitted ideas and suggestions, THANK YOU!