

The Compost

A Newsletter celebrating University of Maryland Extension Master Gardeners of Charles County (CCMGs) Projects

CCMG Coordinator Update by CCMG Coordinator Julia Rycyna

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There have been a lot of heat advisory warnings lately, so I hope you all have kept cool and hydrated this summer. Despite the heat, I am pleased to share with you all the activities Master Gardeners have been working on.



I would also like to thank everyone who came out and supported our Plant Sale this past spring. With the funds, we hope to keep providing horticultural education to the county at low to no cost.

If you or your organization in Charles County would like assistance with planting techniques or design, or would like to request a gardening presentation, please complete this [form](#).

Note from the Editor

Welcome to the Master Gardeners Newsletter!

As the new editor, I am truly excited to begin this journey with you. This newsletter is more than just updates—it is a space to celebrate our shared passion for gardening, sustainability, and community growth. Together, we will highlight the incredible work being done by our Master Gardeners, share practical tips and resources, and continue to cultivate a spirit of learning and connection. I look forward to growing alongside you and showcasing the many ways we are making a difference—one garden at a time.

Warmly,

Chimene Castor, RDN, CHES
Editor

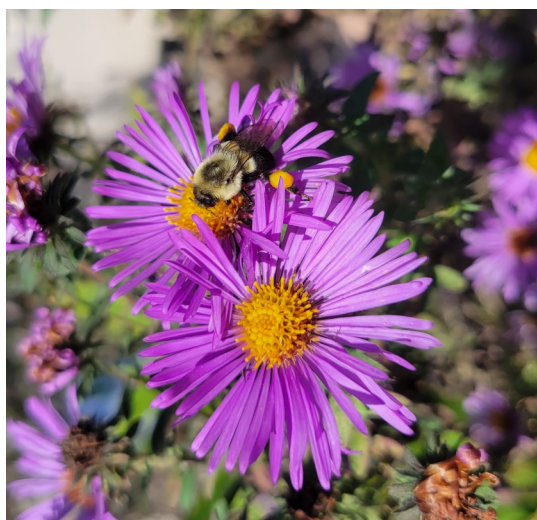


Photo by Julia Rycyna



SUMMER 2025

Bay-Wise Corner

by Rose Markham

Summer is at its peak. The days are long, and temperatures are hotter than ever. As Master Gardeners, we are forever working in our gardens and yards after we planted our flower beds and favorite veggies in the early spring. With the hard part done, this is a good time for you to take some time to check out the new UME replacement of the Bay-Wise yardstick. Take a well-deserved break and read the new living landscapes metric developed by Stacy Small-Lorenz, Residential Landscape Ecology Specialist, and Maryland Living Landscapes "Bay-Wise 2.0" Program Lead. The new metric replaces the previous Bay-Wise Yardstick but maintains and expands upon the core Bay-Wise/Water-Wise practices. Stacy will be visiting all of the State/County extension offices these next few months for further field training to promote the new changes. We are using the new metric so why don't you go ahead and fill out the new version to see how you are doing. Our certification open season runs from April until Oct 31.

Scan the QR code on the new Metric or [click here for the link](#).

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BAY-WISE

A MASTER GARDENER PROGRAM

Maryland Living Landscapes Metric

Essential Habits of the Metric

1. Recycle organic yard and kitchen waste on-site
2. Capture and use precipitation where it falls
3. Plant and conserve a wide variety of native plants
4. Protect pollinators and beneficial insects
5. Reduce hazards to fish & wildlife
6. Shrink your lawn footprint
7. Protect our waterways and shorelines
8. Educate friends, family, and neighbors about MD Living Landscapes practices

Online at:

A Checklist of Landscape Practices for Healthy Maryland Watersheds
2025 v.1

go.umd.edu/MD-Living-Landscapes-Metric

Senior Education Programs (SEP) Project Activities (formerly the Victoria Park Senior Living Project)

By Michelle Chenault

Photos by CCMG Connie Nesbary at the Richard R. Clark Center on 7-10-2025

Greetings, Fellow Gardeners! The Clark Garden is in full bloom! The Clark Gardeners (Senior Plus participants) have multiple varieties of annual and perennial flowers, tomatoes, potatoes (white), peppers, sweet potatoes, kohlrabi, mustard greens, Swiss chard, kale, strawberries, blueberries and beans growing in the raised garden bed, buckets or other types of planters. We have provided therapeutic horticulture instruction in the form of 6 classes so far to the Clark Gardeners during 2025. One of the most popular classes for Senior Plus (only) taught by the SEP team is: "Cut Flower Arranging." All the materials are donated from a local florist and, if available, flowers are cut from the Clark Garden.



A class held for all seniors on Thursday May 22, 2025, was entitled: "Growing and Capturing the Flavor of Herbs." It was an interactive workshop that taught the participants about the history, safety and health benefits of using herbs in their cooking. The presenter was Dr. Deon Littles, University of Maryland Extension, Family and Consumer Sciences Agent. Dr Littles prepared a salad using cilantro from the Clark Garden for all to taste. This workshop was supported by the McCormick Institute and everyone received free spices. There are 4 more events planned in 2025 along with short sessions for additional planting and harvesting.

News Regarding The Other Senior Centers:

Indian Head Senior Center

100 Cornwallis Square, Indian Head, MD 20640

The SEP team is continuing to provide consultation for the Green Thumb Club (GTC), at this site. These gardeners planted potatoes (white and sweet), herbs, peppers, lettuce, radishes and various flowering pollinators. Discussions are in progress to improve the landscape for this garden to make it easier to maintain.

Nanjemoy Senior and Community Center

4375 Port Tobacco Rd., Nanjemoy, MD 20662

The Nanjemoy gardeners have formed their own Green Thumb Club. This group is growing a variety of tomatoes, potatoes (white and sweet), various types of peppers and a variety of herbs, in addition to flowering pollinators. They decided to start small, as this is their first year with an active garden. This center hosted its first Arbor Day event the first week in April. This will be an annual event. One more horticulture event is planned for 2025.

Waldorf Senior and Recreational Center

90 Post Office Rd., Waldorf, MD 20602

This center does not have an active on-site garden. However, the seniors are very active in their own horticulture activities. There are two, possibly three, events planned for the Waldorf seniors during the remaining months in 2025.



The History – Southern Maryland Food Bank Project

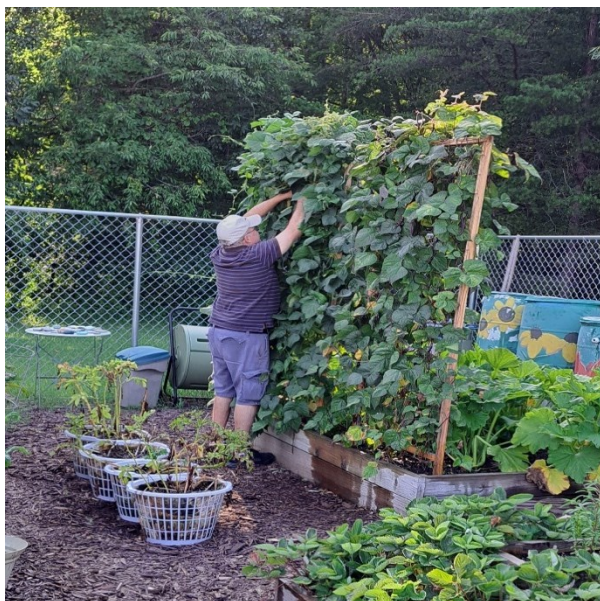
by CCMG Brent Burdick, photos by various folks

Since 2019, the CCMGs have managed and operated the “Seeds of Hope” Community Learning Garden for the Southern Maryland Food Bank and its Outreach Programs. So as of 7/17/25, 148 pounds of produce have been harvested and given to the Food Bank for its meals programs. Items harvested included mustard greens, Swiss Chard, kale, white and red radishes, turnips, Kohlrabi, onions, garlic, zucchini, yellow summer squash, cucumbers, bush and pole beans, peppers, basil, sage, mint, parsley, dill, strawberries, blackberries, potatoes (Russet, red, Adirondak Blue, Yukon Gold), okra, and Spaghetti squash. The garden is thriving!



Left: CCMG Intern Carol C. Finds Cantaloupe on July 8

Right CCMG Intern Carol C. Observes Same Cantaloupe a Week Later



As part of the Food Bank’s Outreach Programs, the CCMGs conducted activities at the Wills Group in La Plata. The company were big supporters of the Food Bank. On Thursday, May 1, during the Wills Group’s Community Engagement Fair, CCMGs Brian L., Bob P., and Brent B. worked with Wills Group employees with winter sowing of herbs for the Food Bank. The employees planted 20 jugs for us. (The employees also helped by putting together self-watering bottle planters for NatureFest, another CCMG project activity scheduled in May.) On Thursday, July 17, CCMGs Brian L., Karen H., and Brent B., along with Intern Deborah C., participated in the Wills Group’s “Bring Your Family to Work Day,” in La Plata.

Southern Maryland Food Bank Project Cont.

The Food Bank Team members demonstrated planting techniques by having participants plant herb and/or flower seeds in cups, which they could take home. They also set up a static display for our Year of the Herbs theme. It was noted that 24 youth and a couple parents made seed cups. The CCMGs had help during late spring with some garden maintenance chores. On Tuesday, May 6, a local U.S. Air Force recruiter and 10 of his recruits (awaiting basic training report dates) volunteered assistance to the Food Bank. They worked several hours installing new ground cloth and mulch in garden walk-ways.



Food Bank Tours

MG and UME-related program groups can schedule Food Bank Garden tours/activities by contacting the CCMG Project Coordinator. Other community members and groups can schedule garden tours and other gardening learning activities by contacting, Catherine Wright, Program Assistant, catherine.wright@cc-dc.org (301)-274-0695.

CCMG Grow It Eat It Education Project

by CCMG Meg MacDonald

Photos by Tina Bailem (July workshop) and Terry Thir (August workshop)

The mission of the Grow It Eat It (GIEI) Edu project is to teach members of the public how to grow their own food in an economic and environmentally sustainable way. To this end, the project has offered several free public workshops starting in 2023, at a variety of venues, to teach people of all experience levels and with varying space limits ways to produce food at home. Workshops on starting vegetable and herb seeds, Indoors and Outdoors, and on Vegetable Garden Planning were offered early in the Spring (see previous issues of The Compost).



Photo CCMG Beth Grem explains about squash bugs, which vegetables they typically attack and how to best avoid and manage the damage

The CCMG GIEI EDU project team members are Tina Bailen, Michelle Chenault, Beth Grem (co-chair), Lori Guido, Kathy Jenkins, Meg MacDonald (co-chair), Kay Redman, and Terry Thir.

 GROW IT · EAT IT
A MASTER GARDENER PROGRAM

CCMG Grow It Eat It Education Project Cont.

JULY WORKSHOP - Vegetable Plant Problems

By mid-summer, almost all vegetable gardeners – including Master Gardeners! – are seeing problems with their crops. So in July, the GIEI EDU team offered a workshop on Vegetable Plant Problems.

The workshop was held at the Waldorf West Public Library on July 26, 2025, in cooperation with the Charles County Public Library. During this free workshop, Master Gardeners provided information and answered questions about common pests and diseases of tomatoes, cucumbers, eggplant, squash and other crops typically grown in home gardens. The presentation also discussed abiotic (not biological) problems, such as drought and excessive heat, and offered sustainable solutions as well as preventive strategies for dealing with these challenges.

This 2025 summer season has been very challenging, with excessive heat, consistently high humidity, and frequent rain, all of which can foster diseases and pollination problems. Much time during the workshop was devoted to questions and answers. Participants were invited to bring photos and specimens of garden problems. CCMG volunteers also brought samples of plant problems from their own gardens, including blossom end rot of tomatoes, fungal diseases septoria leaf spot and early blight, downy mildew on cucurbit, anthracnose on tomato, squash bug and cucumber beetle-feeding damage, and poor fruit pollination. Did we mention this was a challenging year?

One fun activity that both MGs and audience members enjoyed was a cherry tomato tasting during the break. Participants were asked to state a preference between two varieties (Sungold and Midnight Snack). The result? About 50/50. But people enjoyed the sampling. A table of demonstration items included some solutions for garden problems, such as shade cloth and insect netting. A video from UME about Integrated Pest Management concluded the presentation.

Feedback from the attendees was overwhelmingly positive. Many of the participants had attended previous GIEI EDU presentations and some expressed interest in becoming Master Gardeners themselves.

The CCMG GIEI EDU presentation **Vegetable Plant Problems** is available on our website here: [PowerPoint Presentation](#)

Many thanks to the Volunteers who helped with the July 13 workshop – CCMGs Pat Biles, Linda Bronsden, Ronla Henry-Reeves, Linda Ivko, Laura McManus, Kay Redman, Karen Trundle, and Teri White, and Interns Rebecca Raphael and Heather Santimays.



Photo CCMG Intern Rebecca Raphael shows off our "Table of Misery" with fruits and vegetable showing different diseases and pest damage already incurred

CCMG Grow It Eat It Education Project Continued

CCMG GIEI EDU Project – Fall Vegetable Gardening Workshop

Vegetable Gardening doesn't end in the fall – it's just the start of a new season! That was the message of a workshop offered by the CCMG GIEI EDU project on August 23, 2025, at the county Extension Office in Bel Alton.

The team provided information on finishing up the Summer garden, including harvesting last fruits and correctly disposing of garden debris. CCMGs presented a section on Fall Crops that can be grown in the region, where they can be planted, and when those should be planted. Audience members learned about frost dates, hardiness zones, cultivar days-to-maturity, and using the UME Planting Calendar. The HGIC celebration of 2025 as the "Year of Herbs" was mentioned and herbs that can be grown in the fall were suggested. One of the highlights of the Fall Crop section was CCMG Kay Redman's informative segment on planting and harvesting garlic. A UME video on that topic was also shown.



CCMG Kay Redman presenting on what crops to direct seed or transplant

After a break, the presentation focused on extending the garden season using plant protection, including cloches, row covers, low and high tunnels, and hobby greenhouses. A segment on fall crop pests and UME short videos about some of these pests completed the presentation.



CCMGs Kathy Jenkins and Teri White at the demonstration table with lettuce box and cool weather seeds.

A demonstration table staffed by CCMG Volunteers gave audience members an opportunity to ask questions and view some of the items discussed in the presentation, such as lightweight and heavyweight row covers, cloches, fall vegetable crop seedlings and some cool weather herbs. Free cool weather crop seeds were available for the participants and a RAFFLE was held to win an MG-built lettuce box.

Many thanks to our CCMG volunteers who helped the project team with this workshop: Elveta Gibson, Suzanne Trosclair, Karen Trundle, and Teri White.

Melwood Horticultural Therapy Programs

By Barbara Hill

Photos by Suse Greenstone

University of Maryland Extension Master Gardeners of Charles County (CCMG) assisted with monthly Seed to Table (S2T) Saturday events, where 8 families (approximately 30 people in total) were learning to grow, plant and cook seasonal vegetable and how to use herbs at home. Families also learned: to grow and plant in food production gardens, about plants that attract beneficial pollinators, benefits of companion planting, and methods to reduce pest problems.

As part of the S2T program, CCMGs taught the families about food insecurity and how home gardens, community gardens, food bank and food pantry gardens, and MG UME statewide demonstration gardens can and do assist with providing fresh produce for food-insecure families, individuals, senior center and school facilities in our region.

CCMGs also assisted with monthly veterans workdays in therapeutic horticulture activities in the MRC greenhouse and in the MRC vegetable garden (Learning Garden) planting vegetables and herbs in accessible bag containers and raised beds.

In addition to weekly plant care behind the scenes to prepare the gardens and greenhouse crops for production and group plantings, CCMGs helped to ready and teach about irrigation systems for the new growing season. This season, CCMGS were instrumental in trouble shooting an unexpected water pressure challenge, that led to a substantial upgrade to the irrigation system which resulted after the Learning Garden was enlarged.

CCMGs assisted and taught volunteers who have come to community and corporate/local business workdays, to help prepare raised beds for spring planting and ready fittings to connect drip tape irrigation lines.

CCMGs are taking part now in teaching youth with all abilities and special needs from Children's National Hospital and local communities about all forms of gardening during Melwood's 9-week summer program called Camp Accomplish. Approximately 700 youth are expected to attend Camp Accomplish this summer. Melwood is extremely grateful for CCMGs who take part in this annual program where gardening is offered throughout the week, especially in the heat of the DMV summers!



Left: CCMG Teri White teaching S2T families about backyard composting.

Right: CCMG Ebony Nicholl with a young camper in the Pollinator Garden working to remove an invasive plant from this planter.



Save the Date

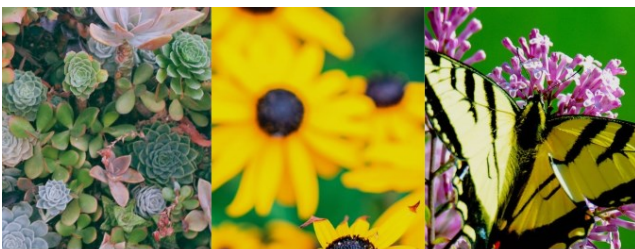
September 27, 2025 — Native Seed Collecting, Cleaning, and Packaging at the Extension office

October 4, 2025 Monarch Mania

October 5, 2025 La Plata Fall Festival from 12-3pm at La Plata Town Hall

October 18, 2025 — Grow It Eat It: Winterizing the Garden and Composting at the Extension office

November 15, 2025 — Celebrating the Seasons: Lessons from a Native Garden



UME Master Gardener Spring 2026 Basic Training

Become a Master Gardener!
Combine your love of plants, people,
and the environment to help residents
in your community solve problems &
make environmentally-sound
decisions.

Classes held virtually Tuesdays
6-9pm
Hybrid local schedule
Feb 3 - May 5, 2026

Accepting applications by December 1 in
select counties! go.umd.edu/MGJoin

This institution is an equal opportunity provider.

If you need a reasonable accommodation to
participate in this training, please contact your local
University of Maryland Extension office

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Master Gardener Basic Training 2026

If you are interested in applying to become a MG
volunteer, Charles County will be accepting
applications until December 1, 2025. Please
download and complete the [UME Volunteer
Application](#) and send it to Julia at
jrycyna@umd.edu.

If you have a landscape, insect, or plant disease
question, please use the [Ask Extension webpage](#) to
submit photos and other details.

2025 is "The Year of Herbs"

The Home and Garden Information Center at the
University of Maryland Extension has declared
2025 "The Year of Herbs," and GIEI projects
around the state will be celebrating all things
herbs. Information on selecting, growing, and
using herbs will be a part of our workshops and
events. More information can be found here: [Year
of Herbs | University of Maryland Extension](#).



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Click on photo above to visit our website.



The mission of the Charles County Master Gardeners is to support the University of Maryland Extension service by educating residents about safe, effective, and sustainable horticultural practices that build healthy gardens, landscapes, and communities.

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