



**Virginia
Cooperative
Extension**

Virginia Tech.
Virginia State University

GOOCHLAND COUNTY NEWSLETTER

2023 / Spring

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A RENEWED FOCUS ON ELDERBERRY

Bob Whitehead, Horticultural Program Associate

Elderberry is a native plant that is receiving renewed interest, by researchers, home gardeners and commercial growers, for its nutritional and medicinal benefits plus potential crop production. Elderberry cultivation dates back to ancient times and much has been written concerning its many useful purposes.

However, it isn't a fruit for fresh consumption since various parts of the plant contain cyanogenic glycoside which can be metabolized in the body to produce poisonous hydrogen cyanide. Processing is needed to deactivate the glycoside prior to consumption. Today, both flowers and fruit are used for wines, juices, jellies, jams, pies and colorants. Its berries are known as a source for "vitamins A, C, potassium, folate, calcium, and iron." Syrups and supplements are touted for having antioxidant, anti-inflammatory, and antibacterial characteristics.

Two Elderberry species are commonly used for production purposes - European Elderberry (*Sambucus nigra*) and American Elderberry (*Sambucus canadensis*). As the names imply, the European Elderberry is native to Europe, while the American Elderberry is native to North America. In fact, the native American Elderberry can be found growing in every county in Virginia. The European Elderberry is more tree-like while the American Elderberry has a shrub-like growth habit. Some believe the American species is better suited to commercial production due to its larger berry clusters and flavor characteristics.

Older commercial cultivars were developed in New York, and Nova Scotia. More recent research at the University of Missouri has led to several new varieties, yet many crop production questions remain unanswered. With a health-conscious public in mind, Elderberry research and consumer product development is likely to continue. If you would like more detailed information on Elderberry culture and varieties, see the following web links:

<https://extension.missouri.edu/media/wysiwyg/Extensiondata/Pub/pdf/agguides/agroforestry/af1017.pdf>

<https://extension.psu.edu/elderberry-in-the-garden-and-the-kitchen>



Elderberry blooms.

Image credit: Mandy L. Smith, PSU.

**Virginia Cooperative Extension
Goochland County Unit Office**

2748 Dogtown Road

804.556.5641

<https://goochland.ext.vt.edu>

We're Hiring! We are hiring a full-time Administrative Assistant. Applications can be submitted at <https://jobs.vt.edu/>. To learn more about the job, please contact Nicole Shuman (804-556-5872; nks49@vt.edu).

FOCUS ON NATIVE PLANTS: VIRGINIA BLUEBELLS

Pat Lust, Extension Master Gardener Volunteer

Virginia Bluebells, *Mertensia virginiana*, are among our favorite spring ephemerals, perhaps because of their striking blue color. An herbaceous, perennial wildflower, they are native to all of eastern US – from Maine to Alabama, from Virginia to Minnesota – and they thrive in moist woodlands and river flood plains.

Generally, bluebells bloom in early April, but with the warm winter, they may be ahead of schedule this year. The first sign of bluebells is the reddish, rosette-looking tiny foliage that soon turns green and sends up a stem with alternate, bluish-green leaves and pink buds. Then, voila! The beautiful trumpet-shaped blue flowers unfold.

Once they get established, bluebells will easily naturalize in a moist wooded wildflower garden. They pair beautifully with trilliums, *Trillium grandiflorum* (native to VA, but not specifically to Goochland and Powhatan Counties), or, if your garden is not totally native, they also do well with bulbs like yellow daffodils or a colorful range of tulips.

Because their foliage will be totally gone by mid-summer, it is a good idea to interplant bluebells with some plants that will have a beautiful presence later in the season. Hostas and astilbes are good choices to slip into the vacant spaces. Ferns and heuchera or even some shade-loving annuals may also fill the gaps nicely.

The tubes of the flowers can be as much as an inch long. Favored pollinators include butterflies and moths and sometimes hummingbirds. Bumblebees and other long-tongued bees are also attracted to bluebells. Fertilized flowers produce small nut-like fruit containing the seed. If you want to start bluebells from seed, plant the seeds right after collecting them and be patient. They do require a winter dormancy period, so if you wait to plant them the next spring, you will probably be disappointed.

Once the new plants emerge, they require several years to develop their elaborate root systems. When they are established, they prefer not to be moved; however, the rhizomes can be carefully divided when the plant is dormant. Left on their own they will self-seed and colonize, forming compact clumps up to 2' tall.

Bluebells are not known to have any serious insect pests or disease, but snails and slugs will probably find them. They can coexist with black walnut, and, best of all, the deer and rabbits generally leave them alone.

For more information about bluebells:

University of Wisconsin-Madison - <https://hort.extension.wisc.edu/articles/virginia-bluebells-mertensia-virginica/>

Virginia Native Plant Society - <https://vnps.org/1989-virginia-bluebells/>



Virginia bluebells in bloom.

Image credit: Goochland-Powhatan Master Gardener Association

TREES & THINGS THAT MAKE YOU SNEEZE

Bob Whitehead, Horticultural Program Associate

Winter 2022-23 has been rather mild except for the last week of December when we had bitter cold temperatures for a short period. Since February 2nd, it seems that Punxsutawney Phil missed his prediction for six more weeks of winter. Judging from blooms on cherry and pear trees, spring has already sprung and that includes spring allergies.

It is estimated that nearly 30 percent of the U. S. population experiences allergy symptoms. “Common allergens include dust mites, animal dander, molds, mildew and fungi, inhalants and plant pollens. Spring pollens include trees, while summer pollens suggest grasses, and fall allergies, weeds” (PSU). If you have noticed some itchy eyes or a runny nose lately, it may be caused by spring tree pollens. Generally, tree pollens are in the air from February – late May each year. Many tree species--Elm, Oak, Hickory, Maple, Cedar and others—can cause allergic reactions. Most people notice pine pollen when it covers vehicles, lawn furniture and porches during the month of April. While this is a nuisance, allergies to pine pollen is less common than other tree pollens. It may have something to do with pollen grain size. Pine pollen is larger than hardwood tree pollens. Still, all pollens have the potential to enter our nasal passages and may cause an allergic response for some individuals. Thankfully, spring rains help clear the air and wash away the accumulated yellow coating from outdoor furnishings. For more information and recommendations for coping with spring allergies, see the following publication: <https://studentaffairs.psu.edu/health-wellness/medical-services/health-information-resources/allergies>.

GARDENING 101: DIGGING IN

Pat Lust, Extension Master Gardener
Volunteer

In January, the Goochland-Powhatan Master Gardener Association volunteers launched a new initiative, called Gardening 101. This is a specialized course for gardeners who want to acquire more gardening knowledge but don't necessarily have time to commit to the volunteer requirements of the Extension Master Gardener program.



At left, participants consider the quality of soil.



At right, Master Gardener Volunteer Don Smith talks about growing fruit.

Image credit: Goochland-Powhatan Master Gardener Association

Gardening 101 consists of 20 hours of instruction in a variety of horticultural subjects including soil, landscaping, native plants, insects, growing fruits and veggies, pruning, plants in containers and many more. Classes have been meeting for two hours on Wednesday evenings starting mid-January through March.

We are pleased to report that most of the instruction is being delivered by our very own GPMGA volunteers. One of the benefits of the Extension Master Gardener program is the opportunity for each volunteer to develop specialties or pockets of expertise in certain areas of horticulture, and this course has provided a perfect opportunity for some of our volunteers to test their mettle. It's been my privilege to sit in on several of the classes, and I can confirm that my fellow volunteers are delivering a first-rate educational experience.

GPMGA will be likely to offer Gardening 101, or a similar course, during the winter of 2024. If this is something that would interest you, you can put your name on the “to-be-notified list” by contacting Rebecca Crow at rebecca.crow1095@gmail.com

Agriculture, Natural Resources and Horticulture Upcoming Programs

March GPMGA Meeting Continuing Education Lecture

March 9, 2023

9:30 to 10:30 AM

Goochland-Powhatan Master Gardener Association Meetings have a continuing education lecture that is open to the public. For the March Association meeting, Peggy Singlemann will speak on 150 Years of Gardening, from Horse and Carriage Delivery through the Internet. The meeting will be held in the Auditorium of the Central High School Complex, 2748 Dogtown Road, Goochland, VA 23063. For more information: www.gpmga.org.

Salad Box Workshop

March 11, 2023

9:00 AM to 1:00 PM

This hands-on workshop will teach you how to build a salad box for cut-and-come-again greens. Cost is \$50 and you will return home with a 24" square, naturally rot-resistant cedar salad box. Workshop will be held on at the Goochland Extension Office, 2748 Dogtown Road, Goochland, VA 23063. For more information, contact Bob Whitehead at 804-556-5841 or whitehd5@vt.edu.

Register online at <https://tinyurl.com/My-Salad-Box>.

Pond Management Workshop

April 11, 2023

6:00 to 9:00 PM

Do you have a pond on your property? Join us to learn about water quality, aquatic weeds, fish stocking, and more! More information and registration available at: <https://tinyurl.com/PondManagementWorkshop>. Class will be held at the Goochland Extension Office, 2748 Dogtown Road. For more information, contact Nicole Shuman at 804-556-5872 or nks49@vt.edu.

April GPMGA Meeting Continuing Education Lecture

April 13, 2023

9:30 to 10:30 AM

Goochland-Powhatan Master Gardener Association Meetings have a continuing education lecture that is open to the public. In April, Kathy Gee will speak on water issues in the home garden and back yard. The meeting will be held in the Auditorium of the Powhatan Health and Human Services Building, 3910 Old Buckingham Road, Powhatan, VA 23139. For more information: www.gpmga.org.

Horse Farm Pasture Walk

May 9, 2023

5:00 to 8:00 PM

Managing horse pastures can be tricky. Join us for a pasture walk at Labyrinth Training Center to discuss best management practices that can benefit your horses, your pastures, and surrounding natural resources. We'll be joined by specialists to discuss forages and nutrition for horses. Address, more information and registration available at: <https://tinyurl.com/HorsePastureBMP>.

Rain Barrel Workshop

May 18, 2023

6:00 to 8:00 PM

Learn the importance of using a rain barrel to conserve and collect water for use in your garden! During this workshop, participants will work together to assemble one or more rain barrels. Each participant will receive one rain barrel per \$55 registration fee. Class will be held on at the Goochland Extension Office, 2748 Dogtown Road, Goochland, VA 23063. For more information, contact Bob Whitehead at 804-556-5841 or whitehd5@vt.edu. Register online at <https://tinyurl.com/Rainbarrel-2022>.

SPRING GARDEN FEST

The Goochland-Powhatan Master Gardeners Association (GPMGA) will hold its 17th annual Spring Garden Festival on Saturday, April 29, 2023 at Reynolds Community College, 1851 Dickinson Road, Goochland. This annual event of GPMGA in cooperation with Reynolds Community College and Virginia Cooperative Extension is a free, family-friendly event that is a celebration of all things related to gardening. Spring Garden Fest 2023 will include the much loved GPMGA Plant Sale, with plants suited to Central Virginia gardens at great prices, an Ask the Master Gardener station for free gardening help, and lots of fun gardening related vendor booths.

For a small registration fee you can also increase your gardening knowledge through classes, workshops, and tours offered throughout the day. Examples of class topics include propagating native plants, landscape design for small gardens, vegetable gardening, native shrubs for wildlife, and exploring butterflies. If you like to learn by doing then you can take advantage of hands on workshops on building a mosaic decorated pot, cultivating a mushroom log, or creating your own floral tiara. Finally, if you prefer observing while learning you can join tours of the college's gardens focused on topics such as herb garden design, rain garden design, and how a landscape design matures over time.

Online registration for these educational opportunities is available at <http://www.gpmga.org> or contact the Goochland Cooperative Extension office at 804-556-5841. Sign-up now as classes can fill up quickly.

2023 Goochland Spring Ag Fair Small Animal Show

Open to 4-H members in Goochland and surrounding counties
AND Goochland FFA Chapter Members

April 1, 2023; Entries Close March 13, 2023

Hosted by Goochland County 4-H and the Goochland Ag Fair Committee



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Register **HERE!**

SCAN ME



If you are a person with a disability and desire any assistive devices, services or other accommodations to participate in this activity, please contact Cayla Walker, Goochland 4-H Extension Agent, at (804-556-5873/TDD*) during business hours of 8:30 a.m.- 5 p.m. to discuss accommodations 5 days prior to the event.*TDD number is (800) 828-1120.

GHP 4-H Camping Cluster Taste of 4-H Camp Day-Camp!

Open to youth ages 9-13 as of September 30th 2023



April 3-6 (9am-12pm)

Central High Complex in Goochland County



**Come Experience Crafts, Archery,
GaGa Ball, Woodworking,
AND MORE!**



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Dates to Remember

February 27: Registration Opens For Goochland Residents

March 3: Registration Opens For Powhatan/Hanover Residents

March 17: Registration Closes

Register HERE:



If you are a person with a disability and desire any assistive devices, services or other accommodations to participate in this activity, please contact Cayla Walker- Goochland VCE at (804)556-5873 or at caylaks98@vt.edu between the hours of 8:30am - 5:00pm to discuss accommodations 5 days prior to the event.

*TDD number is (800) 828-1120



REGISTRATION IS LIVE!

Goochland-Hanover-Powhatan Junior 4-H Camp 2023



July 17-21



For youth ages 9-13 as of September 30 2023

For registration and more information,
please contact Cayla Walker at caylaks98vt.edu



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