The Home Grown News
A Newsletter from the Hanover Master Gardener Association
November 2012

Hanover Master Gardener Association

Phone: 752-4310  Fax: 752-4311  Website: hanovermastergardeners.org

Board Members

President
Buz Sawyer ...................................... 744-4398  william.sawyer@gmail.com

Vice President
Liz Campbell ................................. 550-9126  jecampbell@comcast.net

Secretary
Barb Sawyer ................................... 744-4398  bsawyer@gmail.com

Treasurer
Rene Henderson ............................ 569-9453  rene3den@comcast.net

VMGA Representative
Christy Brennan ...............................741-0801  ctb47@comcast.net

Membership Chair
Liz Campbell ..................................... 550-9126  jecampbell@comcast.net

Newsletter
Stephanie Workman ....................... 726-0345  workmansj@gmail.com

MG Staff Coordinator
Pattie Bland .........................................752-4310  pbland52@vt.edu

MG Volunteer Coordinator
Val Kish ............................................ 749-4937  vkish@richmond.edu

Immediate Past President
Cheri Haggerty ...................................................

Board meetings are open to any HMGs who is interested. The meetings are scheduled the third Monday of each month at 6:30 pm. The meeting place varies from time to time so check with the Extension Office to see where the meeting will be held should you plan to come.

Good Sample = Good Diagnosis
Jim Schroering - Extension Agent, ANR

As any Master Gardener who works the help desk knows, landowners often show up at the Hanover Extension Office with a diseased plant and want to know, “…What’s wrong with my plant?...”. The answer is not always easy to give, considering we get questions and samples on beans, tomatoes, squash, peppers, azaleas, crepe myrtles, boxwoods, perennials, greenhouse cuttings, and even pine and hardwood samples.

Since becoming the Hanover Ag Agent in November 2011, I receive notification of all testing results. That helps me not only learn what types of diseases may be present in the county, but also to monitor what questions are coming to the MG desk. As you know, I am not always able to be in the office when all samples arrive.

From January through June 2012, approximately 20 samples were sent to the lab. Of these, about 50% came back with a comment in the “condition upon arrival” box that said “insufficient, poor or fair”. That means the pathology lab was not able to make a valid diagnosis since they didn’t have proper tissue, root, or soil samples. In order to better assist our citizens, we in the extension office need to give them the best information on how to provide a good sample and what it needs to look like.

I’ve had the pleasure of working with Mary Ann Hansen and Elizabeth Bush in the Plant Pathology Lab. They have been very helpful in explaining and educating me on some basic sampling techniques. While there is no standard sampling technique for every plant, I thought I’d share some basic ones with you. Mike Likins, our distinguished Ag Extension Agent in Chesterfield County says, “…A good sample leads to a good diagnosis...”.

First of all, the tissues samples need to be fresh. We do a good job of getting the sample in the mail the same day so this is a matter of educating our clients. It is always helpful to have a fresh cutting of healthy plant material along with a sample of the diseased tissue. A handful of both should be sufficient. There is no need to include dead wood or tissue in the sample. The lab is not able to culture anything from dead tissue. Remember, never add water or wet paper towels to the sample, since this can lead to secondary infections by the time the sample reaches the lab.

Simply dry off the sample if necessary, removing dew or irrigation water, and seal the sample in the appropriate sized plastic bag.

Next, include a sample of the roots with some soil – about a pint should do. This is not used for a soil sample test nor to culture anything from the roots. It is simply a visual method that the
Good Sample = Good Diagnosis (Cont)

lab specialists use to assess the overall condition of the roots. Obviously, this is impractical for any established yard tree such as pines or hardwoods, but it is useful for recently established roses, azaleas, boxwoods, and any newly planted landscaping varieties.

There are situations where it is necessary to send a soil sample. If the plant looks yellow or is in a weakened condition, it may be helpful to measure the fertility and pH of the soil. The standard soil sampling (1/2 pint) procedures (clean sample, no roots, rocks, leaf litter, organic matter, etc.) can be followed. If it is suspected that nematodes may be causing a problem, especially on landscaping plants including boxwoods, then a separate soil sample (one quart of clean soil with NO root material) needs to be taken. The soil samples can be sent in the same sample box as the tissues samples. The lab will then forward it to either the soil or the nematode testing labs for further analysis.

We’ve had a couple of samples sent to the lab from commercial vegetable growers and from commercial landscaping operations. Both samples included smaller transplants or cuttings, one involving tomato seedlings and one involving winterberry cuttings. In these situations, the lab requested that we send at least 20 samples in order to culture and observe the smaller samples properly.

Finally, as the saying goes, “A picture is worth a thousand words”. I have found it very useful to ask clients to send us digital photos of the plants in their natural environment. This is very easy to do and it helps the lab folks tremendously. They are often able to narrow down the alternatives just based on good photos. Of course, we never know when a client is going to walk through the door, but after listening to the landowner, I often ask them to go home and take 3 - 5 photos of the plant and e-mail them to me. I then forward the digital photos to the path lab with a brief explanation and let them know that a sample will be mailed shortly.

I’ll be happy to go into more detail if any of you would like to discuss proper sampling techniques further. Stop by my office or give me a call. Obviously one set of standards can’t be used for every plant, so we are constantly fine tuning our techniques. Just to show you how successful you have become, only 3 reports came back since July 1st for insufficient, poor or fair samples. Keep up the good work and let me know if I can help in any way. Contact me at 804-752-4307 or jschroer@vt.edu.

Association Historian
Barb Sawyer, HMGA Historian

Did you know we have a position called Association Historian? It has been vacant for a long time and I volunteered to revive it.

Do you have photos or articles that would be of interest and perhaps should be archived? I would like to have a presentation (PowerPoint if PC, Keynote if Mac) running in the background at our Annual Meeting. Pictures of Hanover Master Gardeners hard at work or play, special moments in our history, articles extolling our virtues, and so on.

To avoid having my regular email flooded with big jpegs, I have established an email address specifically for this purpose and will check it every couple days. As it is not my regular email address, do not expect an immediate reply. Please send me contributions! The email address for articles and pictures is barb@barbsawyer.com.

Thanks in advance! I am really looking forward to seeing everyone’s pictures, reading the articles, and putting together a presentation and an archive.

Home Gardening Series
Fall 2012

Bountiful thanks to Walter Hempfling, JoAnn LaMarca, Hugh Rooney, September Sickinger, David Sumner, and Betty Jane Hughes for graciously offering their time and talents to our community. Our citizens grew in their knowledge of turf care, pruning practices, season extending, and sound garden maintenance procedures.

Pattie’s Coneflowwrs
Pest labs are available twice a year, spring and fall. Join us!

So, what exactly IS inside that oak gall? Pest lab participants delve into the mysteries of the plant world, using scalpel (green boxcutter), probe, and research books as guides.

What in the world is that?? Perched on the eaten interior edge of a greenbrier leaf, this curve-lined owlet caterpillar (*Phyprosopus callitrichoides*) is one of the most bizarre creatures to be seen anywhere. Found in September, it is a dead-leaf mimic, moving as a leaf would do in a slight breeze when disturbed.

Seen throughout the woods in the fall, this strawberry bush fruit (*Euonymus americanus*) is so brightly colored that it stands out amid the fall leaves. The flowers are pale white and appear in May-June on this 3-6 foot woodland shrub.

Fall has arrived and the temperatures are falling. The leaves on the trees are changing color and the work of raking leaves and preparing our gardens for winter has begun in earnest. Our thoughts are shifting to holiday planning, time with family and friends, and hunkering down until Mother Nature is ready to put on her spectacular displays of spring. It is also a time when we take stock of the season just passed.

For our Association, taking stock involves making our annual report to members, holding our Annual Meeting, and electing officers. If you don’t have it on your calendar yet, please set aside December 3rd for the Hanover Master Gardener’s Association annual meeting. All Master Gardeners, Interns, and Trainees, are welcome to attend and to bring a guest to the association meetings. (Please respond to the invitation with the number attending to help us in planning.) In the past year, we have seen an exciting increase in attendance at our general membership meetings! Surprisingly, this has not resulted in a significant increase in Association membership.

Our Association does much of the organizing and planning for the Master Gardener program in Hanover County: Plant Clinics, State Fair volunteers, Plant Sales, Training, HGS, Grants to schools, and much more. There are counties without a Master Gardener Association that need more paid staff to accomplish these programs. Organizing and empowering volunteers through an association like ours is an effective way to use resources and multiply our impact in the community.

Our Association needs your support, in both volunteer effort and membership dues, in order to fulfill our stated goal of providing meaningful horticultural education to the public. These are some of the many ways your time and membership helps:

- Your participation at our Plant Sales helps fund our ability to offer educational grants to Hanover public schools.
- Through [hmgacontact@gmail.com](mailto:hmgacontact@gmail.com), our Association provides information on MG opportunities, such as advanced Master Gardener programs, Master Gardener College, and other continuing education opportunities, as well as HMGA sponsored educational events.
- Opportunities are offered for public education hours via Plant Clinics, Plant Sales, the State Fair, Scotchtown, and more.
- Our newsletter, *The Home Grown News*, provides information of particular interest about and for Hanover Master Gardeners.
- Membership in the Association requires payment of dues, a reasonable $10 per year. Your dues help pay for purchasing equipment for public education, display tables, and tents for Plant Clinics and other events.
It’s been a busy few weeks in September and October . . .

The Extension Office moved the week of October 8 to its new location. We now share a building with the Parks & Recreation Department at the Taylor Complex. The physical address is 13017 Taylor Complex Lane, Ashland (just 2 miles east of I-95 on Route 54). Our mailing address remains the same: P.O. Box 9, Hanover, VA 23069. We’ll be unpacking for a month, I’d say, but please feel free to drop in and say hi. We look forward to having an official reception so watch for an announcement.

The 2012 State Fair of Virginia is now history and Extension Master Gardeners really shone. Our booth, located in The Meadow Pavilion and featuring intensive backyard gardening and composting (vermi- and regular), logged over 5000 visitors. MGs from Hanover, Henrico, Chesterfield, Northern Neck, Spotsylvania, Louisa and Norfolk rotated in to staff the booth.

Hanover Master Gardeners again were instrumental in creating and supporting the VCE-MG presence this year at the Fair. Those myriad details included building the raised bed model, growing or buying plants for the raised bed, watering the horticulture displays, scheduling MG staffing and ticket distribution, transporting /setting up the displays, and assisting with the Virginia Green Industry Council’s Monday plant sale.

The Fall Plant Sale, in a leaner version than spring, was successful on beautiful, sunny September 15th.

By the time you read this the Fall Ag Days, October 17-18, will have occurred. Colonial Farm Credit, event coordinator, invited Hanover MGs again to educate our county third graders on flowers.

Enrollment for the 2013 Master Gardener training class and for the winter/spring Home Gardening Series (HGS) has been opened. So far, we have a list of over 30 who want to expand their horticultural knowledge.

Save the dates for these quarterly HMGA meetings: Monday, December 3rd and Monday, January 7th. Location: New Hanover Presbyterian Church.


Master Gardeners, thanks for all your efforts!

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Get Ready for 2013 Home Gardening Series

By Theresa Cammarata

We are busy organizing our 2013 Home Gardening Series. This series of 10 classes is offered to our citizens by our own Master Gardeners from January through April on Saturdays from 9:00 to 11:00 a.m. in the DSS Room. For this coming year the topics are as follows:

- **January 12**  More Than Just Dirt: Soils, Soil Prep, Fertilizers (presented by Kitty Bates and Ray Leffler)
- **January 26**  It’s Reproduction: Plants from Seeds and Cuttings (Presenter TBA)
- **February 2**  Behold the Beauty: Flowers (presented by Joel Klein)
- **February 9**  Turf Battles: Lawn and Turf Strategies Part 1 (to be presented by Walter Hempfling on Pests and Diseases); Part 2 on Lawn maintenance and how-to (Presenter TBA)
- **February 16**  Bounty in the Back Yard: Vegetables (presented by Joel Klein)
- **February 23**  Make a Plan, Stan and Ann: Landscape Design (presented by Ayer Chamberlin)
- **March 9**  Powerhouse Delicacies: Small Fruits (presented by Jim Stewart)
- **March 23**  Virginia Tried ‘n’ True: Annuals, Perennials and Natives (presenter TBA)
- **April 13**  Yikes! Insects, Pests and Diseases (presented by Bill Slowinski)
- **April 27**  Maintenance Counts: Pruning and Watering (presenter TBA)

Do you have an interest in presenting a talk on planting from seeds and/or cuttings? Can you talk about Turf and your lawn care routines? Do you have experience with annuals, perennials and natives? Do you prune? Become one of our presenters either alone or in a team.

Email Theresa at tcammarata1@comcast.net or call at 804-779-0555
Got Resources? Add Them to Our List!

Lisa Willis

I am new to the area and am looking for some place to buy local strawberries, can you help me? Do you know where I can find a local source for mushroom compost? I have decided to use more native plants in my landscape, where can I find them?

Have you ever been asked these questions while answering the phone at the MG office or at a plant clinic? Did you have some good answers? Hey, we’re Master Gardeners … we’re supposed to know everything! After these questions have been repeatedly asked, I’m compelled to compile a list, with your help, to attempt answering these type of questions. After all, who knows better than a Master Gardener about all those mom and pop fruit stands, farms, nurseries and garden centers that are tucked away down some county road!

So before you harvest that last fall veggie, clean up that perennial bed, and put your yard to bed for the winter, please take a few minutes to jot down your favorite haunts and email them to me. Make sure you include the name, location, contact information, and what kinds of products they offer. If there is a really great place that offers something else we should know about, send that too! Remember, just because you know about it and think everyone else already knows, I guarantee some people don’t know your resources and wish they did. Please don’t leave anything off the list! This list will be distributed to the master gardeners and will be placed at the MG office as a useful resource for inquiring minds.

If you have any questions about this project, please contact Lisa by email (jnlwillis@gmail.com) or by the good old telephone (804-779-3825).

The President’s Plot, (Continued)

Virginia Tech determines requirements for the status of Active Master Gardener. To be an Active Master Gardener one must report 20 volunteer hours and 8 continuing education hours during the calendar year. Note that one must report, not just perform those hours! If you are not yet reporting your hours via VMS, please ask for assistance in doing so.

In addition to hearing great speakers, enjoying great meals, having a bit of entertainment, and enjoying time to socialize with other Hanover Master Gardeners, you can also fulfill some of your 20-hour volunteer commitment and 8 hour continuing education commitment by attending the Association Meetings!

Paying your dues and maintaining Active Master Gardener status will enable you to:

I Nominate and vote for HMGA Officers (President, Vice-President, Secretary, and Treasurer).
I Become an Officer of the HMGA. Come to a Board Meeting sometime. You might be surprised to discover how interesting and rewarding being a Board Member can be.
I Support the work of the Association, and enjoy the benefits mentioned above.

What we do together really makes a big difference in our community. Hanover County and the Commonwealth of Virginia are better off because of your dedication and hard work. Give yourself a pat on the back and be a member of the Hanover Master Gardener Association.

Sustainable Backyard Gardening Was the Theme of the Virginia Cooperative Extension Master Gardener Booth At the State Fair
We now believe that plants do not detect sounds. (But don’t let that prevent you from talking or singing to your azaleas or zinnias if it improves your mood. I speak earnestly to my fescue, but it still goes into summer heat dormancy.)

If plants can’t “hear” then how can they communicate with one another, as they clearly do? Plants don’t converse, despite what the New York Times might say editorially “When Trees Talk” - “talking trees whose bark is worse than their blight” from 1983; rather they detect volatile organic compounds (VOCs) such as methyl salicylate or methyl jasmonate emitted by themselves and other plants in response to water stress or damage by disease or insects. Such compounds elicit defense chemicals in foliage. A fruit-bearing tree can coordinate ripening of later fruit by responding to ethylene formed by early fruit, thereby enhancing the display to attract more browsing animals that can then distribute seed. Often exquisitely small amounts of volatiles can elicit a response.

Plants express a rich array of responses by “seeing” red, far-red, blue and ultraviolet light. The mustard Arabidopsis boasts at least eleven photoreceptors. These include phototropism, “reaching for the sun”; photoperiodism, seasonal responses, short-day or long-day flowering; and circadian rhythms, the biological clock.

Anchored to the earth by the root, plants can’t pick up and leave when conditions become unfavorable. Yet plants are capable of movement, as Charles Darwin thoroughly documented in his 1881 book The Power of Movement in Plants.

He showed that roots grow downward because they sense gravity. We now think that “gravitropism” is expressed owing to the intracellular presence of plastids, amyloplasts, somewhat denser than cytoplasm that move in the gravitational field. In space, microgravity, such expression is absent. The rotatory motion of the aerial portion of many plants, circumnutation, likely depends upon slight displacements over time of such bodies in the cell’s interior.

In a delightful passage Chamovitz describes the dodder’s slow pursuit and capture of a tomato plant by combining circumnutation and its ability to sense particular VOCs emitted by the tomato. A website is provided where this movement can be viewed. The Venus flytrap’s capture of an insect owes its response to the touching of not one but two sensory hairs, resulting in an action potentially producing transmembrane ion currents, osmotic water movement, and a marked change of turgor. Leaves close, and the plant’s supply of nitrogen and minerals are supplemented.

I hope that I have piqued your interest. Plants have neither a brain nor an integrated neural network. Yet their display of so many kinds of awareness evokes aspects of animal behavior. The unusual information and amusing stories in this little book are well worth your time.
The mission of the Virginia Master Gardener Association is to foster communication, education, and fellowship among Virginia Cooperative Extension Master Gardener volunteers. The VMGA represents all Virginia Master Gardeners’ to VA Tech Cooperative Extension.

Hanover Master Gardeners can join VMGA by visiting VMGA.net or inquiring to Christy Brennan, the Hanover Unit representative. Dues are $12.00 per year.

VMGA is in cooperation with VA TECH to endow the VCE Master Gardener Coordinator Position. Please consider donating to the Master Gardener Coordinator Endowment Fund at VA Tech. The endowment will assure that the MG Program will continue to have a coordinator during budget cuts and restructuring of VCE.

- Support the MG Coordinator Endowment in one or more of the following ways:
- Giving tax-deductible donations through VMGA.net
- Contacting Dave Close to recommend a corporate sponsor dclose@vt.edu
- Purchasing VCE Master Gardener shirts and sweatshirts via VMGA.net or through Christy Brennan.

VMGA provides advanced education through regional trainings several times per year. VMGA members receive discounts based on volunteer hours earned.

**Annual Master Gardener Day At VSU**

February Virginia State University, Ettrick, VA

Virginia Cooperative Extension Master Gardener College takes place at Virginia Tech in Blacksburg, VA June 2013

**What is Master Gardener College?** Over 300 participants from throughout the Commonwealth and beyond come to MG College to learn the latest in environmentally sound lawn and garden practices and pick up materials on the latest in horticulture, which are then shared with their constituents throughout the year. MG College is the premier event for Master Gardeners in Virginia and one of the very best ways to interact with and engage MG Volunteers, Extension Agents, and gardeners in Virginia. VMGA offers scholarships for VMGA members to MG College. Let Pattie Bland know if you are interested and ensure the applications are registered in time.

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**Who’s Been Eating My Veggies**

By ????

Eat your vegetables we preach to our children. “Don’t you dare touch those vegetables”, I shout to some unknown critter devastating my garden!

I have had a vegetable garden for many years. And it has been mostly successful. After completing my Master Gardener training (class of 2012) I was amazed that I had been able to grow anything since I certainly hadn’t been using all the best practices. So this year I did the soil test, adjusted the pH, and applied the recommended amounts of fertilizer in anticipation of a bumper crop.

My worst problem from last year had to do with my “round crops” such as pumpkins and cantaloupes. I had never tried these kinds of plants before. Our grandson, having no suitable spot in his yard, asked us to plant his pumpkin seedlings, which he had grown in pre-school. I also planted melons, butternut squash, spaghetti squash, acorn squash, and some decorative gourds. Everything came up and even produced fruit. I took frequent pictures of our grandson’s pumpkin using my hand as a reference tool so show Kenny how well his pumpkin was growing. All of a sudden half of the pumpkin was eaten.
How to escape a predator when you cannot run and hide? In some cases, such as the caterpillar of the eastern black swallowtail butterfly (*Papilio polyxenes*), bright, conspicuous warning colors may be associated with a nasty taste, and so the predator (most likely a bird) moves on to locate a more palatable meal and the caterpillar survives another day.

The presence of eyespots in many animals has been linked to greater survival and therefore an increased chance that the species will lay eggs to produce the next generation. Here are several examples of insects with eyespots that you might see in your own backyard.

The saddleback caterpillar (*Acharia stimulea*) is striking and hard to miss. The greenish saddle over the abdomen is edged in white. However, look but don't touch. Those hair-like projections are stinging spines that pack a wallop! These caterpillars are generalists and can be found munching on the leaves of oaks and maples as well as a variety of garden and ornamental species. The eyespots are certainly menacing. They are located at the pooping end of the creature! The adult of this species is a moth.

The eyed click beetle (*Alaus oculatus*) belongs to a large family, named because of an unusual ability: to right itself. The click beetle first "arches" its body, then curls and, with an audible "click", somersaults into the air and lands on its feet. The eyespots on the thorax (behind the head) are clearly visible to a potential predator. The beetles, abundant in mid-to late spring, are beneficial insects, living in decaying wood where they eat insect larvae found there. Click beetle larvae, called wireworms, can live in the soil for years. They are a major agricultural pest.

Many butterflies and moths display eyespots that may scare away predators. The common buckeye butterfly (*Junonia coenia*), which belongs to the large family of brush-footed butterflies, has prominent, large eyespots on its wings that are key to its recognition. The butterfly overwinters as an adult, which means that it is exposed to natural enemies for a longer time than other butterflies that live only a few weeks. It is believed that birds are deceived by the eyespots, thereby increasing the survival of the species. This butterfly migrates from southern to northern areas each spring and summer.
Spotting Eyespots (Cont)

If you have spicebush or sassafras on your property, you may have encountered the spicebush caterpillar (*Papilio troilus*). Earlier stages of the caterpillar look like bird droppings. As the caterpillar matures, it changes color and size. With a body the same shade of green as the leaves on which it feeds, these caterpillars would be hard to see. But, near the front of the thorax are two enormous yellow and black eyespots. The white spot in the center of the yellow makes the eye look even more menacing and realistic. This caterpillar is described by David L. Wagner, in his book *Caterpillars of Eastern North America*, as one of our largest shelter-forming insects and perhaps the best snake mimic. The caterpillar “pulls” the edge of the leaf over its body, forming a shelter by day. A bird would see only the “snake” peering out of the opening. The caterpillar exits its shelter at night and feeds.

![Spicebush caterpillar (BugGuide.net)](image)

Take a careful look around your property. Before you know it, you will be spotting eyespots throughout the landscape.

Remembering Marlu Winalski

By Barb Sawyer

Those of us who knew Marlu are treasuring the memories, glad we had the opportunity to know her and work with her. She gave up driving at night several years ago, and so many MGs may not know her or even recognize her name. For those of you who did not have the opportunity to meet her, let me tell you what you missed.

Marlu (MaryLouise, though no one I know ever addressed her that way) celebrated her 85th birthday in September amidst many friends, with cake and memories of happy times. She had a grand day. Over the following weeks, she had visits from many friends and fans, and she passed away on October 23, in the presence of three of her dearest friends.

She became a Hanover Master Gardener in 1997 and achieved her 1000 hour Milestone as a Master Gardener. She was a reliable volunteer at the Ashland Farmer’s Market till 2011, when health forced her to take a break. It was her favorite Farmer’s Market. People came to rely on her presence and advice, and she missed seeing them when she could not be there.

Since 1990, Marlu logged almost 5000 volunteer hours at Lewis Ginter Botanical Garden: she was an ever-present figure at Spring and Fall Plant Sales, checked in attendees at the Winter Symposium, assisted at FunFests, served on the volunteer Bloemendaal Council, as well as attending and participating at many other functions, and was the recipient of the 2010 Volunteer Lifetime Achievement Award. She was remembered by Shane Tippett, now the Executive Director, for being “fiercely passionate about Lewis Ginter, committing time and resources to our future, and sharing herself fully with staff, volunteers and guests.”

Marlu’s husband passed away many years ago. Though they had no biological children, Marlu and her husband sponsored an entire family from Cambodia, helped them get jobs, then helped them get...
Who’s Been Eating My Veggies (Cont)

I do have a rabbit fence but of course that would not deter the suspects of squirrels, raccoons, or deer. As each of my round veggies neared readiness they would disappear partially or completely. So I approached this year with doubts about seeding those particular plants again.

This year I decided to try garden peas, which was a first for me. They progressed well until it appeared “something” suddenly ate the tops of each plant. I saw side shoots and still had hope. Over time the tops of the side shoots were also eaten. The plants never grew any taller than 4 inches with no hope of blooms. I figured “something” feasting was smart enough to not eat the whole plant to sustain growth and provide a long-term banquet. The culprit was probably the same creature that destroyed my “round crops” last year. My husband added two more feet of fencing with smaller openings without success.

We installed a game camera to determine the culprit. Following multiple trials, errors, and self-portraits, we finally got it to working correctly. After several days we got a picture of a groundhog, then of the groundhog climbing the fence, followed by a picture of two groundhogs.

We have a couple of piles of wood and upon examination we spotted a probable site for a burrow entrance. By now “they” had expanded their menu to include all the leaves on the broccoli plants, lettuce, and kale. They didn’t seem to care for the spinach. My green bean seeds were about to sprout; I was in a panic thinking I was going to lose everything especially if one of the groundhogs would soon be bringing her youngsters to join the feast. Our grandchildren had cute names for the critters but the names I had for them are not fit to print.

We purchased a humane trap, tried multiple locations and manifold bait with no luck at first. Then we caught “something”, which broke out and nearly destroyed the trap. Now, our thoughts were, “What would we do with it if we did catch it? How would we manage to kill it? Did we even have the courage to kill it? We couldn’t just move it to another location so maybe the trap was not the right solution. And besides, the trap just wasn’t strong enough.

So we went back to tractor supply and purchased all the necessary parts to install an electric fence. By now we had probably spent far more that the value of our anticipated produce, but at this point it was a challenge. We couldn’t let those groundhogs defeat us. Several days later the power to the area and the fence were set up just outside the rabbit fence. We put up two strands about 4 and 6 inches above the ground. We flipped the switch and crossed our fingers.

The game camera stopped working. Everything was so chewed up that it was hard to tell if they were still getting in. I would have loved a video of the first time the groundhog came in contact with that fence. Slowly, I began to see new growth on the peas and the green beans were growing without any damage. I was brave and planted all my “round crops” again.

I had researched lots of suggestions which didn’t work but just for good measure we tried one more tip. We dumped a box of used kitty litter into the burrow entrance we found. We hoped to send the message that they were not welcome in our neighborhood. About two weeks later, I was returning home when I spied a groundhog crossing the road away from our property. I cheered, especially since she had three young ones scurrying along behind her.

The green peas finally bloomed and set pods. I figure that fighting with the groundhogs set us back about a month. We did get some peas and they were the best we had ever tasted. I can’t wait until next spring to try them again. We will definitely plan to use the electric fence again. Now that we have that problem solved, I hope to rid the voles who feasted on the leaves of each lima plant.

Remembering

better jobs, and welcomed them to their family. Buz and I were with Marlu at lunchtime recently, and met Touch, who was a young wife and mother when she and her family came and were guided by the Winalsks through the complicated maze of establishing a life here in the USA. As she helped Marlu with lunch, she spoke in soft hush tones about that period, and of how much she treasured Marlu and Bob.