

CULTIVATING COMMUNITY

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members.vimga.org

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Editor's Letter

Is it Spring Yet???

As renowned author, Margaret Atwood has noted "in the spring, at the end of the day, you should smell like dirt". I for one, am eagerly awaiting my share of dirty knees, fingers and smelling a bit 'earthy'.

A brief respite from Zoom you might say. Not that I am complaining. Virtual Conferencing has offered new found knowledge and inspiration that I didn't believe possible. For example, the "Rain Garden" presentations have encouraged me to disconnect one of my downspouts and create my own little patch of sunken garden—much to my husband's dismay. And, his wry comment of "you'll flood the house" have furthered my resolve to prove him wrong. Only time will tell.

Our Virtual presentations have also afforded us an unique opportunity to join with others such as the American Rhododendron Society in offering quality education opportunities. Witness the number participants (224) who tuned in to Linda Chalker-Scott's presentation on 'Raised Vegetable Beds'. What a wonderful and great boost to our VIMGA profile.

And if your Saturday nights have been a little dull lately, join us on Saturday, March 20th at 7 pm for a presentation from gardening expert **Brian Minter**. Brian will introduce us to hot new varieties of easy-to-grow food plants for 2021.

In this issue you will find contributions from our members on what is happening in their areas, including updates on how to get more education, advice hours. Enjoy

- Jan



Jan Thorsen

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Want to see Linda Chalker-Scott's presentation? Here is a link to the our Zoom directory in the VIMGA cloud.

<https://cloud.vimga.org/index.php/apps/files/?dir=/ZOOM%20uploads&fileid=20768>

President's Message

Greetings VIMGA Members!

Here we are in March and it is wonderful to see lots of early spring flowers: snowdrops, crocus, cyclamen, early rhododendrons and lots of others which bring us cheer.



In 2021, VIMGA members have already had several excellent education opportunities, some organized by our VIMGA Continuing Education Committee (CEC). Thanks to all of you who have worked our programs and those organized jointly with other gardening organizations, like the Rhododendron Societies in District 1 of the American Rhododendron Society. It is very gratifying to see such joint projects between groups that have similar interests. The talk by Linda Gilkeson (January 15) on "Year-Round Gardening" was a favorite of mine. We had the talk by Ken Nentwig on "Water Efficiency in the Landscape" organized by our CEC. It was full of useful information and generally built well on Deb Jones' talk "Rain Gardens". Spring Education Day updated us on VIMGA's activities and we certainly enjoyed the talk by Linda Chalker-Scott.

In this newsletter, you will find an article on Advice hours (and education hours) requirements and a long list of opportunities on how to obtain them all prepared by your District Planners and District Representatives. Note that some of these opportunities are specifically created for the COVID period.

A note for Master Gardeners-in-Training

A number of MGITs have made good headway in completing all the requirements to becoming a Certified Master Gardener. Your Board has decided (with agreement from Vancouver Island University) that if you have completed the 65 required advice hours and have had your 25 plant IDs completed and approved by your Mentor you can apply to graduate at the end of our year which is marked by the AGM.

If you are still needing to complete the requirements, you will graduate at the 2022 AGM. This arrangement applies only to the class of 2019 due to the lack of clinics in 2020 and MGITs being unable to get the required hours in the usual 2 year period.

And finally: The Canadian Garden Council would like 2022 to be officially designated (through the federal Government) as "Year of the Garden". If you want to participate in this undertaking, contact GARDENSCANADA.ca or email director@gardencouncil.ca.

I hope you enjoy spring in the gardens,

Dorothee

In Memorium

In August 2019, Master Gardener Janet Miklas passed away. Janet was an active member of VIMGA. During the 9 years that she lived on Gabriola Island, she trained to become a Master Gardener and spent many happy hours with friends made through the group. She especially enjoyed the Community Outreach programs at various fairs and markets.

In Janet's memory, her family has generously donated funds that will be used in the future to continue the education of all Master Gardeners and Master Gardeners in training.

Our MGABC Community



Master Gardeners Association of BC

Provincial Council Meeting – February 16, 2021

Brief Summary of Discussions and Actions

- President Mike Juleff welcomed 13 members to the meeting. All chapters were represented. Mike announced that Karen Bennett (Past President) will stay on Council in a consulting capacity to assist with the website upgrade.
- Rachael Fleming of the Okanagan Chapter was appointed to the position of President Elect.
- **The Council agreed to use some of our financial surplus to upgrade the website.**
- Treasurer Lynne Christmas informed us that our Liability Insurance will not cover us in the event that a member of the public contracts the coronavirus at a master gardener event.
- **Victoria Chapter will organize a virtual MGABC AGM for Sunday, September 26, 2021.**
- A manual is under development that will assist with chapters organizing virtual events.
- **The Website Upgrade Committee is working with all the chapters for the benefit of our members, the chapters and the public. Chapters were encouraged to provide input to the upgrade.**
- Consolidated Chapter Reports have been provided to all Chapter Reps for distribution to their members.
- **Chapters are being creative about providing members with virtual clinics and continuing education opportunities.**
- Several master gardeners from around the province participated in a Q and A for the virtual Farm Folk City Folk Seedy Saturday Conference February 19 to 21. It was very informative and well done. Questions were sent in via the Chat feature of Zoom from well over 150 participants.
- **Council members discussed how we would refer to students doing the Basic Training, as well as those in their first and second years prior to becoming certified. We all agreed that we would refrain from using any terms that might carry an insulting or derogatory connotation. More discussion at the next meeting.**
- While there are many restrictions right now on our members completing public education and continuing education requirements, we all agreed to share information, resources and Zoom presentations so that our members can continue to learn and be involved.

Jill Wright announced that this would be her last meeting as Vancouver Chapter Rep on the Council. We thanked Jill for her long and valuable service.

- submitted by Chris Southwick and Jacqueline Sherk



VIMGA's Library Project Takes off with Zoom - submitted by Jo Canning

So, my friends, this is really a sales pitch. I hope it will create some interest, though. As you know, the library speakers project began in 2018 when we were contacted by VIRL, and asked to offer a monthly gardening seminar. This year it has turned into a wildly successful venture for VIMGA. Here's some statistics.

The most registrants for the 2019 and 2020 years was 25, with 13 attendees as the highest number of bodies in the room (50% is standard). For most in-person clinics, this constituted a good number, especially considering that 8 questions has been the average asked at an old-style venue, and these are a one-of, not a complete teaching session for the public.

Since we began on Zoom in November 2020, our top number has been 90 (!!!) with 40 attendees -- the silver lining in the Covid cloud. Feedback and suggestions have been very useful!

- About 40% of the attendees have been MGs. We are expanding our marketing, so hope to see more of the public (as a ratio) as the year moves forward.
- As of this year, seminars are recorded and offered on VIRL's UTUBE channel, making VIMGA's work part of the library's collection, and ensuring the public can access reliable, science-based gardening knowledge. This also allows us to offer pre-recorded seminars to garden clubs in the future.
- Because 2019 was the first full year after we set it up in 2018, and then we were hit with COVID, I agreed to keep it going for 2021. April Ripley (the adult education coordinator at VIRL) and I have developed the project's evolution and repaired glitches so it is running smoothly. April put in a lot of work behind the scenes for VIMGA, and continues to do so, not only organizing and administrating the Zoom sessions as secretary and Zoom host, but has also created reading lists, tended to ongoing marketing through the U-tube channel, expanding VIRL's attendee capacity, sending out speaker's handouts ahead of the seminar, and compiling a monthly feedback and survey document.

To help the project on our end, the executive has made a generous decision to increase the volunteer hours credited per engagement (from 1:3 ratio = 6 volunteer hours, to 1:4 ratio = 7.5 hrs). This has made a very big difference in supporting members having trouble covering their volunteer commitment during Covid.

For those who are unclear on how the project is set up:

1. Each month VIRL (usually on a Saturday at 1300h.), VIRL hosts a gardening seminar of 1.5 hours
2. VIRL markets it on-line, through their events calendar, on their poster board at the branch, and with bookmark handouts at the library checkout desks.
3. I've been acting as the over-all project CC (much as a DP might do...): deciding on subject matter focus; recruiting speakers from our membership; making up the schedule with April. This year's focus is food crops, so 6 of the 11 seminars have been about various aspects of growing vegetables.
4. The project coordinator puts the schedule on the Master List so members can add it their volunteer and education hours.
5. The speakers act as their own CC, so does the rest of the admin work and reporting.
6. When a MGITs signs up to speak, the project coordinator (this year, yours truly) acts as CC / fact checker / mentor as per VIMGA regulations, and earns 1.0 hour volunteer hours per this type of seminar arrangement for this.

I've found getting the project off the ground enjoyable, but I really need some assistance to keep it going into the future. Can you help? Here are some possibilities:

1. A hearty soul can take over as Project Coordinator for 2022. Your planning work would begin in October this year, and finish up when the seminars are added to the Master List for next year. The main work is in the spring, as it is with a D.P. Depending on the roster of speakers, you may also act as a CC for any MGITs who want to offer a seminar. I can let you know the approximate number of hours in a volunteer year.
2. This is a VIMGA-wide project community outreach initiative even though it is held in the Nanaimo District; if 2 or 3 MGs and/or MGITs want to form a committee to steer the project, it would be much less work. It isn't a complex project, and I would make myself available to help if you need it for 2022.

Please contact me if you want to work on this project, even if you do not want to run the whole thing. I'll host an informational Zoom meeting for all interested parties. No obligation to sign on. Once you get the info and understand the scope of the work, you can decide. My e-mail is suncoastpearl@gmail.com.

Record of Hours Update

Filling Out Your Record of Volunteer Hours Form

One of our duties as Master Gardeners is to record the number of hours we spend providing advice, continuing our education, and helping with the administration of the Vancouver Island Master Gardeners Association.

The way we do that is by filling out the Record of Volunteer Hours form, found on the VIMGA members' website (<https://vimga.org/>). When you login to the website, you will see a menu on the right-hand side of the page. Click on "Forms" and the "[Update Your Record of Volunteer Hours](#)" link will be on the top of the menu that appears. Click on that to show the form and the hours that you have recorded there.

At the top of the form, you'll see a drop-down menu with current clinic year: 2021. If you want to view or change a previous year's form, choose the year you want to view from that menu. Below that is your name and below that you can see the minimum advice and education hours required for your membership status: "CMG", "MGi1", "MGi2", "Alumnus" or "Lifetime".

Then, the table: this table lists your VIMGA activities for the year and the number of hours spent on each activity.

The first column is the status: a checkmark indicates that this is an advice clinic and the Clinic Report Form has been completed for this clinic; an "x" indicates that this is an advice clinic for which no report has been filed; a dash "-"

means that this is an advice clinic which has not yet occurred; and a bullet (dot or small circle) indicates that this is not a clinic, but some other activity that you have entered onto the form.

The second column is a description of the activity. If this is an advice clinic, the description is filled for you by the system. The description for non-advice clinic activities is filled in by you.

The next two columns are for advice hours. The first of these, labeled "Clinic Advice Hours", indicates hours spent at an advice clinic and, like the description, is filled in for you. You cannot change this number. The second of these columns is labeled "Other Advice Hours" and this is where you record hours spent on non-clinic activities such as article writing, giving presentations or lectures and other advice activities.

Note that while you cannot change the number of hours shown for advice clinics, there are two methods of adjusting the hours you receive for that clinic. If, for instance, the clinic was scheduled to last for 1.5 hours, and that's what you were credited with on your form, but you realize that you had to leave half-an-hour earlier, you can ask the Clinic Co-ordinator for that clinic to adjust your time on the Clinic Report Form. Another adjustment is adding hours to the "Other Advice Hours" column; Clinic Co-ordinators, for instance, get an extra hour of advice credit for being the Clinic Coordinator would go on the same line as the clinic in "Other Advice



Hours" column.

The next two columns, columns five and six, are for Continuing Education hours, attending lectures, watching webinars, etc., and Administration hours such as attending committee or Board of Directors meetings, the business portions of the AGM or Spring Education Day, VIMGA event preparations, etc.

Finally, the bottom of the table are totals of all of the hours shown in each of the columns. Remember that your total advice hours is the sum of the "Clinic Advice Hours" column and the "Other Advice Hours" column.

The "Save" button at the very bottom the form will record all of your information into the database. You can re-open the form at any time to add new activities or edit existing entries. After you click "Save", you will be shown a summary page, echoing the information entered into the database, and you will receive an email showing you your current record.

As always, if you have any questions or concerns about the Record of Volunteer Hours form, or any other aspect of the VIMGA website, don't hesitate to contact me at ccsmith@cetsi.com.

- Submitted by Cameron Smith, VIMGA Webmaster

Certification Requirements (by Oct. 31, 2021)

Master Gardeners: 15 hours advice, 10 hours education

MGIT's—2019 cohort: 65 hours advice—over these two years,
20 hours education—10 in each year 2021 & 2022

Plant identification to be completed by Oct. 31, 2021



A. Garden Advice Party Clinic

In person session amongst VIMGA District members only, to mimic pre-COVID GAP.

- CMG Clinic Coordinator will prepare the questions to be asked of participants.
- Participants will receive advice time equal to the actual amount of time of the clinic, Clinic Coordinator will receive 1 extra hour for preparation
- All pandemic protocols must be followed

B. Virtual Advice Clinics

Virtual sessions created to mimic in-person clinics like those prior to COVID.

- Zoom session length will be **1.5 hours = 1.5 hours of advice clinic hours** for all participants
- Participants will be given their questions a minimum of 1 week ahead to allow them to do research. CC also encouraged to add one question during the clinic that was not given beforehand to mimic the experience of an in-person, community clinic
- **CC and MGITs** will be able to accrue up to 2 additional hours of advice for researching and preparing answers, up to **a max of 3.5 hours per VAC.**

- **CMGs** will be able to accrue up to 1 additional hour of advice for researching and preparing answers, up to **a max of 2.5 hours per VAC**

- MGITs may earn only 35 hours of their 65 hour requirement via Virtual Advice Clinics

C. Gardening Advice Line

The Milner Gardening Advice Line regular season season March 30 to October 31 is done via email.

- **One session = 3 advice hours per person.** Coordinator is Karen Bennett.
- The busy months of the regular season (May and June) will have 1 CMG and 2 MGITs for each session. For the rest of the regular season, each team will be 1 CMG and 1 MGIT.
- The winter months (November through March) will also now be covered by email. Two MGITs from a list of those who signed up will be given 1 question on which to confer and answer, the next question will go to the next 2 MGITs on the list, etc. **1 question = 1 advice hour/person.** All answers are reviewed by the Administrator, Dorothee Kieser, prior to being sent to the questioners.

D. Plant Picks/ Frequently Asked Questions

These are coordinated by Kay Howard. Current Plant Picks are full for this year, but the FAQs still need participants.

- **1 Plant Picks article = up to 2 advice hours**
- **1 FAQ and answer = up to 2 advice hours**

E. Demonstration Garden at Milner/Plant As with all of the in-person events, if these are a "go", they need to follow the pandemic protocols at Milner Gardens and Woodland and the Provincial Health guidelines.

- 1 hour = 1 hour advice, or
- 5 questions = 1 hour

F. Video Clips

- 20 - 60 second clip on a topic of your choice to be posted on the Milner Gardens web site. Coordinated by Dorothee Kieser

One clip = 1 advice hour

G. Video presentations

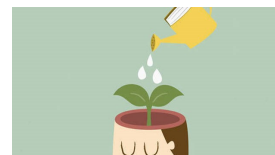
- Presentations on gardening topics to outside groups or through VIRL
- One hour presentation = 5 advice hours (1 for the presentation and 4 for preparation).



From your Continuing Education Committee.....

Looking for ways on how to get your hours of education? Well, look no further. Here are just some of the opportunities to connect with others and build on your gardening expertise.

CEC members: Jan Thorsen, Wendy Strachan, Mary Shakespeare, Chris Southwick, Jacqueline Sherk and Liz Cullins



What's New In Edible Gardening

Brian Minter, BC's own gardening guru, will introduce us to new varieties of easy-to-grow, edible plants. As a master gardener and nursery man, Brian has years of experience to share with all of us about how we can grow even more of our own food and go beyond runner beans and tomatoes. He will also explain which foods can be grown in containers and around your house when you don't have unlimited space!

Location: Live Zoom connection

Date: Saturday, March 20, 2021

Time: 7:00 PM PDT

Instructions for the ZOOM connection will be emailed prior to the event. Please log in early as space is limited.



Brian Minter, a University of British Columbia graduate (BA) and Master Gardener, quickly became BC's go-to garden expert through his experience at both the garden centre and the display gardens. He has hosted countless radio and television shows, is a frequent gardening columnist, and is the author of Canadian Best Seller, 'Brian Minter's New Gardening Guide – Fresh Approaches for Canadian Gardeners'.

March to May Library Garden Seminars

- March 27: Perennial Food Crops & Edible Ornamentals with Jo Canning
- April 17: Rhododendrons: the Northwest's Iconic Evergreen Shrub with Chris Southwick
- May 1: How to Grow Squash and Pumpkins with Laura McLeod

Library Sessions are posted on their website: <https://virl.bc.ca/calendar/>. Presentations begin at 1 pm.

Saturday March 27 and Sunday March 28: Vancouver Master Gardeners Spring Back 2021

Presenters for this two day event are: **Dr. Noel Kingsbury, Fergus Garrett, Jonathon Jones, Egan Davis, Dr. Linda-Chalker Scott, Andrea Bellamy, and Lorene Edwards Forkner.**

This year's theme is "resilience" and our speakers will offer advice on growing food in small spaces, the latest trends in natural floral landscapes, plants that triumph over extreme conditions, and plant-protecting tactics in a climate changing world. You will not want to miss it! For more info go to: <http://mgabc.org/node/2867>

Area Representative Updates:

In our **Nanaimo District**, our current membership list shows the following information:

- Master Gardeners in Training – 7
- Certified Master Gardeners – 28



Mike O'Neill

Not much has been going on socially with the current situation in BC.

I contacted the majority of our area members by telephone in February and had some good discussions. The majority agreed that MGIT's should be a strong focus in getting their clinic hours and it looks like we are doing that with more to come. Educational opportunities were plentiful with many sources of online offerings. They are appreciative of the work VIMGA is undertaking to help with alternative clinic opportunities online.

Members were reminded that if they are having any technical or communication difficulties help is only a phone call or email away.

Spring is in the air and lights are on at the end of the tunnel. Hooray for us all! Till next time.

- *Mike*

In Qualicum/Parksville District, District Planner Karen Bennett is busy organizing the Virtual Milner Garden Advice Line and also Virtual Advice Clinics, following Cowichan's lead. We will also be holding COVID Friendly Garden Advice Parties this summer.

PQN Area Virtual Clinics:



Ruth Beilman

Title: Virtual Advice Clinic (VAC) - Zoom

Description: Clinic hour credits for preparation and participation starting March 17. Contact: Karen Bennett, karenbennett51@gmail.com, (250) 951-3367

- *Ruth*

Cowichan District has virtual clinics are now underway with the third and fourth in the series having taken place on Tuesday, March 3rd. There is a morning session and an evening session, both addressing the same set of five questions, plus additional questions posed from the field if time allows. In addition to the 'Zoom' clinics, members have also spent additional time practicing use of the software, including how to set up a meeting, invite participants and share screens. In addition to providing our needed advice clinic hours (especially for those completing requirements for certification) the virtual meetings furnish participants with a chance to get to see and converse with each other. It is a welcome escape from pandemic boredom!



Jacqueline Sherk

Membership Chair, Martha-Jean Clarke, created a private Facebook page for all VIMGA members, with 24 members having joined to date. She is regularly updating the page with many interesting articles of interest to gardeners.

The February 6th presentation event featuring landscape architect and Gaia instructor, Ken Nentwig, which included slides showing geo-textile use in rain garden designs, was somewhat at odds with the information in Deb Jones' presentation last November. Consequently, a discussion on this topic with both Ken and Deb has been planned. Both presenters are interested to hear the other's approach, and Jan and Jacqueline, who will facilitate the (Zoom) meeting, I will update the group on any findings in the next newsletter.

New: Gwen has brought forward the idea of a plant info advice line such as we have with Milner Gardens, with Q&A's with the Ladysmith & Saltair Garden Club. Stay tuned.

- *Jacqueline*



Cathy Lund

In **North Island District**, we are excited to be rolling out volunteer events in the north region. We have four events set up and a couple more in the works. Thanks to all of our group who have provided input and contacts to this planning.

We will be running virtual advice clinics for internal members on Saturday mornings. Frequency and timing is to be confirmed in the next couple of days. Mark Fleming will be coordinating the schedules but each CMG will host and serve as the clinic coordinator.

We will also hold Garden Advice Party Clinics at each of our gardens. Those will be held on Sunday mornings and the dates will be confirmed by the hosts. Each host will act as the clinic coordinator.

We are coordinating with the Comox Valley Horticultural Society to reinstate our Master Gardener Advice clinics at the beginning of their monthly meetings on the first Mondays of April, May, June and September or October with an option for a short talk in the beginning. The Master Gardeners have had a table at the monthly meetings when they were physically held. This will be a virtual replacement with some modifications to get questions in advance.

A local organization, through some virtual presentations by Jane Kerr, have solicited interest in Garden Advice Party Clinics. They will be set up virtually and timing will be driven by the requests.

There are a couple of local garden society's that we are exploring virtual volunteer opportunity's with that may be geared towards lectures but these are in still under discussion.

We all hope that face to face events will be possible sooner than later to replace some of the virtual activities. All in all we are keen to get started.

- Cathy

And the Lucky Winners are

Thank you VIMGA Members for your participation in our Spring Education Day on March 10th. Special thanks to Chris Southwick and Mike O'Neill for their 'plant pick quiz' and Liz Cullen for sourcing out the nurseries for the \$25 door prizes. Lots of fun.

North Island—Winner, Debra Gurrad.

Outback Nurseries, 6016 Headquarters Rd., Courtenay

Parksville/Qualicum Beach – Winner, Karen Laity.

Lakeside Nursery, 1405 Greig Rd., Parksville

Nanaimo—Winner, Susan Malo

Wheelbarrow Nursery, 2280 South Rd., Gabriola

Cowichan—Winner, Sandra Kelly

Dinters Nursery, 2205 Phipps Rd. Duncan

