

Director's Message

Spring signals growth and beginnings. First comes the appearance of tentative green spears that poke through the dusty layer of leaves followed a few weeks later by riotous displays of blooming trees, shrubs and bulbs. Springtime graduations and Easter celebrations all hold the



WVNLA Executive
Director Julie Robinson

promise of renewal and change.

We're looking at some changes this spring at West Virginia Nursery & Landscape Association.

We plan to launch a redesigned and user-friendly website in a few months with features such as on-line registration and payment, social media integration and photos – lots of photos. We want to feature our members' successes and highlights. Next time you shoot a high resolution digital photo of a project you love, email it here for use on the website.

Of course, springtime heralds the beginning of sometimes frantic activity for most green industry businesses. As the days lengthen and settle into a productive seasonal routine, take a minute to check what continuing education credits your employees with pesticide applicators' licenses need. We'll be offering a workshop at the end of July in Huntington. The date's not set, yet, but we'll let you know soon.

As noted in the adjacent article, our Certified Professional

(Continued on page 2.)

CPH program and manual updates

Our Certified Professional Horticulture program is getting an update. Committee members are in the process of reviewing Maryland Nursery, Landscape and Greenhouse Association's recently revised manual, which we will adapt as a replacement for our current manual. After WVNLA board members John Jett and Bud Cottrill, Jason Testman of TerraCare, Eamon Barker of Flowerscape, Dr. Mira Danilovich, WVU Extension Service Consumer Horticulture Specialist, and Michael Arnold of West Virginia Department of Agriculture complete their reviews, looking specifically for information that is not applicable in West Virginia, we will implement the changes and make the manuals available at a fee of \$50 for WVNLA members and \$150 for non-members.

The committee members are also rewriting the exam questions to more accurately reflect the information in the updated manual.

Have you already prepared to take the exam, next offered in July, from the old manual? Not to worry. That exam will be the same version we've always given. After July, the exam will be based on the new version of the manual.

(Continued on page 2.)



Dicentra and Mertensia virginica mingle along a trail in Charleston.

CPH (continued from page 1.)

In addition to the certificate we've always issued to Certified Professional Horticulturists, we'll send wallet cards to everyone who has received that certification. It's an impressive list, broken down here by year certified:

1998

Brian Beckett, Patrick Biafore, John D. Chidester, Rick E. Cutlip, Richard Cutlip, Tracy Cutlip, Elaine Flaxer, Aaron Helmick, Benjamin A. Markell, Donna Myles, Daniel J. Noble, Rayburn Perry, Mark Springer, Bradley A. Teets, Chris Tatham, Barbara Wilcox.

1999

Chris Chanlett, Torula Chanlett, John Shane Holstein, Edward S. Mason, Eric Michael.

2000

Michael S. Book, Joyce McKenney, Brenda Runions, Kelly Russell, Betsey Sorrell, Roger Wood.

2001

Margaret R. Grose, Andrew Hilling, Rudy Horst, Chuck Kinsley, Chad Manko, Carol McCarthy, Alex Personius, Eddie R. Thompson.

2002

Larry Gouer, A. Janie Hatfield, G. Lynn Jennings, Jason Lingenfelter, Deborah Meadows, Larry L. Ohrn, Carrie Parker, Steve Ritter, Aubry Wilson.

2003

Bettie E. Dempsey.

2004

Lorie Bowen, Jason Lipot.

2006

Todd B. Anderson, Janie K. Carpenter, Bill Licliter, Seth Pratt.

2007

Matthew Davis.

2009

Christopher Hartsock.

2011

Michael Bombly, Michael Osborne, Donna Rumbaugh.

2012

Dean Myles.

2014

Michael Bartholomew, Michael Dick, Dee Fournier.

2015

Ruffner Woody.

Director (continued from page 1.)

Horticulturist manual and exam are undergoing a major renovation. We're adopting our neighbor Maryland's recently rewritten manual as our own. Although much of the horticultural information is unchanged, the new, full-color format is readable and full of critical information. It's a great resource and we're pleased to offer it to our members at a reduced cost.

Bill Mills of Terra Salis and Lynne Schwartz-Barker of Flowerscape are working with me to schedule the high quality speakers you've come to expect at the Jan. 22, 2016 Winter Symposium. We've moved back into downtown Charleston this year at the Sheraton at Four Points Hotel – with free parking!

For now, I'll wish you safe and productive spring seasons.

-- Julie Robinson, WVNLA Executive Director

How-to-plant guides available

Garden Center members: send your customers home with our How-To-Plant guide when they purchase a tree or shrub to increase the chances of the plant's survival. The front and back guide gives detailed instructions on how to plant both containerized and balled and burlapped plants.

Visit wvnla.org and scroll down to "For our Garden Center members" to click on a camera-ready version you can take to a copy center, print front and back, and cut into thirds for a hand-out that might result in fewer returns.

How to Plant Balled and Burlapped Trees

Dig a saucer-shaped hole as deep and 2 or 3 times as wide as the root ball. Do not disturb the soil at the bottom of the hole. **Set** the tree in the center of the hole. Handle the tree by its root ball, NEVER by the trunk. Root collar should be slightly above ground level.

Use wire cutters to cut vertically up the side of the wire basket (if used) and peel it away. Remove all rope, twine and burlap nails from the ball. **Cut and remove** remaining burlap. Regular burlap can remain under the root ball, but vinyl or treated burlap should be removed completely.



Pack the original soil around the root ball, keeping the tree remain straight. Make sure there are no air pockets. **Backfill** until the soil is just below the root collar. **Build** up a slight ridge around the outer edges of the hole to create a basin.

Water the tree well. After it soaks in, **spread** mulch over the filled hole, but **not touching** the trunk. Water the tree slowly at the dripline every 7 to 10 days during the first year.

Remove any tags and labels as they will affect growth. **Prune** any dead branches. **DO NOT fertilize** or use chemicals on newly planted trees.

How to Plant Containerized Trees

Dig a hole the same depth of the container with sloping sides that are three to four times the width of the container to allow for proper root growth.

Lay the tree on its side and carefully **slide** it from its container, keeping the soil around the roots intact. **Do not yank** the tree out by its trunk.

Is the plant root bound, i.e. do the roots circle the root ball? If so, use a sharp knife to **cut** an X across the bottom of the root ball and four vertical slices along the sides of the root ball.

Set the tree in the middle of the hole. The root collar (where the trunk flares at its base) should not sit below the soil line. **Add** soil underneath the roots if it does.

Hold the tree in a straight upright manner and fill and firm the removed soil back into the hole until the soil is just below the root collar. **Build** up a slight ridge around the outer edges of the hole to create a basin.

Water the tree well. **Spread** mulch over the filled hole, but not touching the trunk.

Water the tree every 7 to 10 days during the first year. Water slowly at the dripline.

Remove any tags and labels from the tree as they will affect growth. Prune any dead branches.

DO NOT fertilize or use chemicals on newly planted trees.

 West Virginia Nursery & Landscape Assoc.
wvnla.org 304-553-1234

Research/student successes thrive in WVU hort program

By Dr. Sven Verlinden

In what I hope will be annual installment and update, I would like to fill in the WVNLA members on the goings-on of the WVU horticulture program. First, my colleagues and I would like to thank the WVNLA for its continuing support of faculty, students and programs at WVU. Without your support, students would not get much deserved academic recognition, or have the opportunity to travel to landscaping competitions, or to participate in international travel and study.

In addition, faculty would not be able to carry out applied research with direct practical impact for the landscaping and nursery industry (*see article on page 4*) or provide students with excellent out-of-class experiences such as WVNLA Winter Symposium and MANTS.

The horticulture program at WVU currently includes 32 students and three faculty members: Dr. Sven Verlinden, Dr. Nicole Waterland, and Dr. Dave Davis. We teach three to four horticulture classes a semester and have seven to eight students participate in internships every year. Students get basic science instruction with many opportunities for hands-on experience in labs and independent studies.

Our students are employed by landscaping companies (Brickman/Valleycrest, John Mini, Ruppert, and many smaller outfits), public gardens (Monticello, Central Park in New York), nurseries (Corso Perennials), greenhouses (Green Circle Growers), or are self-employed (Tyler Reel, Dave Mitchell, John Wagers). Almost every year we have one or two students who continue their education in Master of Science and Ph.D. programs and get employment as county extension agents (Evan

Anderson) and extension specialists (Natalie Bumgarner).

This sampling of our graduates provides some idea of where our students wind up.

This spring Dave Davis and I traveled with a group of 21 students to the campus of North Carolina State University in Raleigh to compete in the annual PLANET landscaping competition. We did better than ever before and finished 17th out of 64 schools, an improvement of five places over last year (22nd in 2014). See box at left for individual results.



WVU horticulture students (foreground) Orin Jackson, Jake Kelly and Whitney Dudding install their design at PLANET competition

Thank you for your continued support, WVNLA!

Speaking of support, members of the WVU Horticulture Club last year raised \$12,000 through a Valentine's Day fundraiser, spring flower sales, and graduation flower sales. However, a single PLANET competition can cost \$10,000 to \$18,000 (when we need to fly) and we continue to depend on sponsorship not only for PLANET but other trips we organize (Western Europe Study Trip, Monticello, Biltmore, US Botanic Garden, US Arboretum, Phipps Conservatory, etc.). WVNLA has been an invaluable supporter and we hope to count on that support in the foreseeable future. Our students look forward to presenting on their experiences at the 2016 Winter Symposium.

WVNLA member and WVU Horticulture professor Dr. Sven Verlinden will be a regular contributor to WVNLA's newsletter, updating members on research, initiatives and programs at Davis College of Agriculture, Natural Resources and Design.

WVU students place at PLANET

- **Irrigation Design** – 5th place, Silas Childs (recipient of the 2014 WVNLA scholarship – horticulture)
- **Turf & Weed ID** – 5th place, Matt Pefferman (agroecology)
- **Computer Aided Design** – 8th place, Clint McHenry (landscape architecture)
- **Plant Problem Diagnosis** – 12th place, Matt Pefferman (agroecology)
- **Interior Landscape Design** – 12th place, Nicky Kovach (landscape architecture)
- **Exterior Landscape Design** – 12th place, Bryan Simmons (landscape architecture)

Biodegradable pots: the good, the bad and the ugly

By Dr. Sven Verlinden

West Virginia University recently helped finish a large multi-institution, multi-state study on the usefulness and effectiveness of biodegradable containers as alternatives to plastic pots in the greenhouse, nursery and landscape industry. The research, which spanned four years, culminated in numerous peer-reviewed and technical publications including a recent article in *Nursery Management* called "Pick Your Pot." This article does a great job of highlighting our most important findings and I would encourage you to go online and read up on the project at www.nurserymag.com/nm0315-container-alternatives-options.aspx.

As part of that study, the WVU research focused on the production of annuals in small 4-inch alternative containers (compostable and/or plantable) and their performance in the landscape. The most important conclusion of our work is that all biodegradable containers (4-inch compostable and/or plantable pots) can grow a quality plant in the greenhouse. The crucial differences between the pots are their price, ability to hold up during production and handling, propensity to support algal growth, degradation in the landscape, and their ability to be de-nested and placed in shuttle trays.

Figure 2 shows that most serious problems or potentially serious problems can be found in pot strength and percent degradation in the landscape. Manure, wood fiber, and peat pots are flimsy when wet and are difficult to handle if not placed in shuttle trays. They may be difficult to handle in landscaping operations. Wood fiber and peat pots are more likely to develop algal growth on their surface, causing a possible detraction to customers.

Peat pots are also difficult to dislodge from stacks of pots and require significantly more time to place in shuttle trays when compared to other pots. This was also an issue to a lesser degree in coir, manure, wood fiber, and rice straw pots. Some plantable pots (coir, wood fiber, slotted rice, and conventional plastic pots) did not degrade significantly after four months in soil. This may be an issue not only for esthetic purposes (debris on soil surface) but may also make further landscape operations such as tilling more difficult.

Figure 2

Container	Quality Rating	Plant growth	EC	pH	Watering Frequency	Algal Growth	Pot Strength	Percent Degradation	De-nesting	Notes
Coir	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	
Manure	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	
Wood Fiber	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	
Peat	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	
Slot. Rice	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	
Solid Rice	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	
PLA	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	
PHA	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	
Straw	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	
Plastic	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	

● No problems ● Potential Problems ● Caution



Front row (left to right): Slotted Rice Hull, Solid Rice Hull, Plastic (conventional), SoilWrap (PHA plastic)
Back row: Peat, Rice Straw, Coconut fiber/Coir, Composted Manure.

Based on our research and experience we thought that the biosleeve (soil wrap) performed very well. This pot has to be used in shuttle trays as it is bottomless, but holds up well during greenhouse production while degrading fairly quickly in the landscape. Other pots that performed well are the PLA biodegradable plastic pot and the solid rice hull. These pots are not plantable and have to be removed to be composted, adding an additional step to landscaping operations. Not surprisingly, pots that performed well in greenhouse settings also showed problems in degradability in the landscape. However, this may not be a problem for plants that will stay in place for prolonged periods such as perennials, small shrubs, and some herbs.

Ultimately, the decision to implement and use alternative containers will be based on consumer preference and their willingness to pay for a greener approach and on whether greenhouse and nursery operators will overlook some drawbacks such as structural weakness. In addition, type of crop and length of production will also have to be taken into account.

Dr. Sven Verlinden is a Horticulture professor at West Virginia University.

HRI pledges support for Bee & Pollinator Stewardship

The Horticultural Research Institute, the research affiliate of AmericanHort, recently announced it will grant \$125,000 in special financial support for four key projects as part of the Horticultural Industry Bee & Pollinator Stewardship Initiative.

In 2014, the Horticultural Research Institute established this initiative with three primary goals:

- convene a task force to develop a bee and pollinator stewardship program, including creation of best management practices for plant production;
- identify and fund research that will help answer key science questions and fill gaps needed to design and refine the stewardship program;
- positively position the horticultural community and its customers by collaborating with other compatible groups interested in augmenting pollinator habitat and protection.

“The Pollinator Stewardship Initiative is of critical importance in developing a singular, comprehensive response to concerns about our industry’s impact on pollinator health,” said John Coulter, president, Horticultural Research Institute. “The Initiative’s focus on research is a key component in establishing clearer understanding of horticulture’s impact on pollinators.”

Michael Geary, president & CEO, AmericanHort agrees. “The research selected for funding represents work that can best refine the horticultural community’s pollinator practices and advance the industry as beneficial partners in pollinator stewardship efforts.”

AmericanHort and allies advocate for urban and wild forest protection

AmericanHort and allies ranging from the Nature Conservancy to the American Public Gardens Association joined to support key federal appropriations in support of programs that protect urban and wild forests from introduced pests. In separate letters sent to the U.S. House of Representatives and U.S. Senate, the ad hoc Coalition Against Forest Pests weighed in on federal contributions to the eradication or containment of devastating introduced pests like the Asian longhorned beetle, which threatens tree species in 15 botanical families worth an estimated \$600 billion.

Scholarship opportunities for horticulture and LA students

Know any bright horticulture or landscape architecture students? Make sure they know about industry scholarships, including WVNLA’s **Marcus W. Rennix Memorial Scholarship** with an annual award of \$5,000 to be awarded to one or divided among several applicants. Applicants must be West Virginia natives in at least their junior year as horticulture or landscape architecture students. Deadline for application is Dec. 1. Find details at wvnla.org.

Southern Nursery Association reminds senior or graduate level horticulture students who are residents of one of the 16 southeastern states (including West Virginia) to apply for **The Sidney B. Meadows Scholarship**. Visit sbmsef.org for details of this scholarship which will award 12 applicants \$1,500 this year. Deadline for application is May 29.

CPH exam and Summer Pesticide Applicators Recertification Workshop date to be announced

We regret that as of press time, we did not have a date and location firmly set for our summer Pesticide Applicators Recertification Workshop. It is likely to be held during the last week of July in Huntington. We will notify members as soon as possible. Additionally, the West Virginia Department of Agriculture will send out registration forms to all pesticide applicator license holders.

Of historic note

At a recent meeting, members of WVNLA's board of directors decided to convert the many boxes of records that chronicle WVNLA's history since its 1939 inception into digital format. As we sift through the records, we'll publish a few nuggets in each newsletter.

The Association's second annual meeting, held in 1940, was in Morgantown. The members attending paid 50 cents each to cover the cost of a picnic lunch at Cooper's Rock State Park.

The following year, the summer meeting was held at Oglebay Park in Wheeling, where 36 members received membership cards, the first time this formal step was taken. Members attending paid \$1.50 for their share of a cabin rental.

Member Spotlight:

Women-owned businesses thrive

(Three WVNLA members, Lisa McDavid, Betsy Raynes and Meg Reishman, were recently featured in an article "Woman in Landscaping" in the Charleston Sunday Gazette-Mail. Excerpts of the article are printed below, with permission.)

Lisa McDavid of Lisa's Gardenscapes

Lisa McDavid launched Lisa's Gardenscapes six years ago in Cross Lanes, where she still conducts her landscaping operations from her home there.

"I am not interested in 'minding' a store and having retail overhead to zap my income," she explained. "Basically, I am a 24/7 garden designer.



Lisa McDavid

This stuff is all a part of my dreams and daily goings and comings. I am constantly seeking inspiration for new concepts for design and installation through professional organization memberships, reading materials and listening to those who have experience in areas where I am lacking."

Lisa's Gardenscapes provides commercial and residential garden and landscape design, installation and maintenance, along with consulting for homeowners who "want go the DIY route but don't know where to get started or how to prioritize the tasks ahead of them," she said.

McDavid said 80 percent of her landscaping projects are done in Kanawha County, with the rest primarily for clients in adjoining Putnam.

"As a female landscaper and garden designer," she said, "I face the challenge of working within a male-dominated industry. It's funny to me what happens when I am engaged in business with nurserymen, arborists, concrete masons and the

like -- that upon introduction of myself to them and extension of my hand for a handshake, 75 percent of the time I will get one of those weak 'fingertip/ touching'- type handshakes instead of a full hand grip and a direct, look-in-the-eye, 'nice to meet you, too' kind of greeting."

"I guess the biggest challenge is to be taken as a serious businessperson, since I don't have a retail location. What I do simply doesn't require one, and I would rather use that money to visit my daughter in Fiji or make improvements to real estate or to buy a motorcycle."

Betsy Raynes of Riverside Sod Farm

With a sea of green grass shimmering in the distance behind her, Betsy Raynes hopped off a tractor and held a square carpet of fresh sod in her hands.

Two days before the arrival of spring, and Raynes is preparing for another crop of grass that she raises on her 80-acre Riverside Sod Farm in Winfield.

As a wholesaler, Riverside Sod Farm produces sod for landscaping companies, as well as retail customers. "We provide mature lawns to people who need it. We're not an installer or a landscape provider," Raynes said.

In addition to providing excellent erosion control, a mature lawn from Riverside Sod Farm is the answer for those who have struggled over the years to grow decent lawns.

"It's instant beautification for your yard; it's a ready-made lawn," she said.

Citing research, Raynes said it's actually less



Betsy Raynes

in West Virginia's green industries

expensive to have a mature lawn planted rather than trying to grow one from seed. "It's cheaper to go with sod up front than it is to go through years of weed control, fertilizer and the work and effort that goes into establishing that yard."

In addition to producing sod, Riverside Sod Farm also provides "hydro-seeding" services.

"We have a big water tank truck that includes lime, fertilizer, mulch and seed that allows us to seed acres at a time. We have specialized mixes for erosion control," Raynes said.

Raynes purchased Riverside Sod Farm last June from its founders, Charlie Price and Becky Morris. They founded Riverside Sod about 15 years ago.

Riverside Sod Farm raises Turf Type Tall Fescue and Kentucky Bluegrass. Tall Fescue "tends to be low maintenance," whereas with Kentucky Bluegrass, "we recommend a permanent irrigation system to maintain it," she said.

To prepare herself for her new undertaking, Raynes completed turf classes at Virginia Tech, and she also relies on advice from Price, who earned the second Landscape Architect license in the state.

Coming to work every day at Riverside Sod Farm is a joy for Raynes. "In the summer, we get here before sunrise, and it's just beautiful in the mornings."

Meg Reishman of Bella Gardens

As a teen, Meg Reishman loved working outdoors. Mowing and raking lawns at the age of 12 helped cultivate a career that led to Bella Gardens, a one-woman gardening and landscaping business that she owns in Charleston.

"I've just always loved working outside and working with plants," Reishman explained.

When she turned 18, she moved out West, where she was groomed through a variety of projects.

"I worked in a lot of different orchards and small organic farms in central Washington and southern Oregon," Meg explained. "It wasn't until I moved to the Seattle area in 2002 when I started working as a landscaper for this woman who owned her own business. She did design, install and maintenance. I worked with her for five years and learned the way she did things. I just fell in love with it."

In 2012, she moved back to West Virginia and worked at Valley Gardens along with the Kanawha



Meg Reishman

Institute for Social Research & Action's urban farm. She started Bella Gardens in August of 2014, where she works with both landscaping and agriculture and gets to work closely with people she enjoys.

"A lot of my clients are amazing gardeners and they just like some help in their yard," Reishman said. "They want somebody who knows what the plants are and how to prune. I actually end up working side by side with a lot with my clients."

Last year, she started work in the pilot program for the Sustainable Agricultural Entrepreneurs (or SAGE) garden on Charleston's West Side, where they grow orchards bearing fruits such as apples, peaches and pears along with vegetables. They sell the produce to area restaurants, the Farm to Childcare program and to the Hudson Farm Community Supported Agriculture. She currently serves as farm manager.

Reishman has also worked with implementing the garden at Thomas Memorial Garden in South Charleston and plans to help start a community high tunnel for year-round gardening and initiating a children's discovery garden.

"I don't know what I hope it grows into," she said of Bella Gardens. "I love plants and I really love other people who also love plants. It's nice to meet them, to collaborate, to talk plants and to dream about ways to make things beautiful and better and creative."

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WVNLA NEWS

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Dates to Note

May 19-22	American Boxwood Society Symposium, Longwood Gardens, PA.
June 18-20	American Hosta Society Convention, Raleigh, NC. www.americanhostasociety.org .
July 11-14	Cultivate'15 AmericanHort, Columbus, OH. www.cultivate15.org .
July 17	Woody Plant Conference, Swarthmore, PA. www.woodyplantconference.org .
July 21-23	SNA 2015, Atlanta GA. www.sna.org .
July TBA	WVNLA Pesticide Applicators Recertification Workshop/CPH exam, Huntington, WV.
July 27-Aug. 1	Perennial Plant Symposium, Baltimore, MD. www.perennialplant.org .
July 29-30	PANTS15, Philadelphia, PA. www.pantshow.com .
Oct. 16	Perennial Plant Conference, Swarthmore, PA. www.perennialplantconference.org .
Nov. 13	Chesapeake Conservation Landscaping Council Conference, Towson, MD. www.chesapeakelandscaping.org .
Jan. 6-8	MANTS, Baltimore, MD. www.mants.com .
Jan. 22	WVNLA Winter Symposium, Charleston, WV. www.wvnla.org .

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