

President's message

Spring greetings to all!

As we are deep into another busy season, I bet that you are reading this on a slow rainy day.

There have been many shifts in the industry over the past few years and I think we are all starting to feel the pinch of availability and inventory. Post-recession, there are fewer nurseries and many others offer reduced production and numbers as an effect of cuts to make



WVNLA President
Norman Cole

it through the lean years. Green goods are (generally) not produced and turned over quickly so it appears we will be feeling this shortage of plants for a few years.

This creates opportunity and challenges on every level and is another sign of how we as an industry must always adapt and overcome to survive and prosper.

Just as the industry has changed, so has the WVNLA. We are trying to reach out to all the members with regional employee training and regional landscape tours in order to achieve the maximum amount of education and serve the maximum amount of members.

The WVNLA has also invested in the future by upgrading the Certified Professional Horticulturist training.

It is my pleasure to serve as the President in these exciting and changing times for our industry and our organization. If you have any ideas or suggestions, please drop an email to Julie or myself so we can better represent our state.

Best regards,
Norm

Speak now on West Virginia's pollinator preservation practices

By Michael Arnold

President Obama issued a Presidential Memorandum in 2014 for the purpose of improving the condition of native and managed pollinator species in the United States. This document called for a plan from multiple federal agencies to act by way of regulations and policy with the goal of improving pollinator habitat and reducing pesticide exposure. The Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) is the primary federal agency dealing with pesticide issues and is largely responsible for pesticide regulations/labeling in the US.

Following the lead of the president, the EPA has altered labeling on certain pesticides that have been found to be particularly damaging to pollinators. Some of the pesticides are commonly used, and the labeled usage will be restricted if it hasn't been already. The EPA is currently working with state Departments of Agriculture within the US to develop State Managed Pollinator Protection Plans (MP3s) to address methods of reducing the adverse effects of pesticides on all pollinator species. These plans are a form of 'Best Management Practices' designed to offer points of view from pesticide users and beekeepers. Suggestions to minimize exposure is offered as well.

The members of the WVNLA will be affected by the recent changes and the MP3 since most members use pesticides at one time or another. As growers we all know the importance of pollinators from multiple points of view. Any improvements we can make for the sake of pollinators will benefit the industry as a whole. Failure to do so will be short-sighted.

The West Virginia Department of Agriculture has completed its draft MP3. You should have received an email from WVNLA

containing the draft for your review earlier this spring. An additional email will be sent to coincide with the publication of this newsletter. If you did not receive a copy, please contact WVNLA's director Julie Robinson at 304-553-1234 or wvnlassoc@gmail.com.

Send comments/suggestions about the plan to Julie, who will compile them and submit to me as a group. The WVDA will change the draft MP3 as needed and the document will become final. **Now is your time to have a voice.**

Michael Arnold is Plant Regulatory Programs Coordinator -- Plant Industries Division for WVDA. He can be reached at 304-558-2212 or marnold@wvda.us.



Member spotlight

The grass is always greener at Riverside Sod

At first blush, people and sod don't have a whole lot in common. Riverside Sod owner Betsy Raynes sees it a little differently. Two years ago, she switched from a career in nursing to one in growing grass.

"The science behind it all just makes sense to me. You have to watch things like nutrition and pH whether you're growing grass or caring for people," she said. Of course, the transition was a little more complicated than that. Betsy took turf classes at Virginia Tech, studied for and secured her pesticide license and relied heavily on Riverside Sod's former

owners Charlie Price and Becky Morris.

Charlie and Becky are family friends of the Raynes, who watched the business grow from the time the duo started in Mason County 15 years ago. When Charlie and Becky asked the Raynes if they were interested in buying the business, Betsy's



Betsy shows the edge of a harvested section of sod. The sod is cut in rows, and then rolled.

husband Josh was too busy with his work with Raynes & Sons Excavation. He encouraged Betsy to take on the challenge. "I had been wanting to be outside – to do something different. I just leapt at the chance," she said.

Despite her enthusiasm, she was wise enough to have trepidation at the thought of taking on debt. She did it anyway, and the business is solely hers. She, three full-time and several part-time employees run the 80-acre sod farm, located along the Kanawha River adjacent to AEP's John Amos power plant in Putnam County. Currently, she has about 50 acres in sod. She's seeded an additional four acres since she purchased the business and plans to add more. The market appears to warrant the production of additional sod.

"We've sold out of sod both years. Last year we harvested the sod in the backyard. I hated to do that

because I knew I'd be looking out the office window at bare earth for six months, but it got us through to the spring crop," she said.

They harvest sod year round, depending on the weather. This year January and February were too wet to harvest, creating a cash flow issue. So far, the spring weather hasn't hindered the harvest.

The sod mix is 90 percent turf type tall fescue and 10 percent Kentucky bluegrass. The bluegrass has a spreading habit that fills in any gaps and creates a lush lawn. Riverside Sod also offers hydroseeding. They still use the seed mix that Charlie developed for hydroseeding mine reclamation sites.

The customers are mostly landscapers and some homeowners in the tri-state area. Riverside is about an equidistance of 30 minutes from both Huntington and Charleston, where many of her customers are located. Betsy offers a volume discount for purchases of more than three pallets. The nearest sod producer is in Columbus, Ohio, and her prices are about the same as that company's prices.

Betsy finds the weather, irrigation and cash flow to be her greatest challenges. Riverside Sod holds a permit from Army Corps of Engineers to irrigate out of the river, but her system doesn't



Riverside Sod's property runs to the river's edge. This lush expanse of sod awaits harvest. The acres in the background have been harvested.

cover all 50 acres. The operation isn't large enough to justify investment in a reel irrigation system.

She hopes her business continues to grow, not only for business reasons, but also because the sale

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WVNLA announces slate of upcoming events

Mark your calendar now for WVNLA's **Winter Symposium** on **Jan. 27** in Charleston. We are bringing an exciting group of nationally known speakers to speak on design and business topics. By popular request, several big names who joined us in January, but alas had few in attendance due to winter storm-induced cancellations, are returning. Designers, horticulturists and authors such as Andrew Bell of the Chicago Botanical Garden, Allan Summers of Robinson, Anderson, Summers and plantsman Jenks Farmer bring their insights to our design session.

On the business side, Jody Shilan of FromDesign2Build will share keys to success in landscape design/build industry. Other topics in this session include specialty pruning, asset and lawsuit protection and social media as a marketing tool.

The Winter Symposium will again be held in the Sheraton Four Points in downtown Charleston with plenty of free parking available. More details to come, but do plan to take advantage of the opportunity to hear and interact with such great speakers during their West Virginia appearances.

WVNLA will partner with the West Virginia Department of Agriculture and West Virginia University Extension to offer a **Pesticide Applicators Recertification Workshop** on **July 14** at the Waterfront Hotel in Morgantown. As always, WVNLA members attend free. Non-members pay \$50 to attend.

Registration information will be mailed to WVNLA members and licensed pesticide applicators

in June, or attendees may soon register online at wvnla.org.

The **Certified Professional Horticulturist** exam will be given in Morgantown at the conclusion of Pesticide Applicator's Recertification Workshop on **July 14**. Call 304-553-1234 or email wvnlassoc@gmail.com to register to take the exam.

The **2016 Designers Showcase Garden Tour** will be in **Morgantown** on **Sept. 17**. The event will feature behind-the-scenes tours of properties designed and installed by WVNLA members and will conclude with a tour and reception at the West Virginia Botanic Garden. Watch for your invitation to arrive later this summer. The tour is open to WVNLA members and guests only.



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of sod reflects an increase in building and investing in the area. New construction is an ideal match for sod because it is actually more cost-effective in the long run than seeding, according to many studies, she said.

Betsy credits her employees, all of whom she hired, with much of Riverside's success. They learned the business together. She likes the flexibility of owning her own business. She and her husband Josh have two children and reside in Eleanor. Their daughter Tallie is 5 and son Zeb is 3. "Zeb loves it here. He'd come to work with me everyday if he could."

Betsy Raynes can be reached at Riverside Sod at 304-755-0581 or riversidesod@citynet.net. Visit www.riversidesod.com.

SNA debuts SEGGreen Conference

Southern Nursery Association, of which WVNLA is a member state, presents **SEGGreen** on **Aug. 30 - Sept. 1** at The Classic Center in Athens, GA. Activities open with a Green Tour on Aug. 30. The Marketplace is open Aug. 31 - Sept. 1 and runs simultaneously with the Plant Conference and Landscape Conference. The 61st annual SNA Research Conference will be held Aug. 30-31.

For event details, visit www.sna.org.

WVU students top their previous finishes at national competition

By Dr. Dave Davis

In mid-March, 17 WVU students from the Davis College of Agriculture, Natural Resources & Design competed in the annual National Collegiate



The hardscape competition challenged students to construct a design in an efficient and safe manner.

Landscape Competition at Mississippi State in Starkville, MS. The students placed 14th out of the 63 school's participating. The score marks WVU's best finish ever and continues the steady progress WVU students have made in the competition over the years.

The competition, considered to be the largest of its kind in the nation, featured 28 events including:



Students work out the schematics of an irrigation system at the competition.

arboriculture, several plant identifications, irrigation assembly, wood construction, hardscape installation, several machinery operations, four landscape designs, plant problem diagnosis, truck and trailer and maintenance cost estimating. Besides the competition, students participated in workshops and a green industry career fair with approximately 75 companies represented. WVU faculty members Dr. Dave Davis and Dr. Sven Verlinden accompanied the students.

Individual WVU highlights include:

Zack Grossl, 5th place in 3D Exterior Design.

Jeremy Moore and Elliott Speer, 6th place in Landscape Maintenance Operations.



Safety counted in the Arboriculture Techniques competition. Photos provided by Dave Davis.

Orin Jackson and Jason Abshire, 9th place in Truck & Trailer.

Jordon Masters, 13th place in Sales Presentation.

Dustin Trychta and Rachel Dapper, 13th place in Wood Construction.

Robert Eckenrode and Alyssa Marvel, 14th place in Arboriculture Techniques.

The students raise money throughout the year to cover the costs of the competition. WVNLA provided additional funding. The 2017 competition takes place at Brigham Young University, Provo, ID, on March 15-18.

Dr. Dave Davis is an assistant professor of horticulture at WVU's Davis College of Agriculture, Natural Resources & Design.

WVBG's new director works to expand facilities and activities

By Bill Mills

Greetings Members.

It is a both an honor and a pleasure be writing you as the Executive Director of The West Virginia Botanic Garden. I greatly appreciate your support of the Garden and of my position here. The Garden would not be where it stands today without this support.

There are many exciting things happening here at the Garden, especially the anticipated opening of the Welcome Center located in its heart, and overlooking the basin. The building is incredibly handsome, with an expansive deck and stunning views. Some of the wood floors will be milled from trees that have fallen on our property. Administrative offices, a reception area, public restrooms and a classroom that opens up onto a terrace are all housed in this structure. Sections of the building have been donated by West Virginia University. It had been part of a Solar Decathlon competition. Solar collectors mounted on the roof will help offset the cost of our electricity.

This building gives the Garden heart and soul. Education programming, tours, fundraisers and rental of the space will greatly



The newly constructed Welcome Center will be the site of many new activities and events.

expand the scope of our mission. Find a listing of our classes and activities on our website: www.wvbg.org.

We are in the midst of work on a renovated master plan for the core areas of the Garden. This includes the entrance, central garden areas, and the basin of the old reservoir. We hope to go public with the final design this fall, allowing us to pursue donors and those who are interested in naming opportunities.

I would encourage each of you to join the



A sunset over the botanical garden's basin marks the end of the day.

Garden. An individual membership starts as low as \$25 and will keep you connected with what is happening at this West Virginia gem. Growing our membership is key to our survival and to making the WVBG known statewide. Find membership information on WVBG's website.

My position has me living in Morgantown for part of each week. I walk out my door, and I am at the Garden. Close by is the Decker's Creek rail trail that runs for miles into Preston County, close to Modern Homestead at Tatum's (www.mymodernhomestead.com). They are great supporters of the Garden.

Historic Arthurdale, Eleanor Roosevelt's little village, is just down the road from there. Find information at arthurdaleheritage.org.

If any of you find yourself in the Morgantown area, I would be glad to give you a tour of the Garden. Remember that Frank Lloyd Wright's Falling Water (www.fallingwater.org) and Kentuck Knob (kentuckknob.com) are just an hour from here.

Wishing you all happy and healthy gardening.

Bill Mills has served as president of WVNLA during his many years of membership.

Follow these planting guidelines to give trees a great start

Bella Gardens owner Meg Reishman says she sees many poorly planted trees on her jobs sites in the Charleston area. Although the trees may have been planted by homeowners, we thought it wouldn't hurt to remind WVNLA members of some basic rules for planting trees. These guidelines were written by Cass Turnbull of Plant Amnesty and reprinted with permission.

A tree that lives 200 years in the forest has an average urban life span of only 20 years.

You can prevent many of the most common causes of premature urban tree mortality by thoughtfully selecting and properly planting your tree. Turnbull's article also contained valuable information on tree and site selection, but we've excerpted only the planting guidelines.

Dig a hole.

The hole should be no deeper than the rootball, to avoid settling later. Loosen surrounding soil by digging or turning it over as far outward as practical from the planting hole. Each inch increases chances of survival in unfriendly soils. Dig the hole, at the very least, beyond the area necessary to spread out roots. Add nothing to the backfill soil (it is not necessary to add peat moss or other amendments to the planting hole). Sides of a clay hole should be roughened, not left glazed by the shovel.

Unpot your tree.

Remove pot (including peat pots) and as much burlap, wire basket, or bag as possible without destroying the rootball. This may require knives, pruners, wire cutters, tin snips, etc. Slicing roots free of pot sides with a knife may be necessary. When absolutely necessary to prevent damaging the rootball, untreated burlap can be folded down and left in the bottom of the hole. Seconds count with exposed roots. Never let the rootball (or roots, if bare root) dry out or allow the rootball to break, thus exposing or damaging roots.

Check the planting depth.

Before setting the tree, make sure it will not be planted too deep. The root flare (also called the collar or crown) should be at soil level or a little above to allow for mulch. Usually, this flare is the same as the soil line from the nursery, but not always (sometimes they get buried during the last potting up). Check to see where the roots diverge from the trunk. That's the proper soil level. Trees planted too deep can die within a few years or develop problems as many as fifteen years later. Use a stick or shovel handle to measure the rootball. Then, use the stick to gauge the depth of the hole.

Set the rootball.

Now, spread out, score, tease out, or cut off all circling, girdling and damaged roots. Root tips

should make good, straight contact with new soil, almost immediately. Lower your tree into the hole. Never leave anything tied around the tree's trunk.

Plant it.

Plant your tree using the unamended soil as backfill. All roots should be covered with soil. Use your feet and shovel handle to tamp out air pockets that can dry out roots. Take care not to crush the roots on bare root trees.

Soak it.

Use water for final settling of the soil. If additional settling occurs,

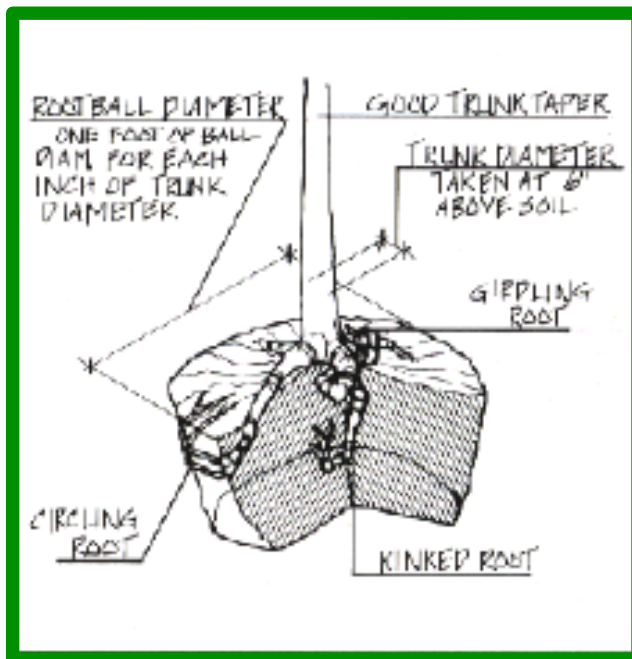
add more soil but do not further tread on wet soil. When soil is dry, watering a tree as soon as possible after planting is the most critical factor to survival.

Dam it.

Build a circular dam or basin with loose soil around the tree to aid watering. Trees need deep watering to establish good root systems. Water trees A LOT the first year or two, and always during a drought. Let the root zone dry out between waterings. Five to fifteen gallons a week is average, depending upon site conditions and tree size.

Mulch it.

Mulch is any material (compost, bark, wood



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Question of critter control has no easy answer

Spring has sprung—with a vengeance in some parts of the country; quite gently in others. No matter the geography, spring is prime season for critters to emerge from winter's hideaways and for adorable new little critters to spring forth, each with a thirst for knowledge of their surroundings and a hunger for, well, their surroundings. Tender shoots and juvenile leaves offer some of the tastiest treats for all manner of plant pests—some of the fuzzy mammalian persuasion, and some just plain slimy.

No matter how cute (or how bizarre), these crunching, munching garden raiders need a bit of discipline if your clients' plants are to be spared. Your customers, however, are not likely to endorse the types of controls waged on the scallier, creepy-crawler types of predators, and probably will request more humane methods of protecting their gardens. State and local laws may support them in their demands that critters be shooed away, but remain unharmed in the process. So before you get out the bow and arrow, check local covenants and ordinances.

The poor vole. It's adorable, but it wreaks havoc on garden plants, including veggies and herbaceous ornaments. Most especially, though, it damages turf. And it's not often considered a protected species, so lethal control is acceptable in many areas. (Still, be sure to check with local authorities before you wage war.)

Industrious little critters, voles are active both day and night, digging a network of short, shallow burrows and creating underground nests of grasses, stems and leaves. These burrows often can be seen in lawns; the clearest sign of a vole infestation is a maze of well-traveled, aboveground runways that connect burrow openings.

Management is best achieved early, before the population grows—given favorable conditions, voles tend to be prolific breeders, and spring is the favored season for adding to the family. Monitoring is essential, and habitat modification can be an effective deterrent. Weeds, heavy mulch and dense plantings tend to encourage them, so removing this protection will likely result in a population decline. Regular mowing to create buffer zone adjacent to ornamental beds also can deter them from entering the garden.

As with rabbits, voles are repelled by low fences; if this can be incorporated into an ornamental planting without compromising the aesthetics, it's a good start. Mesh must be no larger

than ¼ inch, however, in order to be effective.

If damage occurs over a large area, toxic baits may be the best solution.



Reprinted from American Nurseryman

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chips, shredded leaves, etc.) used as a cover over the soil. In nature, trees mulch themselves every fall. By keeping weeds away, retaining water, and moderating the soil temperature, mulch improves the chances of survival for your tree. Apply two to four inches of mulch as needed, but never let it pile up against the trunk. After mulching the planting pit, brush back the mulch that is in contact with the trunk.

Stake it?

Trees grown up to rely on stakes have weaker trunks and roots than free standing trees. It is the trunk's slight movement that causes trees to grow sturdy. So, use staking only as needed to hold the tree up until the roots have become established (usually one year). Skip the stakes if they are not necessary. The most important thing is to remove the stakes and ties as soon as possible. Trees are frequently girdled by ties that people forgot to take off.

If staking is needed:

One or two 2x2 wood stakes, driven firmly into undisturbed soil. Tie at one point about one third up the tree to allow for maximum trunk movement. Soft, flat tie material against the trunk is preferred (inner tube, flat soaker garden hose, commercial products). Never use straight twine, electrical, or other types of wire against trunks. Avoid using pipe or rebar for stakes. Once set, they are difficult to pull out when the time comes to remove them.

WVNLA NEWS

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Dates to Note

June 14-15	National Lawn & Garden Show, Bloomington, IL. www.nlgshow.com
June 22	WVNLA Board of Directors meeting, Sutton.
July 9-12	Cultivate'16, Columbus, OH. www.cultivate16.org
July 14	Pesticide Recertification Workshop, Morgantown. www.wvnla.org
July 24	Certified Professional Horticulturist exam, Morgantown. www.wvnla.org
Aug. 2-4	Independent Garden Center Show (East), King of Prussia, PA. www.igcshow.com
Aug. 30 - Sept. 1	SEGreen Tour, Marketplace, Plant, Landscape and SNA Research Conferences, Athens, GA. www.sna.org
Sept. 17	WVNLA Designers Showcase Garden Tour, Morgantown. www.wvnla.org
Jan. 11-13	MANTS, Baltimore, MD. www.mants.com
Jan. 27	WVNLA Winter Symposium, Charleston. www.wvnla.org

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