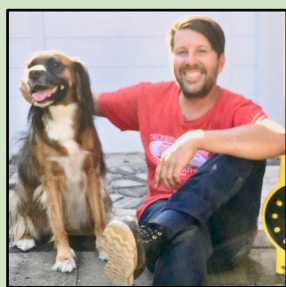


## President's Message

Greetings, all! I hope the season is going well for all of you out there in the green industry, in our little piece of heaven we call the Mountain State.

As we turned the corner on



David Hill II

Labor Day, seemingly marking the end of summer for many, I pondered a bit about this celebration.

Yes, it's a Monday off work in the first week of September. Many of us spent quality time with families and friends, grilling out, watching football, maybe just taking it easy by doing absolutely nothing, and so on. Regardless of how you spent your time off, it was still time off, right?!

But Labor Day has to have a reason, a meaning, an origin, so I did a little investigating. According to the US Department of Labor, Labor Day, created by our country's labor movement in the mid-1880s, "is dedicated to the social and economical achievements of American workers. It constitutes a yearly national tribute to the contributions workers have made to the strength, prosperity and well-being of our country."

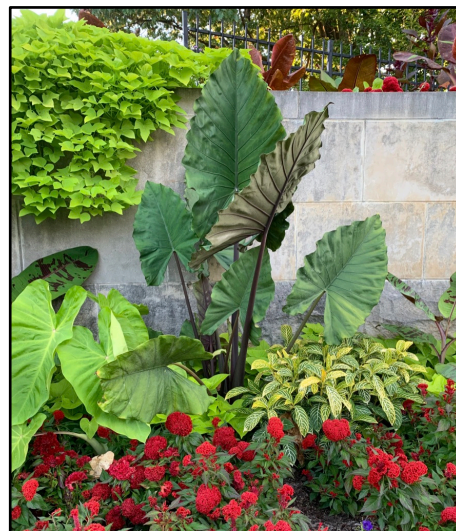
After municipal ordinances were passed in some cities in 1885 and 1886, Oregon passed a bill making Labor Day a state holiday in 1887. Many states followed in Oregon's footsteps. Then, on June 28, 1894, Congress passed a law

*Please see PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE on page 2.*

## Winter Symposium Falls Later This Year – Mark Your Calendar

Until 2020, WVNLA's Winter Symposium has been a January calendar event. Inevitably, snow falls and forces some attendees to cancel. Although we cannot predict the weather, event planners have set February 12 as the date for the 2020 Winter Symposium, hoping that a later date might be less likely to be a snowy one. May or June would practically guarantee that, but landscapers tend to be rather busy then.

So, mark February 12 as your day to be in Charleston to hear a stellar line up of speakers. On the design side, we have the very entertaining Scott Beuerlein of the Cincinnati Zoo and Botanical Garden speaking on trees to place in inhospitable places and best regional perennials; Irvin Etienne of Newfields Museum in Indianapolis speaking on plants selected for museum gardens; Kate Kennen of Offshoots Productive Landscapes on pollution purging plants and Charleston's own Tom Vasale on specialty pruning.



*Irvin Etienne will present information on the gardens at Newfields in Indianapolis. (Courtesy photo)*

On the business side, we are bringing in industry suppliers to chat with attendees about their needs. We'll exchange thoughts of what worked and didn't in the landscape and lawn care business this year. We'll hear from teachers about launching landscape careers in the minds of high school students. And we'll hear from expert witness and research Hannah Mathers on the latest on glyphosate and Roundup.

So respond quickly when notification arrives of the Winter Symposium. You won't want to miss a minute!

## Important Date Change

Please note that the date for the winter Pesticide Applicators Recertification Training and the Certified Professional Horticulturist exam has been changed. Both events will be held on Thursday, February 13, 2020 at Embassy Suites in Charleston.

# Shelter Residents and Volunteers Treasure Its Greenspaces

The partnership between WVNLA and the Kanawha County Master Gardeners Association (KCMGA) continues to yield big results for the Sojourner's Shelter for Homeless Women and Families in Charleston. With funding supplied by WVNLA several years ago, the hard-working, volunteer master gardeners restored the playground, outdoor gathering space, entrance, and game court areas that WVNLA had installed at the



*KCMGA volunteers tackle the tedious task of weeding between pavers in the courtyard.*

shelter more than 10 years ago. Although the busy shelter staff had attempted to weed the greenspaces, the maintenance requirements were beyond them.

Today, the work continues, as does the funding. A recent donation will provide mulch, shrubs, grasses, perennials, annuals, and bulbs for the shelter's grounds.

"Accomplishments at a recent work session included weeding the beds, pruning, and working on the brick work to get the grass and weeds out," said KCMGA volunteer Dolores Barber. "We're excited that we will be able to plant some new shrubs and perennials and spread mulch during our two scheduled work times in September—thanks to the

generous financial support of WVNLA."

The gardening and horticulture work they did at the shelter netted the KCMGA a

Project of Excellence award from the West Virginia University Extension Service, during the annual master gardener conference in April. The volunteers say they find the work rewarding and know that their efforts are appreciated by residents and staff members.

"The majority of the work for this project during the time that KCMGA has been maintaining it has been completed by volunteer members. But is not unusual for residents to stop by to tell us how much they enjoy the outdoor spaces and gardens, and to thank us," said Delores. "There have also been residents who have come and asked if they can help, and they have pitched in with weeding and pruning. Teenage residents have helped with removal of large shrubs and the arborvitae that had to be removed."

WVNLA is proud of our now long-term partnership with WVMGA to develop and maintain this important outdoor space, which has been appreciated and enjoyed by many.



*Hardy perennials and annuals soften the space between a privacy fence and a game court.*

## PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE *(Continued from page 1)*

making the first Monday in September a national holiday honoring American workers.

Our country is steeped very deeply in a positive work tradition. The United States was literally built from the ground up by the American workforce. These people shared their innovative, forward-looking thoughts and skills and, in turn, shaped the landscapes of the cities and towns where we currently dwell.

The American people continue to do this to this very day. To me, that is something totally worthy of an annual recognition and celebration.

For our members out there who own companies and are fighting the good fight, I challenge you to take up a small task. Besides the normal day off you probably gave your employees for Labor Day, I say go a little further. Perhaps tell them how vital and appreciated they are to your company and your community. Talk to them one-on-one and give them

an appreciation-filled handshake. Do something nice for our proud West By God Virginia workforce!

As we are all fully aware, not everyone gets Labor Day off work because that would shut down our country for the day. So, next Labor Day, or on any holiday, when you are running to the convenience store for more ice, or to the grocery for more bratwurst, say an extra thank-you to the people working. Let's honor their dedication to keeping our economy moving along. And maybe take a minute to reflect on our deeply rooted tradition that started more than 130 years ago. After all, we are all in this together!

Hope you had a happy Labor Day, WVNLA! See you out there.

Dave Hill II, WVNLA President  
*Dave owns and operates Three Trees Design and Landscaping in South Charleston.*



# 3 ... 2 ... 1 ... Blast-Off for WVBG!

*By Philip Smith*

Can a public garden double as a rocket ship? If so, you'd have to strap in at the West Virginia Botanic Garden (WVBG), since it has really "taken off" in just a few short years.

In 2000, the state's flagship garden gained active management of the 85-acre Tibbs Run property in Morgantown. The property was once home to the city's water supply. The reservoir was drained prior to the garden assuming management, and in its place, an incredible emergent wetland habitat grew. The wetland, together with a virgin hemlock forest and meadows, became a spectacular natural area now known as WVBG.

Being a new nonprofit with no historic endowment, WVBG had to spend its first years scraping together any spare change to install basic amenities. Yet in the past five years, the garden has really started to take shape as a signature tourism location and educational resource for the state of West Virginia.

In 2016, the solar-powered Education and Events Center was opened, featuring 2,000 square feet of event space, with classrooms, offices, and public restrooms. Simultaneously, the event center's Yagle Gardens, which include WVBG's most photographed perennial garden, were developed.

The Secret Garden, Pollinator Garden, Butterfly Garden, George W. Longenecker Shade Garden,



*Patrons enjoy dinner in the garden.*

Entrance Gardens, Rhododendron Garden, Hammock Haven, and The Long Walk have gained thousands of new plants and additional hardscaping

design in just the past few years. An event lawn was also constructed, which is now used for weddings and formal dinners. In addition, strategic water and electrical utility access has been developed around the property; the roadway and parking have been expanded and improved; sculptural art has been installed; and trail systems have been further developed.

WVBG now employs seven individuals who coordinate education, site management, and many other tasks. Hundreds of volunteers also help with weekend hosting and site maintenance.

The garden hosts five farm-to-table dinners throughout the year, as well as a very popular Garden Party event each August.



*The Yagle Garden features colorful perennials.*

A full slate of diverse programs, including art workshops, yoga classes, and guided tours, entertain visitors year round. WVBG also hosts five weeks of summer nature camps, special programs for scouts and others, and field trips for hundreds of school children. The garden has become very popular for weddings, corporate outings, and meetings as well.

And things aren't slowing down. Thanks, in part, to funding from the West Virginia Nursery and Landscape Association, construction in the service area will begin in 2020. We will grade the area, install additional utilities, and construct a composting facility and service building. This is vital to maintenance and the development of the WVBG Master Plan. In addition, we have secured partial funding for the Children's Adventure Garden and hope to begin construction on it next year.

Further plans for 2020 include expansion of the Yagle Garden around the Education and Events Center, new signage and waymarks, development of smartphone-app-based walking tours, new art installations, and an outdoor fossil exhibit. Additional funding is being sought for sculptural art, steel arbor tunnels for vining plants, and construction of a large wedding pavilion with more parking. It is all part of our master plan.

WVBG and WVNLA have developed a great relationship since the garden's inception. That partnership has really helped WVBG, our state's only botanic garden, to grow. I look forward to meeting more WVNLA members at the garden. Be sure to stop in and see us the next time you are in the Morgantown area.

In the meantime, we're strapped in and enjoying the ride. All systems are go!

*Philip Smith is executive director of the West Virginia Botanic Garden.*

## MEMBER FOCUS:

# Fourth Generation Nursery Started by Innovative Owner

The combination nursery and Christmas tree farm at Mt. Zion Nursery in Fairmont is a good fit for the Martin family. The landscaping side of the fourth-generation family business is busy April through October, while the Christmas tree harvest and sales stretch into December.

"I'd say the business is about half landscaping and half growing trees. It does seem to work pretty well," said matriarch and owner Lucille Martin,



*Mount Zion Nursery in Fairmont*

whose husband and business partner, Robert, recently passed away.

It all started with Christmas trees in the 1930s, when founder Gilbert A. "G. A." Martin decided to grow them as a fresh alternative to the Canadian-grown trees that dominated the market at the time. The Canadian trees frequently arrived dried out and dropping needles. When the first trees G. A. planted were ready for harvest in the 1940s, Robert wasn't old enough to be much help, but by the time he was 12, he was planting and trimming the trees.

Robert left home in 1956 for a stint in the air force but eventually returned home to help on the tree farm. In its heyday, G. A. Martin & Sons sent tractor trailer loads of Christmas trees out of state to cities such as Philadelphia. Business was good, but not as good as a book Robert purchased indicated it could be.

"We were in a book store and saw a book called *How to Be a Millionaire in Ten Years*," Lucille recalled. "One of the ways was to grow Christmas trees. However, it doesn't quite work out that way. There was nothing in there about mowing, trimming, keeping the bugs out. None of that came into play. There was just planting and then harvesting."

At one time, the Martins had four tree farms,

where they grew Norway spruce, white pine, and Colorado spruce. In 1972, they opened a retail space and changed the name to Mt. Zion Nursery.

Today, Mt. Zion offers landscape services in addition to the retail business, but finding workers among the local ranks is a challenge. Lucille said she is fortunate to have about six dedicated employees, including her granddaughter Kara Chisler, and others she uses on occasion.

"Kara does about everything that I used to do, which was the paperwork and billing. She studied accounting in college. I still go into work every day and tell everyone what to do," she said with a chuckle. She has no intention of retiring.

Mt. Zion focuses on smaller, residential landscape jobs, for which there is a healthy market, Lucille said. Yet, even the smaller jobs require lots of labor, particularly since many customers are switching from mulch to river rock.

Lucille and Robert had three sons, none of whom chose a nursery career. They opted instead for the insurance, retail, and hotel management industries. However, Kara's father, Bruce Martin, lends a hand when he can with the early-morning watering.

In 2017, G. A. Martin was inducted posthumously into the West Virginia Agriculture and Forestry Hall of Fame. In addition to his years of tree growing and the officer positions he held with both the state and national Christmas Tree Growers Association, G. A. was recognized for his many tree farm inventions, some of which are still on the market today.

G. A. invented a Christmas tree stand that screws into the base of the tree, a tree driller to prep the trees for that stand, a tree planter that was pulled behind a tractor, and a tree baller.

"The tree planter was basically two tires and a disc in the middle that opened a space for the fellow



*G.A. Martin and his son Robert with one of G.A.'s inventions*

*Please see MOUNT ZION on next page.*



# Good Spots Still Available for Conference Sponsors

Sponsorships are still available for the Northeastern Leadership Conference, to be hosted by WVNLA in Charleston Oct. 21-22. This innovative event brings nursery and landscape association directors and officers from the Northeast together to discuss current issues and how to best serve their members. It's a unique opportunity for attendees to hear not only what other state associations are doing but also how directors and board members can be most productive.

The cost for meeting rooms, meals, and speakers are shared by the state associations. To help defray costs for the attending associations, the hosting association solicits sponsorships from its members.

Bud Cottrill of ProScape WV and Brett Merritt of G&G Nursery have signed up to be Silver Sponsors, and Zach Crede of Crede Lawn and Landscaping will be a Bronze Sponsor. Thank you,

Bud, Brett and Zach! **Bud challenges his fellow WVNLA members to sponsor the event.** If four additional sponsors sign up, Bud will up his sponsorship to the Gold level!

Sponsors will be listed in all printed conference materials and acknowledged at the event. In addition, sponsors' marketing materials will be included in attendees' take-away gift bags. This is a nice opportunity to show your support for WVNLA and also promote your business among fellow members and associations in neighboring states.

The levels of giving are:

Bronze: Breakfast sponsorship, \$250

Silver: Lunch sponsorship, \$400

Gold: General sponsorship, \$500

*For more information, contact Julie Robinson at 304-553-1234 or email her at wvnlassoc@gmail.com.*



## MOUNT ZION continued

on the back of the tractor to drop in a seedling. Then the tires closed up the hole," Lucille explained. "My father-in-law was a very smart man. We could have been sitting pretty, but he didn't patent his inventions. That's the way it goes."

Although many books have been written about the struggles and challenges of owning a family business, Lucille said her family escaped much of that, partially because her sons were not interested in taking over the business.

"We've had the usual challenges of owning your own business, but no hassle among the family. There was no interest, except for Kara. We couldn't do it now without her," she said.

Kara began working on the tree farm when she was 12, when her family moved from a neighborhood to the farm. She enjoyed working outdoors but knew an accounting education would be most useful to the family business. Today, she does a little of both and also helps with some other family enterprises.

"It's very rewarding at Christmas time to know all of that hard work goes toward making a tradition for hundreds of families in the

community," Kara said. "Since the trend has moved toward artificial trees, it makes you want to try harder to keep the live tradition going."

*For more information about Mt. Zion Nursery, call 304-366-6597 or email MtZionNursery@gmail.com. Mt. Zion Nursery is located at 815 Mt. Zion Road in Fairmont, WV.*



*Robert prepares to drop a seedling while his father G.A. Martin instructs.*

# WVNLA Welcomes New Members

## New members:

### **Advanced Tree & Lawn Care**

*Active member*

Talicia Riffle

P. O. Box 876

Hurricane, WV 25526

304-397-6006

advancedtreeandlawncare.biz

landscaping@advancedtreeandlawncare.biz

*Arborist, landscape design, construction and maintenance*

### **Greenscapes Lawn Care**

*Active member*

Natasha and Joey Price

P. O. Box 661

Daniels, WV 25832

304-673-9314

natashap@suddenlink.net

*Landscape maintenance*

### **Lawnworks, LLC**

*Active member*

Gary Bailey

208 Sunflower Street

Princeton, WV 24739

304-716-6139

gary\_bailey@lawnworks4you.com

lawnworks4you.com

*Landscape and lawn maintenance.*

### **Native Havens, LLC**

*Active member*

James Dillon

27 Powers Drive

Kearneysville, WV 25430

302-363-3045

nativehavens@gmail.com

nativehavens.com

*Landscape architect/designer, landscape construction, landscape and lawn maintenance, Certified Professional Horticulturist (Pennsylvania)*

## Under new management:

### **Flowerscape**

*Active member*

Eamon Barker

P. O. Box 13617

Charleston, WV 25312

304-470-0780

flowerscapewv@gmail.com

flowerscapewv.com

*Landscape construction, landscape and lawn maintenance, irrigation*





## Penny Goff Recognized for Achievement in State Agriculture

More and more West Virginia women are entering the agriculture field. Whether they're raising cattle or poultry, teaching the basics of agriculture through FFA, or protecting the future of our farmlands, they are making a difference.

"Women now make up 38 percent of our state's farmers. As more women consider agricultural careers, a lot of thanks are due to those who paved the way," said Commissioner of Agriculture Kent Leonhardt.

The commissioner recognized five women who have had "a tremendous impact on our state's agricultural sector" and "helped inspire generations of farmers," including WVNLA member Penny Gritt Goff of Gritt's Midway Greenhouse. The women were honored at a reception at the State Fair of West Virginia on August 11.

Gritt's Midway Greenhouse was established in 1944 by founder Tony Gritt Jr., who peddled his fresh produce in Charleston. Three generations of Gritts have since contributed to expanding the enterprise, including Penny Gritt Goff. She learned from both her grandfather and father about the greenhouse business, and further enhanced her training by studying ornamental horticulture at Ohio State University, where she received a bachelor of science degree in 1983.

Penny is now the owner and general manager of Gritt's Midway Greenhouse. She helped spearhead the production of hydroponic tomatoes, lettuce, and herbs under 1.5 acres of greenhouses.

Penny and her husband, Matt Goff, currently

manage six acres of production greenhouses, with two acres of outdoor growing space. They employ approximately 40 people.

As general manager, Penny oversees and coordinates all activities, including scheduling and buying.

Penny sells her produce to Kroger stores, independent grocery stores, and produce vendors within a 150-mile radius, and through the company's own retail outlet. In the last five years, Gritt's Midway Greenhouse has sold more than \$340,000 worth of produce through the Child Nutrition Office of the Putnam County School system. Each spring and fall, the company also provides starter plants for school gardens and donates seeds for the students to plant.

In addition to being a WVNLA member, Penny is a member of the Robert C. Byrd Institute Agriculture Innovation Leadership Council.

*Adapted and reprinted with permission from the Market Bulletin, a West Virginia Department of Agriculture publication.*



Penny Goff



*This combination of container plants stood up to a hot August day at the West Virginia Botanic Garden.*

## Find an Employee at the Job Fair

Don't miss the chance to find a great employee at the **Second Chance Job Fair** on Tuesday, October 1 from noon to 4 p.m. at the Days Inn Conference Center in Flatwoods. WVNLA will host a table with general industry information, but these job seekers would much prefer to speak with you, the employer. WVNLA members are welcome to participate in the booth, or you may secure your own table.

The recent successful introduction of WVNLA's Certified Professional Horticulturist program to 14 motivated inmates at the St. Mary Correctional Institute (who all studied for and passed the challenging exam) prompted a conversation with Crystal Lively-Thompson with the WV Department of Education's Office of Diversion & Transition Programs. Crystal works to place released inmates and parolees in jobs. She invited WVNLA members to participate in the Second Chance Job Fair.

For more information on the job fair, contact Crystal at [crystal.lively@k12.wv.us](mailto:crystal.lively@k12.wv.us). If you plan to participate at WVNLA's exhibit, please email [wvnlassoc@gmail.com](mailto:wvnlassoc@gmail.com) or call 304-553-1234.

# WVNLA NEWS

P. O. Box 20284  
Charleston, WV 25362

## Dates to Note

- Oct. 15-18 LANDSCAPES and GIE+EXPO, Louisville, KY  
[www.landscapeprofessionals.org](http://www.landscapeprofessionals.org).
- Oct. 21-22 Northeast Regional Leadership Conference,  
Charleston
- Oct. 30 WVNLA Board of Directors meeting,  
Morgantown

## 2020

- Jan. 6-7 Southern Nursery Association Conference, Baltimore  
MD [www.sna.org](http://www.sna.org)
- Jan. 8-10 MANTS, Baltimore, MD [www.mants.com](http://www.mants.com)
- Feb. 12 WVNLA Winter Symposium, Charleston  
[www.wvnla.org](http://www.wvnla.org)
- Feb. 13 Pesticide Applicators Recertification Training,  
Charleston [www.wvnla.org](http://www.wvnla.org)
- Feb. 13 Certified Professional Horticulturist exam,  
Charleston [www.wvnla.org](http://www.wvnla.org)

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