

20TH Annual

2026 Spring Garden Fest

Class Schedule



SESSION ONE: 9am - 10:15am

Creating Seasonal Color in Your Landscape

Class Description:

Color is one of the most noticeable and memorable elements in a landscape. Learn how to develop and use color relationships within your landscape. Learn how to maintain and extend the use of color(s) in your landscape, and how seasonal changes impact color. Be inspired, as visual artists have, by the impact of color in the landscape and nature.

Speaker Bio:

Elizabeth Chodrow is an active Virginia Master Gardener volunteer with the Goochland Powhatan Master Gardener Association. Co-chair of training for GPMGA and a former art educator, Elizabeth is currently working on a botanical illustration certification. She is developing year-round seasonal color in the landscape at her homesite in Powhatan County.

Extending Your Vegetable Growing Season

Class Description:

Harvesting fresh food grown in your own garden is a delight that can happen almost any month of the year in Virginia. In this class learn about ways to extend your growing season for several types of vegetables. The instructor will help you go beyond tomatoes and introduce other types of produce that can be grown year-round using simple techniques such as hoop houses. Benefit from expertise gained over years of farming and put it to use in your own home garden.

Speaker Bio:

Seyra Whitney is the Production Director at the Powhatan location of the nonprofit Shalom Farms. She has been with Shalom Farms since starting as Farmer in Residence in 2016. Seyra oversees hoop house production and produce distribution and loves systems and problem solving. Seyra enjoys trying out new techniques for growing in the hoop houses and is always working to improve yields. When not at the farm, Seyra enjoys hiking, camping, swimming in various bodies of water, and cooking up a storm.

How Smart Are Your Plants?**Class Description:**

Do your plants sometimes surprise you by defying or exceeding your expectations? What do plants know that we don't? Do they have a secret society and defense system? We'll take a look specifically at some of the unusual reproductive habits of plants and some of the recent discoveries about plant communication. And, we'll probably explore a few other quirky plant habits.

Speaker Bio:

Pat Lust, retired Longwood University faculty member and long-time Master Gardener, spends a lot of time growing native plants and talking about them. Her backyard nursery focuses mostly on perennials and bushes but includes a few other types of plants as well. If you get to know her, she says, you will probably be adopting more native plants for your own garden!

**SESSION TWO: 10:30am - 11:45am****Don't Settle for a Boring Lawn: Incorporating Pocket Prairies and Meadows in any Landscape****Class Description:**

Landscapes in Virginia can support many types of diverse ecosystems. In this class learn about the possibility of planting a native plant prairie or meadow on your own property and the benefits of doing so. Topics discussed during this session include planning, preparing the land, plant selection, and propagation choices (seed vs. plugs). Finally, the instructor's experience managing meadows over time will be shared so participants can learn to avoid common maintenance mistakes and how to up the odds for success.

Speaker Bio:

Brian Yoder is the Natural Resources Manager at J.W. Townsend Landscapes in Charlottesville, VA. With a Masters of Natural Resources from Virginia Tech and a Permaculture Design Certification, Brian provides expertise and leadership for many of J.W. Townsend's projects that incorporate meadows. When not helping clients realize their landscape aspirations, he enjoys spending time with his children, cooking, and gardening on his own urban plot.

Growing Fruit in Central Virginia

Class Description:

Growing fruit successfully in Central Virginia can come with some trials and tribulations. The instructor has been growing many types of fruit for market for the last decade and will review a broad set of fruit growing options. By highlighting what each type of fruit crop requires from the gardener, this presentation will help you plan for home fruit production that matches your interests and your desired level of maintenance.

Speaker Bio:

Don Smith is the co-owner and operator of Owl Orchard in Powhatan. With over 400 fruit trees, 50 nut trees, 100 grapevines and 200 blueberry bushes on the property, Don and his wife Holly have developed deep expertise in growing fruit in Virginia. Whether discussing peaches, apples, or Asian pears, Don has firsthand experience in what works and what doesn't and is happy to share his knowledge and humorous insight.

Landscaping for Wildlife Using Native Plants

Class Description:

With a little planning, your garden can be designed to welcome and support wildlife. Learn from the instructor which design choices will draw in pollinators, birds, and animals and what steps you can take in your landscape to provide food and shelter once

they arrive. This class will help you complete your plant selections using wildlife support as a core criteria so your garden grows into a vibrant habitat.

Speaker Bio:

Donna Cottingham is a Virginia Master Naturalist, a nature writer, a Virginia Federation of Garden Clubs Landscape Design Consultant, and educator who offers programs on habitat gardening, butterfly gardening and wildflowers of Virginia.



SESSION THREE: 1:30pm - 2:45pm

Incorporating Native Trees and Shrubs in Your Landscape

Class Description:

This class will focus on selecting the right native 'woodies' for your home landscape. Whether you have full sun or full shade, great drainage or boggy soil, or something in between the extremes, there are great native tree and shrub choices for Virginia home landscapes. This presentation will review why native shrubs and trees are beneficial, recommend some rockstar native trees and shrubs, and walkthrough what you should consider before selecting a specific tree or shrub. Purchasing a native tree or shrub can be a financial investment and the instructor will share her expertise, tips, and tricks to help make that investment succeed in your landscape.

Speaker Bio:

Edie Harris is a senior horticulturist with Cross Creek Nursery in Rockville, Virginia. A former teacher, Edie now educates guests at the nursery and helps them develop and refine their home landscape. With an academic background in biomedical engineering, Edie uses a scientific and analytical approach to selecting trees and shrubs to find the best fit for specific conditions and ensure long term success. In her free time, Edie enjoys spending time gardening in her own suburban yard and cheering on University of Virginia sports - Go Hoos!

Success with Tomatoes in Our Region

Class Description:

Central Virginia provides nutrient rich soil, sufficient moisture (most years), and adequate sun and heat for these South American native plants. However, 'sufficient' and 'adequate' don't always equal success. Learn what makes tomatoes of all types thrive in our region. Take home knowledge and techniques that will increase your yield and your enjoyment of your vegetable garden.

Speaker Bio:

Pam Dawling is the author of *The Year-Round Hoop House* and *Sustainable Market Farming*. She has worked in the vegetable gardens at Twin Oaks Community in central Virginia for 30 years, growing vegetables for 100 people and training many members in sustainable vegetable production. She often presents workshops at sustainable agriculture conferences and events. Pam is also a contributing editor with *Growing for Market* and writes for other magazines, and she does consultancy work and teaching. Pam writes a weekly blog post on her website sustainablemarketfarming.com.

Introduction to Landscape Design

Class Description:

This class is an introduction to the basics of landscape design. Learn how to evaluate what you currently have and discuss some simple steps you can take to make your surroundings the best they can be. Review examples of common landscape dilemmas and some basic solutions that can help the homeowner enjoy their yard.

Speaker Bio:

Jean Cauble is a Virginia Master Gardener with thirty years of experience designing and editing landscapes. Her long-term focus on ornamental gardens means she has experienced the ups and downs of gardening in Central Virginia and is happy to share her lessons learned with others.