

WHAT IS THE VIRGINIA MASTER GARDENER ASSOCIATION (VMGA)?

By George Graine
Fairfax Representative to VMGA

Yes Virginia, we do have a state Master Gardener association! This is the state-wide association for Master Gardeners and Virginia Cooperative Extension (VCE) employees. The Virginia Master Gardener Association (VMGA) is a non-profit organization. It is guided by elected officials who have an interest in the issues concerning Master Gardener volunteers at the state level. You are not required to belong to VMGA to be an active Master Gardener; however, membership in the state association is an important way to give direct input to VCE on the issues of concern to Master Gardeners in Virginia.

VMGA *communicates and networks* with you via their newsletter, “VMGA Report,” through a web site – www.vmganet.net, and a membership directory. At last count, more than 500 Master Gardeners across the state have joined VMGA. Our state association conducts bi-monthly meetings where issues of concern to Master Gardener volunteers are discussed. Of course these are open meetings, held at various locations around the state, and active Master Gardeners are invited and encouraged to attend.

VMGA also sponsors *continuing education programs*. The topics are timely and varied, the presentations are superb, and the cost is reasonable. Each June, VCE sponsors a four-day Master Gardener College at Virginia Tech in Blacksburg. This program includes prominent speakers, workshops, labs, field work, garden tours, and even time for more leisurely pursuits. This is a worthwhile experience and once you attend you will look forward to “matriculating” at Master Gardener College the following year.

In summary and to simplify, VMGA is the voice for all Virginia Master Gardeners. We interface with Virginia Tech (our land grant university and the home of VCE) and the state legislature on matters of importance to our client population, the residents of Virginia. Our citizens of all ages need our help and our expertise to make decisions necessary for a successful gardening experience and to be concerned with our environment.

I encourage you to join VMGA. Annual dues are only \$12. Lifetime membership is also available for a one-time payment of \$120. Feel free to ask me questions about VMGA. Joining will afford you a wonderful opportunity to meet many people outside of Fairfax. You will also have an opportunity to serve on committees that help to shape the future of Virginia Master Gardeners.

Membership applications can be downloaded from www.vmganet.net. A secure payment option is also available on-line. If you prefer, VMGA membership applications are available on the back table.