

# Master Gardeners of Northern Virginia (MGNV) Resources March 19, 2025

**Dona Lee**

Extension Master Gardener (Arlington/Alexandria)  
Chinquapin Community Garden Plot M-6



# Virginia Cooperative Extension (VCE) & Master Gardeners of Northern VA

- Volunteers serving Arlington & Alexandria
- Celebrating 40 years promoting public education on environmentally sound gardening practices since 1985 through:
  - **Help Desk Support via email, phone or in-person**
    - <https://mgnv.org/programs/help-desk/>
  - **Plant Clinics at Arlington/Alexandria Farmers Markets and Libraries**
  - **Free Virtual Classes**
    - <https://mgnv.org/mg-virtual-classroom>
  - **Demonstration Gardens, including organic vegetable garden**
  - **Online resources:** <https://mgnv.org/>
    - Search tip — site:edu, site:gov



Potomac Overlook Organic Vegetable Garden

# Virtual Resources

- **Between the Rows** – MGNV’s online monthly guide on WHAT to do WHEN for veggie gardening & Beating the Bugs  
<https://mgnv.org/veg-herbs/between-rows/>
- **Vegetable Gardening Online Resources** – a collection of resources that supplements this presentation  
[https://mgnv.org/resources/veg\\_references/](https://mgnv.org/resources/veg_references/)
- **Master Gardener Virtual Classroom** – a treasure trove of recorded training classes on topics ranging from **Intro to Vegetable Gardening** or **Vegetable Gardening Without Fear** to Seed Starting to Soil Improvement and more  
<https://mgnv.org/mg-virtual-classroom/#vegetables>

# Quick Facts for Northern Virginia

- Arlington & Alexandria, Virginia are in Zone 7a/b/8a of the 2023 USDA Plant Hardiness Map
- Average last killing frost (Spring): 4/1 to 4/10
- Average first killing frost (Fall): 11/1 to 11/10
- Growing season of >180 days
- Hotter summer days (>90°F) & nights (>70°F)
- Average annual rainfall in this area: ~40 inches
  - In 2018, we broke a longstanding record for annual rainfall with 64.4 inches of rain; in 2020, 57.3 inches
- Clay Soils Dominant

# Planting Chart

Virginia Cooperative Extension Arlington Office  
3308 S. Stafford St. Arlington VA 22206

USDA Hardiness Zone 7b  
Avg last killing frost: 4/1-4/10  
Avg first killing frost: 11/1-11/10

Horticulture Help Desk: 703 228 6414  
mgarlalex@gmail.com

Month	March				April			May			June			July			August			September			October					
Date	1	11	21	31	10	20	30	10	20	30	9	19	29	9	19	29	8	18	28	7	17	27	7	17	27			
Crop																												
Collards	P									H							P									H	→	
Onion, set	P				P&H					H																		→
Peas, garden	P						H																					
Radish	P		P&H				H										P		P&H									→
Spinach	P				H															P					H		→	
Turnips	P				H												P				P&H			H			→	
Potatoes		P									H																	
Beets			P							H								P							H		→	
Cabbage*			P							H							P						H				→	
Carrots			P							H				P&H			P			H								→
Lettuce, bibb			P								H						P				H							→
Lettuce, leaf			P							H							P				H							→
Broccoli*				P									H				P&H	P							H		→	
Brussels sprouts*				P									H				P								H		→	
Cauliflower*				P						H							P					H						→
Beans, bush						P							P&H					H										
Beans, pole						P										P&H		H										
Corn, sweet						P										P&H			H									
Cucumbers							P							P&H							H							
Eggplant*							P										H											
Muskmelons							P										H											
Cantaloupe							P										H											
Peppers*							P										P&H	H										
Pumpkins							P											H										
Squash, summer							P							P&H							H							
Squash, winter							P											H										
Sweet Potato							P											H										
Tomatoes*							P										P&H	H										
Watermelon							P											H										
<b>Key</b>																												
Plant																												
Plant & Harvest																												
Harvest																												

<https://mgnv.org/resources/planting-dates-for-arlington-and-alexandria/>



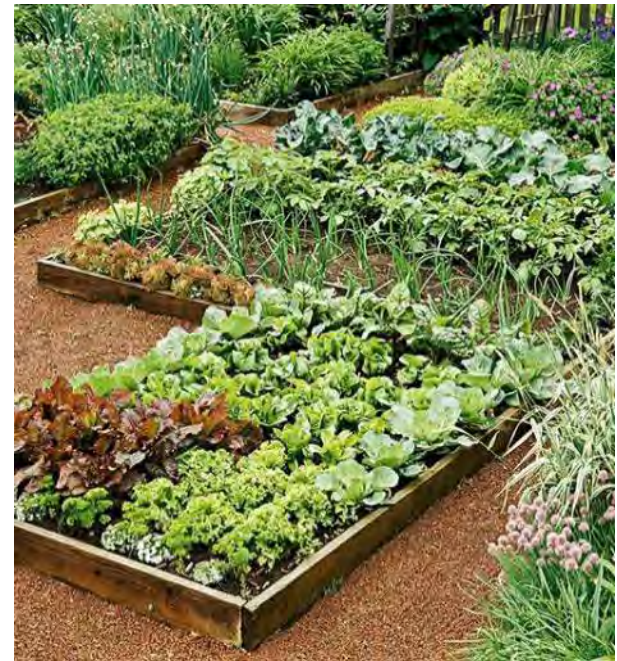
# Nominal Schedule for Zone 7

- **January/February:** get seed catalogs, plan garden, test soil
- **March/early April:** prepare soil – weed, mix in organic matter; start seedlings indoors, start select cool weather crops
- **Late March/April:** plant cool-weather crops outdoors, mulch
- **May (Mother's Day Rule):** plant warm-weather crops (seeds and transplants) outdoors, mulch
- **June/July/August:** nurture, water, fertilize, harvest!
- **August:** plant cool-weather crops for fall and winter harvest, preserve your vegetables for winter enjoyment
- **Fall:** start sheet composting over turf for new garden next year, clean up existing beds, mulch for the winter, plant cover crop



# Best Management Practices

- Test the soil to learn the pH and nutrients already present
- Determine soil drainage capacity before planting
- Improve compacted soil by aerating, incorporating organic matter
  - Plant cover crops/green manures to improve soil nutrients & structure
- Practice right plant, right place to take advantage of garden microclimates - hot areas, light angles & moisture sinks - when planning your garden layout
- Select cultivars of plants & seeds bred for resistance & tolerance for local conditions
- Use companion planting/intercropping to attract beneficial insects, take advantage of symbiotic biochemical and cultural benefits before taking remedial action using the least toxic alternative
- Identify insects (friend or foe), diseases or weeds and susceptible life cycle stages; and evaluate the extent of the problem
- Rotate crops to avoid the build up of pathogens & pests in the garden



# Testing the Chemical Properties

- Plants all need some nutrients from the soil, but their ability to extract nutrients depends on the amount of nutrients present and the pH (acidity or alkalinity) of the soil.
- **How to test:** You prepare the soil sample, indicate what you want to grow, and send the sample to a testing facility, such as Virginia Cooperative Extension Service. VCE test kits are free, and the analysis costs up to \$16 per sample (in-state).
- **Solution:** Follow recommendations for remediating pH and nutrient deficiencies.

For Information: Virginia Tech Publication 452-129, “Soil Sampling For The Home Gardener”  
<https://www.soiltest.vt.edu/fees-and-forms.html>



# VCE Soil Test Kit

- Soil Test Supplies and Locations:
  - **Chinquapin Gardeners Shed** hanging inside the door
  - **Arlington Cooperative Extension Office** at the Fairlington Community Center, 3308 South Stafford St, Arlington
    - On a shelf just inside the front door
    - In a box affixed to a gate to our Teaching Garden adjacent to the loading dock at the rear of the building.
  - **Alexandria Cooperative Extension Office** at the Lee Center, 1108 Jefferson Street, Alexandria
  - **MGNV Plant Clinics** <https://mgmv.org/programs/plant-clinics/>
  - **Greenstreet Gardens**, 1721 W. Braddock Rd, Alexandria, 22302
  - **Brown's Hardware**, 100 W Broad St., Falls Church, 22046
  - **Cherrydale Hardware**, 3805 Lee Hwy Arlington, 22207
- You will mail your samples to the Virginia Tech Soil Testing lab using the address on the Soil Sample Information Sheet that accompanies the container.
- Allow 2 weeks for results to be returned via email.
- More Info: <https://mgmv.org/resources/soil-tests/>



Virginia Cooperative Extension		Virginia Tech
Virginia Tech • Virginia State University		Soil Testing Laboratory
<b>Soil Sample Information Sheet for Home Lawns, Gardens, Fruits, and Ornamentals</b>		Publication 452-125 Revised 2019
<small>Please Type or Write Legibly (Form expires January 2022) Use another form for commercial crop production. Not for growth media containing greater than 50% organic matter. See other side for sampling instructions. Processing will be delayed if soil is not received in the lab's sample container. For a recommendation, be sure to fill in a plant code number. Each sample must have its own form. For more information, go to <a href="http://www.soiltest.vt.edu">www.soiltest.vt.edu</a> or contact your local Virginia Cooperative Extension office.</small>		
Your Name: _____	Phone: _____	Date sampled: _____
E-mail To Send Report To: _____		MM/DD/YYYY
Mailing Address: _____		Office Use only Extension User Code
City: _____	ZIP Code (required): _____	
County Where Soil is Located (required): _____		
Copy Report To (Consultant, etc.): _____		
Their E-mail: _____		
<b>SAMPLE IDENTIFICATION</b> Your Sample Box Number or Name (Up to 5 digits)	<b>PLANT TO BE GROWN</b> Insert Plant Code # from list at right	<b>PLANT CODE LIST (Select One)</b>
_____	_____	<b>Lawn: Kentucky Bluegrass, Fescue, or Ryegrass</b> 201 Establishing New Lawn 202 Maintaining Lawn, Repair of Bare Spots
_____	_____	<b>Non-Acid-Loving Shrubs and Trees</b> 245 Shrubs - Lilac, Forsythia, Rosewood, etc. 246 Trees - Pine, Maple, Oak, etc.
<b>SOIL INFORMATION</b> Last Lime Application	<b>Lawn: Bermudagrass, Zoysiagrass, or St. Augustine</b> 203 Establishing New Lawn 204 Maintaining Lawn, Repair of Bare Spots	<b>Fruits</b> 220 Apples 221 Blackberries 222 Blueberries 228 Beans 229 Carrots 224 Gooseberries 225 Grapes 226 Nectarines 227 Peaches 228 Peas 229 Plants 230 Quince 231 Raspberries 232 Sour Cherry 233 Strawberries 234 Sweet Cherries
Months Previous _____	Pounds per 1,000 sq. ft. <input type="radio"/> 0 - 6 <input type="radio"/> 7 - 12 <input type="radio"/> 13 - 18 <input type="radio"/> 19+	<b>Garden</b> 210 Vegetable Garden 211 Flower Garden 212 Roses 213 Tomatoes 214 Sweet Peas
<input type="radio"/> 0 <input type="radio"/> 10 - 50 <input type="radio"/> 51 - 100 <input type="radio"/> 101 - 150 <input type="radio"/> 151+	<b>Acid-Loving Shrubs</b> 240 Azalea 241 Andromeda 242 Camellia 243 Laurel 244 Rhododendron	<b>House Plants</b> 250 Potted House Plants
<b>SOIL TESTS DESIRED AND FEES</b>		<b>COST PER SAMPLE</b>
<input type="checkbox"/> Routine (soil pH, P, K, Ca, Mg, Zn, Mn, Cu, Fe, B, and estimated CEC)		WEST VIRGINIA \$10.00
<input type="checkbox"/> Organic Matter - Determines percentage in soil - no recommendation given		VA STATE \$6.00
<input type="checkbox"/> Soluble Salts - Determines if fertilizer salts are too high		VA STATE \$2.00
<small>Make check or money order payable to "Treasurer, Virginia Tech". Do not send cash by mail. Please send this form along with payment, together with corresponding samples in the same sturdy shipping container to: Virginia Tech Soil Testing Lab, 145 Smyth Hall (MC 0465), 185 Ag Quad Ln, Blacksburg, VA 24061.</small>		

**Soil Sample Information Sheet for Home Lawns, Gardens, Fruits, and Ornamentals**  
[https://mgmv.org/wp-content/uploads/2022/01/Soil\\_sample\\_info\\_sheet-SPES-172.pdf](https://mgmv.org/wp-content/uploads/2022/01/Soil_sample_info_sheet-SPES-172.pdf)

# For Additional Information

**MGNV Website:** <https://mgnv.org>

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# Caring for Your Garden

**Elizabeth Charles**

Chinquapin Garden Board Member

# Typical Weeds Found In Area Vegetable Gardens



**Bermuda grass**



**Wild garlic/onions**



**Hairy Bittercress**



**Dandelion**



**Creeping Charlie  
(ground ivy)**



**Speedwell-Veronica**



**Goosegrass**



**Buttercup**



**Purslane**



**Common Lambsquarter**



**Common plantain**



**Canadian Thistle**

# Important Tips for Weed Control

- Identify the weed! And learn about its life cycle. This will help in control.
- Do not let weeds flower and go to seed. At a minimum, cut them back or use a string trimmer.
- Minimize soil disturbance. Digging and cultivating brings weed seeds to the surface and when exposed to light, they will germinate.
- Pull weeds when the soil is moist and be sure to get the roots. This will make the job easier!
- Cover bare soil with mulch or groundcovers. Bare soil is an invitation for weeds to move in.
- For walkways: Dig deep to remove roots and cover with newspaper or cardboard and then woodchips.
- ***Helpful Weed Identification Resources:***
  - **Virginia Tech Extension Weed Identification**  
<https://weedid.cals.vt.edu/>
  - **U of MD Extension Weed Identification Photos**  
<https://extension.umd.edu/resource/weed-identification-photos-maryland>

# Learn to ID Ones That Really Bug Us...



**Bean beetle**



**Harlequin bug**



**Squash bug**



**Cucumber beetle**



**Whitefly**



**Aphids**

**...Because They Cause Significant Crop Damage in Our Area.**

# Opportunities to Increase Yield: Attract Beneficial Insects

- Many garden plants require insects for pollination
- Insectary: Assortment of flowers & herbs attracts pollinators and predators, e.g. syrphid flies, lacewings & tiny parasitic wasps
- Plan for continuous flowering succession—spring, summer and fall
- Helps control pests such as aphids, leafhoppers, spider mites & cutworms



# Popular Pollinator Selections

## Annuals

- Cosmos (*Cosmos spp*)
- Dill (*Anethum graveolens*)
- Fennel (*Foeniculum vulgare*)
- Flowering ammi or Bishop's flower (*Ammi majus*)
- Sweet alyssum (*Lobularia maritima*)
- Zinnia (*Zinnia elegans*)



L-R: Dill, Zinnia, Blanket flower. Photo Credits: U of Wisconsin Extension

## Perennials (Zone 7)

- Blanket flower (*Gaillardia spp*)
- Coneflower (*Echinacea spp*)
- Coreopsis (*Coreopsis spp.*)
- Goldenrod (*Solidago spp.*)