



# GARDEN QUARTERLY

## Fall 2002

### VIRGINIA TECH HORTICULTURE GARDEN

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#### Membership Campaign a Success!

Thank you, thank you, thank you! More than fifty individuals, couples, and families have contributed to the Friends of the Garden campaign. These funds help us hire student gardeners and buy mulch, fertilizer, tools, etc. Projects such as a desperately - needed new irrigation system costs thousands of dollars. With the budget reductions at VT, your help is needed more than ever

Our members get great benefits like free admission to American Horticulture Society reciprocal gardens including Lewis Ginter and Norfolk Botanic Gardens, plus discounts on VTHG Short Courses and the Spring Plant Sale. For more information, visit our web site at [www.hort.vt.edu/VTHG](http://www.hort.vt.edu/VTHG).

— H.S.

#### TREES THAT PEG THE WOW-O-METER FOR FALL FOLIAGE COLOR! ALEX X. NIEMIERA—CURATOR OF WOODY LANDSCAPE PLANTS

Here are three U.S. native trees and three exotic tree species which will light up your landscape in the fall. I know I will be searching for synonyms for “spectacular.” No one will deny that the **sugar maple** (*Acer saccharum*) is one of the most aristocratic trees in our landscape—a native beauty with a regal canopy and a glorious fall foliage color. Leaf color varies from tree to tree with yellows, reds, oranges and mixtures thereof. The reason that each tree differs is due to genetics; yes, the same reason that we humans (even siblings) are significantly different in appearance. All trees of a particular sugar maple cultivar (named clone) will exhibit the same color since all plants of a particular cultivar are essentially genetically identical.

**Black gum** (*Nyssa sylvatica*) is another outstanding native with lustrous foliage that tolerates both moist and dry soils. And in the fall, there are few plants that can rival the red to red-maroon of this species. Older trees have a bark that is knobby, almost reptilian-like. The scarlet oak (*Quercus coccinea*) is usually found in nature on dry sites. True to its name, the fall foliage is an outstanding bright red.



Fabulous foliage of the full moon maple (*A. japonicum*)

**Ginkgo** (*Ginkgo biloba*) has one of the most extraordinary bright yellows in nature. It is one of the toughest landscape trees (used as a street tree in New York City). CAUTION, be sure to get a male cultivar because the females produce smelly fruits! One other potential disadvantage (nobody’s perfect) is that the fall color can be brief. If there is a hard frost most of the leaves will immediately abscise.

A plant that is similar in stature



A campus *Ginkgo biloba* in full golden glory...

to the Japanese maple is the **full moon maple** (*Acer japonicum*). This species has larger foliage compared to a Japanese maple. And the fall colors are *bright* with shades of yellows, oranges, and reds.

And lastly, the **katsuratree** (*Cercidiphyllum japonicum*) has subtle fall foliage colors of yellow and apricot but, and get this, when the first frost occurs the leaves emit a cotton candy fragrance that will make you think you are at the state fair. Sugars in the leaves volatilize resulting in the most wonderful fragrance that hangs in the morning air. OK, enough of the thesaurus. ☺

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Coming soon: more Winter short courses! Watch for our "Hands-on" Workshops and Home Landscape Series

**Who's Who at the Garden**

Garden Director,  
Newsletter Editor, and  
Webmistress  
**Dr. Holly Scoggins**

Head Horticulturist  
**Stephanie Huckestein**

Woody Plant Curator  
**Dr. Alex Niemiera**

Head, Department of  
Horticulture  
**Dr. Jerzy Nowak**

**VOLUNTEERS HELP OUR GARDEN GROW!**

Forrest and Linda Fiedler make the 60-mile round trip drive from deep in Floyd County to the VT campus each Monday evening during the growing season since 1993. They're but two of a dedicated group of gardeners who set aside their Monday evenings to plant, mulch, prune, dig, and otherwise help maintain our nearly three acres of garden.

The volunteer program was started under Dr. Bob Lyons' directorship in the early 1990's. Many of our volunteers are in the New River Valley Master Gardener program (<http://civic.bev.net/nrvmg>) and the Monday sessions can count as valuable hours toward the volunteer service requirement. "However," notes Linda, "We are committed to the Hort Garden and would volunteer even if we were not able to use the hours as part of our Master Gardener

requirements. We have been introduced to many perennials, trees, and shrubs that we would not have become familiar with otherwise. Many of these we have then tried in our own garden."

Volunteer sessions run from mid-spring to the end of September, with occasional workdays in between. Often the first half-hour or so is reserved for an educational experience, such as checking out neat new plants or learning which perennials rebloom after pruning.

*"You can either visit with other gardeners, or work by yourself in quiet contemplation, depending on how you feel..." - Linda Fiedler*

Our helpers seldom go home empty-handed, between extra bedding plants or dividing overgrown plant material, and revamping beds. Excess irises, peonies, ferns, and ornamental grasses have all found new and loving homes.

Bill Gottert has helped out for the past five years and offers this explanation of why folks keep coming back, year after year... "We enjoy each other's company, and no matter if you're an expert gardener or just starting out, all are welcome and all contribute." For more information on our volunteer program, contact Stephanie Huckestein at (540) 231-5970 ☎ — H.S.



Most of our Garden volunteers, Summer 2002