

Saturdays in the Garden Teach Best Gardening Practices

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Prince William master gardeners stand ready to teach novice and experienced gardeners alike how to make the most of their gardens. The Master Gardener Volunteers of the Virginia Cooperative Extension-Prince William Unit (VCE) know about growing everything from food to ornamentals.

During the monthly Saturdays in the Garden, between 9 a.m. and noon, at the St. Benedictine Monastery, located at 9535 Linton Hall Road in Bristow, experts give talks and demonstrations on gardening techniques to match growing conditions in the area.

"We hope to teach about sustainable landscaping, which is landscaping that you can manage yourself at home with plants that are suited to our climate and our region," said VCE Natural Resources Specialist Nancy Berlin. "What we really like to see is people using pesticides, herbicides and fertilizers carefully or not at all. We can teach the right plant for the right place. That way, they'll have healthier plants that will be more resistant to disease and insects."

The Classes

In his presentation “How to Grow and Identify Mushrooms” on July 10, Extension Forestry Specialist Adam Downing will show people how to grow shitake and other mushrooms. “We’re going to teach people how to grow mushrooms at home using a log. We’ll be inoculating logs. It’s basically drilling holes and putting the spores into the log so that the mushrooms grow,” Berlin said. The featured Bed of the Month will give tips on how to establish a drought-tolerant bed. [Register](#) here.

People who attend the “Cut Flowers” on Aug. 7 will learn how to make the best of their flower gardens. “They can learn how to start from seeds, how to prep the soil, what to do as far as planting, where to cut the flower, how to best prepare for bouquets, just about everything, A to Z,” said Master Gardener Amye Foelsch. “Flowers bring so much joy. Vegetables nourish the body. Flowers nourish the soul.” The Teaching Garden Bed of the Month: Deer Resistant is featured in the August session. [Register](#) here.

Cover crops, Hugelkultur garden and a fall plant sale will take place at the teaching garden on Sept. 4. Hugelkultur involves using raised beds that provide compostable material and protection with brush piles, leaf management and twig structures. Teaching Garden Bed of the Month: Rock Garden is included in the session. [Register](#) here.

During permaculture and yoga sessions in the garden on Oct. 2, visitors will learn about permaculture design, which is building regenerative and ecological landscapes. “Permaculture expert Rick Stafford will talk about converting your current landscape into a landscape you can eat,” Berlin said. Teaching Garden Bed of the Month: Four Season’s Bed is included in the session. [Register](#) here.

The Benefits

Master gardeners believe gardening is universal. “We hope that people will get a better understanding of the accessibility of gardening for everyone. It’s great for the environment,” said Master Gardener Jean Bennett. “It’s also amazing what it takes to be able to eat – the pollinators, the good soil, the care of the land and awareness of the garden.”

People can garden, to some extent, anywhere, according to Master Gardener and Yoga Instructor Ellen King. “It’s great to throw a plant in the ground, but if you can throw a native in the ground, you’re really going for the whole ecosystem. If you live in an apartment and you can put a flower pot out and grow something, that’s a great thing. The thing that we really want to stress is that anybody can do it.”

The Saturday in the Garden classes are not static. Everyone gets involved. “I’ve enjoyed the interaction with folks,” said Master Gardener Phil Peck. “It’s a learning process for me because they ask good questions. If I don’t know the answer, I have to do a little bit of research or go find someone who does. It’s been kind of a back-and-forth. It’s not a one-way communication, so it’s been good for me from that standpoint.”

People can also call VCE at 703-792-7747 with gardening questions. Visit [VCE-Prince William Unit](#) for more information.