FAIRFAX COUNTY Master Gardeners
Serving the Community Since 1976

Information for Writers, Editors, and Photographers for Fairfaxgardening.org

1. Mission of the Website
The website is intended to:
- Educate the general public
- Promote master gardener programs in Fairfax County.

Fairfaxgardening.org serves this purpose by:
- Featuring essays, papers, recommendations, Q&A's authored by FCMGA members and other invited contributors. <u>Content is based upon research-based horticultural concepts and practices.</u>
- Aiming to publish 3-5 new items per month while maintaining reference materials
- Providing convenient access to research papers on horticulture, particularly those authored by VCE scientists.

Fairfaxgardening.org is designed to serve two sectors of the general public.
- Average Homeowners: Have a practical interest in maintaining the health of plants in their landscapes or in containers inside or outside of their residences.
- Garden Hobbyists: They are interested in gaining more advanced knowledge of topics such as botany, plant selection, garden design, soil health, organic gardening. Note that the Garden Hobbyists are also prospective recruits as master gardeners.

2. Eligibility to write for Fairfaxgardening.org
Writers need not be experts in the subject matter of topics they choose for publication. Writing a story on a subject is a good way to gain expertise. Our expectation is that stories for publication will be researched and authoritative.
Eligible contributors include:
- Interns and Certified members in good standing in FCMGA or Green Spring Master Gardeners
- Anyone invited to submit content by the editors of Fairfaxgardening.org.

3. Service Hours
Master Gardeners earn self-reported service hours for researching, writing and editing content, administering the website, promoting the website, and managing the content.

4. Editorial Policies
Monthly production schedule
- Fairfaxgardening.org publishes new content during the first 7 days of every month.
- Draft stories should be submitted by the end of the preceding the month.
- Editors aim to provide edited copy by the end of the preceding month.

Editing and review, declining publication
- <u>All stories submitted are subject to review and editing to maintain standards</u>. Content may be fact-checked by editors using scientific references and VCE, and may be reformatted to be consistent with the website design and graphic presentation.
- Items of a technical nature are subject to review by the Fairfax County Extension Agent.
- FCMGA reserves the right to:
  - Decline publication of stories that are not consistent with objectives, principles, and standards.
  - Determine volunteer hours. If a story is declined for publication, the appropriate master gardening oversight official will determine the number of volunteer hours, if any, the author has earned for her/his efforts.
  - Allow publication and use of the stories. Fairfax Master Gardeners and the author will hold joint copyright to all published material and can determine publication

Overall Approach to Selection of Content
Timing
Content is presented to the public when it is of most use to our audience. If a piece is completed out of season, we may hold it until the appropriate time.

Area focus
The focus is on Northern Virginia, particularly Fairfax County. Therefore, content is tailored to our area with particular attention given to climate and soil types that are typical for Fairfax County.

Content types
- Fairfaxgardening.org balances topics among flowers, ornamentals, vegetables, trees, edibles, houseplants, garden design, techniques, and gardening problems.
- Fairfaxgardening.org also presents news of interest to our target audience.
- In general, the website avoids repeating information that is presented elsewhere unless the information is inaccessible or unknown to the audience. This may mean explaining technical gardening concepts in layman's terms or simplifying gardening best practices.
- Our website may also take rather dry factual information and make it more accessible and readable.
- Content may also include personal experiences and opinions.

Style
Style Guide
We mostly follow the Associated Press (AP) Style Guide and research organization horticultural nomenclature.

Length
Writers should strive to maintain about 500 words. Longer features are encouraged when the depth or breadth of the subject matter warrants. Subjects requiring longer presentations may be divided into two or more features run in consecutive months.

Formality of writing
- We want writing that will attract readers from the audience pools defined in section 1 above.
- When we are advising gardeners regarding a best practice or providing technical information, the writing style must be sufficiently formal to lend authority to the item.
- The style may be less formal when we are telling entertainment or stories from personal experience.

References, resources, source citations
- Content should be based upon previously published scientific publications from government or research and educational institutions. Reference sources from citations shall be included at the end of the piece. The purpose is to give proper attribution of the information, and to facilitate an online search for additional source material by a reader. The list of citations can be subtitled "References" or "Resources." We do not use footnotes.
- If source material is a Virginia Cooperative Extension publication, the citation shall include the title, author if known, and the VCE publication number as shown below. Abbreviations (VCE) are not used for any institution or source. Periods are not used - references are not sentences.
  Insect and Mite Pests of Boxwood, Eric Day, Virginia Cooperative Extension Publication ENTO-42NP

  Or when there is no publication number:
  May Tips: Vegetables; Virginia Cooperative Extension

  Upon submission, insert a **COMPLETE** URL along with the name of the article being cited. The URL will be displayed and linked in the final online version. The web address is needed so the webmaster can recreate the link in the posting process. A complete citation should appear in the submitted written piece as:
  http://pubs.ext.vt.edu/ENTO/ENTO-42/ENTO-42.pdf
  Insect and Mite Pests of Boxwood, Virginia Cooperative Extension ENTO-42NP

- Extension publications from other states shall be cited in similar fashion. Title, full name of the extension service, publication number (if available) are listed in that order followed by the web address.
  http://www.clemson.edu/extension/hgic/plants/landscape/shrubs/hgic1062.html
  Camellia, HGIC 1062, Clemson Cooperative Extension

- Journal articles used as sources should be listed by title of paper, full name of author, journal or website where it was published with volume number. The year of publication is optional.
  Cultural Practices Can Influence Root Development for Better Transplanting Success, George Watson, American Gardener, June 2010

- When books are used as references, list the title of the book, the edition of the book, if known and the full name of the author insert no abbreviations for names, publication dates, or publication companies
  Manual of Woody Landscape Plants, by Michael A. Dirr

Plant names
- Fairfaxgardening.org uses botanical nomenclature to identify plants. When a common name is used for the first time, it should be followed closely in the text by the botanical name.
- Binomial nomenclature includes the genus name followed by the specific epithet. Taken together, this is the name of a species. The name of the genus begins with a capital letter; the specific epithet is not capitalized. The name is always italicized. Other scientific names need not be used for casual mention of subjects not a direct part of the topic.
  Hydrangea paniculata
  Camellia japonica

  <u>This name need not be reproduced in total throughout the document</u>. After the initial use of the botanical name, it can be abbreviated.
  C. japonica or, when referring to the genus, *Camellia* sp. for Camellia species

- Cultivar names: When we refer to a specific cultivar of the species we use the botanical name, full or abbreviated, followed by the cultivar name set off in single quotation marks. The botanical name is italicized; the cultivar name is not. This nomenclature can be shortened to only the cultivar name when repeated throughout the story.
  Hydrangea arborescens 'Annabelle'
  H. arborescens 'Annabelle'

  This nomenclature can be shortened to only cultivar name if repeated throughout the story, and is set forth in single quotation marks.
  'Annabelle' is often planted as a focal point in the garden bed.

- Variety Names: When we refer to a variety, a version of a plant that occurs in nature, we use the botanical name, full or abbreviated, followed by the word "var." (not italicized) and the variety name (italicized but not capitalized), with no quotation marks. This nomenclature can be shortened to only the variety name if repeated throughout the story.
  Prunus serotina var. *alabamensis*

Pesticides
- We promote the Integrated Pest Management (IPM) approach to pest control.
- If a story includes a pesticide recommendation, it must include a statement to the effect that pesticide users are required by law to follow the label on the pesticide container.
- <u>All pesticide recommendations shall be consistent with the current edition of the Virginia Pest Management Guide</u>, and shall be cited in the references section at the end of the piece. For example:
  http://pubs.ext.vt.edu/456/456-018/Section04-Home-Ornamentals.pdf
  Pest Management Guide: Home Grounds and Animals, 2016, Virginia Cooperative Extension, Section 4, Home Ornamentals

  Note that the appropriate section of the Pest Management Guide is cited and URL given.
- Pesticide recommendations should focus on products that are generally available for purchase and use by the average gardener. Recommendations need not include every pesticide listed. Recommendations should include organic and biological options when these are cited in the Pest Management Guide.

5. Photography
Formatting
- Authors need not submit photos with their stories, but can rely on the editors to provide appropriate illustrations and photos.
- Photographs are used to illustrate points in the story or advance the story, not to showcase an author's garden. They should not be captioned when the point of the photograph is clear from the accompanying text.
- Photos shall be submitted to Fairfaxgardening.org with as much resolution as possible. Photos are submitted in .jpg or similar photographic format. <u>Photos should never be inserted into tables, submitted as embedded in text, or submitted as URL links. Photos and text are submitted as separate files.</u>
- Photos can contain a caption (optional) and photo credit indicated to assist the webmaster in locating the photos in the story. Just a placeholder can be indicated into the text document if photo location is important - such as "place photo 1 here".

Attribution of photos
- All photos submitted for use must have credit indicated.
- Authors of content can use photographs they have taken <u>if of sufficient quality</u>. These are attributed as "Photo by Author."

- Photos from extension service publications (.edu) and government agencies (.gov) web sites may be used with attribution but without permission. The name of the photographer (if known), and the full name of the extension service/copyright holder must however be included in the attribution.
  Examples:
  photo: Virginia Cooperative Extension
  photo: Mary Anne Hansen, Virginia Cooperative Extension
  photo: Mark Wethington, JC Raulston Arboretum at North Carolina State University

- Free photos from a "commons" website may be used as long as the commons website's rules for attribution are followed.
  photo: Paul Munhoven, Wikipedia Commons

- <u>Photos from commercial websites may not be used without written permission from the owner</u>. Contact editors for the simple email form to request permission. Editors of Fairfaxgardening.org may approve exceptions to this policy with appropriate justification.
- Fairfaxgardening.org has no budget to pay rights fees for photographs.

6. Miscellaneous formatting guidance
Spaces
<u>Leave only one space after the period at the end of the sentence</u>. Additional spaces can play havoc with the layout in our Wordpress template, especially when photos or tables are inserted into the story, and are not needed as we have moved away from typewriters which double spaces were used for.

Text Styles
The font, paragraph styling, and layout in submitted text documents are not important and are ignored when uploading. Fonts, line spacing, size, appearance are all automatically set by the web site templates we use - not by the author's document or the author's computer software. Only the text is used in uploading material to the website templates, however, formatting the submissions do give the editors an idea of what the author intended. Editors will format the final document when posting to conform to the standard typology developed and used for the website.

Tables
Use of tables is discouraged because of the difficulty in placing in Wordpress pages and because they do not render well in responsive (cell phone size screens) design. To obtain approval or guidance, contact the Webmaster if you are contemplating the use of tables in a piece