

## A Garden of Delight!

One of the perks of being a master gardener is the opportunity to wander through someone else's perfect garden to admire, enjoy, and learn. Substituting for the May 'sit down inside' meeting was a golden morning at Dunham Massie Farm, the home and garden of Cam and Dean Williams.

Having read of the 'ease' of a wildlife meadow, master gardeners were eager to study the meadows surrounding the 'parking' field where daisies, poppies, and buttercups sparkled in the sun. Mrs. Williams explained that the meadows had not worked out as hoped. Meadows require a more intensive effort than one would believe reading the happy chatter in articles and catalogs, but even if not quite the picture of abundance, the area, refreshed by mowed, can be enjoyed for the charming expanse that it is.

To visit a finely wrought garden as that at Dunham Massie is to recognize the skill, time, taste and downright hard work that goes into its creation. It has elegance beginning with the entrance road lined with willow oaks. The original cedars did not provide space for moving vans so had to go! They became, among other things, the benches that offer a place to sit and contemplate the surrounding beauty.

The shade of tall pines supports the woodland gardens rich with native plants such as huge jack-in-the pulpits and other beloved plants and nothing arcane nor frenzied, just the best of the familiar. The gardens surrounding the house and its patios are enhanced with small trees pruned to show their character and masses of perfectly groomed perennials including iris (I envy) and one exquisite yellow tree peony.

Because Dunham Massie is on waterfront it presents solutions to erosion: one large bed of lavender and rugosa roses – an explosion of fragrance- is held in place by bulkheading and the shore beyond protected by riprap. It was a memorable morning and the Gloucester MGs thank their tour guides, Cam Williams and her co-experts, Cindy Gebhard and Rosalie Brown, for their sharing of time, experience, and knowledge.

**Sign up-you'll love it!**

Are you newly retired or just looking for a different activity to explore? Perhaps your youngest child will be off on the big yellow bus come fall? In any case if you love gardening the opportunity is here, right now, to sign up for the Master Gardener course to be held from September 6 through November 17, 2011. It will be held Tuesday and Thursday mornings, 9-12.

The course will be held at the Northside Christian Church, 1213 George Washington Memorial Highway (Rte 17) York County. The course fee is \$100 and it covers the handbook and other materials.

To expand your gardening understanding is to become a better steward of your home environment. That knowledge has never been more needed as the society around us becomes

more centered on “getting and spending”. Actually you will save more money than this course costs just by knowing which expensive products are not needed in caring for your lawn and garden!

The basic purpose of the program, volunteers who assist their local Cooperative Extension Office in educating the public, is to help your home community. As the natural environment becomes ever more threatened by the pressures of development and climate change, the knowledge of how to protect our gardening spaces becomes more essential and to share this know-how an exciting venture.

The essential fifty hours of instruction includes basic botany, insects, diseases, pruning, lawns, fertilizers, soils, vegetables, flowers, trees, and shrubs, and propagation. The instructors are experts in their respective fields and class time allows for hands on experience as well. The course comes with a massive loose-leaf textbook from Va. Tech that is your tutor for take-home-open-book tests. You may download an application at <http://www.yorkcounty.gov.vce>. **The deadline is May 31, 2011.**

Any of the extension offices will be happy to help you. You may call Hampton (757) 727-1401, York (757) 890-4940, Newport News (757) 591-4838, Gloucester (804) 693-2602