

The Grapevine

June 2018

New River Valley Master Gardener Association Newsletter

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Spring Potluck

by Susan Perry

On May 10th, Master Gardeners celebrated the graduation of a new class of trainees at a potluck dinner. After eight weeks of in-depth classes, our trainees became interns. To successfully complete the program, they still have to complete 50 volunteer hours by year-end. With the many diverse Master Gardener projects available to them, it's clear they will have no problem clearing that hurdle as well. Let's congratulate the members of the class of 2018: Ben Schwarz, Yi-ling Shen, Douglas Mitchell, Fei Fu, John "Alan" Simpson, Carl "Mitch" Holcomb, Jane Sutton, Shirley Cline, Patricia "Trish" Poole, Kathleen Jones, Melissa Philen, Maria Cucinotta, Cynthia Creighton, Jama Mason, and Rebecca "Becky" Howell.



In addition to the graduation of a new class of trainees, the potluck involved good food, conversation, announcements, a request for feedback about communication with Master Gardeners, service awards, and a raffle. Finally, Lynn Brammer, Wendy Silverman, & Kelli Scott were each presented a card signed by all the trainees and a gift, thanking them for all they did for the training class of 2018.

L to R: Jane Sutton, Lynn Brammer, Wendy Silverman, Kelli Scott, Trish Poole

Photo: Ruth Ann Whitener

Highlights from the NRVMGGA Plant Sale 2018

Courtesy of Lynn Brammer



Travels with(out) Charles - Introducing Paige

By Erica Jones

I am sorry to report that Charles, the in-house author, has been replaced by Paige. Charles has vanished and we just do not expect him to return. In any case, Paige is eager to take up pen and paper, in particular pens. The pens do not always survive the dog-encounter!



My most recent (no-dog) outing was across the northern border to Montreal where I have relatives. It was suggested that I visit the Montreal Botanical Garden (4101 Sherbrooke Ave). I initially poo-pooed the idea -- after all, I had just been to Longwood Gardens, and how can you get better than that?

Well, you can, actually. Longwood's interior space is definitely aimed towards the novice viewer, and aimed for maximum eye appeal

vs. the Canadian learning approach. Admittedly, Longwood Gardens' mid-winter display of blue flowers in the main greenhouse (blue edging beds around large grass rectangles) was gorgeous and relaxing. But

Montreal takes the standard layout approach of different climate zones in their 10 greenhouses. You start in the traditional tropical jungle and desert (cacti always seem underappreciated), but then you land in the best collection of tropical fruit and spices I've ever seen, complete with very good information signs. After the coffee, chocolate, mangos, bananas, allspice, cinnamon, guava, fig, citrus, sugar cane, tea, and jackfruit, you open the door to their orchid collection.

Here they seemed to be emphasizing ID, country of origin, and the variety, and not just big, flashy displays. More than a few orchids were behind (locked) glass and there were occasional signs posted about "cameras" and "prosecution".

Then, on to the Begonias and Gesneriads (and also living walls of Tillandsia).

I started to get itchy, so we tried to beeline to the butterfly display. But on the way, you have to go through the winter display of bonsai. These guys were cooling their heels in a slightly heated but full sun greenhouse. The oldest one on display that day was about 100 years old; the youngest was about 20 and attributed to one of the staff in the arboretum. Most of the ones on display were evergreen, but some were deciduous. I would not like to be in charge of a 100-year old plant in a tiny pot: imagine keeping up with the watering?

Finally, butterflies. So THIS is where everyone had gotten to! There were large groups of school children, outfitted in neon green vests, making very happy noises. The butterflies (and two types of large moth) were released in an area full of winter blooming (pollen-laden) plants such as amaryllis, butterfly bush, jasmine, cannas, lantana, hyacinth, and yellow sage. They have about 50 species of butterflies (and a few of the really big moths)

on display at any one time. The greenhouse was also stocked with host plants such as milkweed, powder puff plant, passion flower, and banana. If you stood still long enough, you were pretty much guaranteed to get a least one or two butterflies perching on you somewhere. Seems they keep releasing new butterflies into the area during the two-month display. I did not see very many obviously "used" wings; we wondered if they patrolled regularly for butterflies that were at the end of their life cycle. The garden claims that they purchase butterflies from farms in seven different countries. Apparently, the income helps preserve natural butterfly habitat in Costa Rica.

Bonsai Course at the Philadelphia Flower Show

By Erica Jones

In addition to the amazing displays of horticultural specimens and the theme of "The Wonders of Water", the Philadelphia Flower Show had two locations hosting speakers throughout the day. One of the lectures was a crash course in how to start a bonsai.

Traditional bonsai are shrubs or trees that would be hardy enough to live outside if not tortured into tiny containers. So overwintering them is best in a fairly cool but very sunny greenhouse. Summers require strict adherence to at least daily watering and lots of pruning.

The speaker started with a fairly ordinary 5 gallon spreading type juniper. He trimmed off most of the lower branches and the major side branches leaving basically one (crooked) stem. He also took a knife and damaged the bark on another stem to give it some "aging". Obviously, he had an eye for what could be done with raw material like an ordinary 5-gallon container shrub.

Root reduction has to be done a bit slower. He did not do any root torture during the demonstration and did not recommend doing any immediately. Over the next few years, the plant will be pruned and the roots reduced so that it will eventually fit into a container many sizes smaller.



Wood Thrush Natives Tour

By Susan Perry



On May 24, NRV Master Gardeners had the opportunity to take a tour of Wood Thrush Natives, located in Floyd. About 20 Master Gardeners took the tour given by owner Ian Caton. We also earned CE hours!

I attended a talk given by Ian at the Hahn Horticulture Gardens, earlier this spring. I found Ian to be extremely knowledgeable so my interest was piqued by the offer of a tour. The focus of the nursery is native plants of the Appalachian region.

Ian started the tour by answering questions posed by Master Gardeners. For example, Ian spoke at length about his practice of not using mulch beyond the first year or two of plant installation. He pointed out that Mother Nature provides a variety of “mulches” like fallen leaves or groundcovers. Ian favors allowing plants to spread, thereby suppressing weeds. He has found that applying mulch may cause crown rot.

Ian also favors garden design that uses layers that mimic nature: (from tallest to shortest) large trees, smaller understory trees, shrubs, perennials (tall, medium, and small), and groundcovers. His design tip about groundcovers is that they will act as a background/anchor, so use many and allow them to spread together.

Another question Ian addressed was to discuss landscaping with deer. He suggested thinking beyond just plants, using rocks and logs, and making sure to introduce plant variety/diversity. He did mention that plants in the mint family, ornamental grasses, and ferns are not favored by deer.

Ian starts his plants from seeds, cuttings, and division. His operation is organic and ethical. Heated greenhouses are not used. Gwen Douglas referred the attendees to Wood Thrush Natives website, <http://www.woodthrushnatives.com/>,

which she said is an excellent resource to use in advance of buying.



INSPIRATION

By Barbara Smith

Since I became a Master Gardener last spring, I have started to become interested in visiting other gardeners' showcases during my travels through the United States and abroad. Last summer, I vacationed back where I grew up, and where I still consider home, in Michigan and Wisconsin. While I was visiting, my sister surprised me with a trip to the Door County area, which is a peninsula north of Green Bay that juts into Lake Michigan.



The Master Gardeners in WI have created an open-to-the-public garden in Door County called "The Garden Door." It is easy to see that a lot of fun and creative ideas went into this garden. There were activities and interesting displays of plants, flowers, and critters for both adults and children to investigate. The Garden Door was also filled with art and was designed beautifully. I left filled with ideas, already dreaming up new possibilities.



I thoroughly enjoy traveling and have many trips planned over the next year with my husband. Now I have even more treasures to uncover during my explorations -- The Garden Door only wetted my curiosity to see more of what other Gardeners have accomplished across the world. I'm looking forward to seeking out new creative ideas to bring back to my own Master Garden.



PHILADELPHIA FLOWER SHOW & LONGWOOD GARDENS

By Liz Swinfen

Thanks to Lisa Lloyd's organizational skills, on Thursday March 8th, a group of nine NRV Master Gardeners headed out in a Hootie van to Philadelphia. We had an uneventful trip, but were very glad for our experienced driver when we hit traffic. We were met at the hotel in Wilmington by Linda Davis, arriving from New York.



The hotel was lovely and after checking in, we all dispersed to eat. Some dined at the hotel, others met old friends and relatives for dinner, and some of us ventured out to explore the food available at the very nice Christiana Mall. While we did not head to the casino that night (sorry Gwen!), Erica got kudos for using the hotel swimming pool.

Early the next morning, we climbed back in the van and were taken to the Philadelphia Convention Center for the Flower Show. The theme was "The Wonders of Water". We were greeted at the entrance by a wonderful Tropical Rain Forest, complete with realistic bird sounds.

The rest of the Flower Show was divided into sections. In Landscapes, various designers had incorporated the use of water into their settings. I would love to know how they managed to get fully blooming fruit trees into the hall without damage! There were also displays of specimens and some judged classes. I loved the Grand Old Plants exhibit, which included plants older than 20 years. There were also sections where designers had made a garden around a front door. Everywhere you looked, there were lovely and interesting things to see.



A number of us enjoyed the presentations. All day, on the hour, there was a different speaker. One informative presentation was "Ways to Retain Water in Your Garden". Chris Holt, from Pittsburgh, was the entertaining speaker. Now we have to remember to carry our watering cans backwards so we don't get wet feet and to line our tomato planting holes with wet newspaper. She was full of helpful hints. Other presentations included "Container Gardens", "Pollinator Health", and "Aquaponic Growing". With so much to see, I wasn't able to hear those, although some of our group did.

Several of us took a lunch break across the street at the famous Reading Market. It is fabulous but was very crowded due to the Flower Show. We managed to have good eats though, and a quick glance at what the market has to offer -- foods from around the world, gorgeous bakeries, cut flowers -- made us realize it was definitely worth a second visit.



We returned to the Flower Show in time to hear Jenny Rose Carey, the Director of PHS Meadowbrook Farm, talking about hardy garden plants for winter and early spring interest. I am sure we'll be searching our garden catalogs for her suggestions.

In the last hour, we quickly took in the vendor booths, which we agreed were not gardening-oriented enough and more like any other craft show with some notable exceptions. Then, some of us might have sampled the free wine and spirit tasting - mentioning no names. What happens in Philly stays in Philly!

A weary band returned to the bus and hotel. Gwen got her trip to the casino for supper and we collectively lost about \$5 -- clearly, we are not high rollers.

Saturday morning, we headed to Longwood Gardens. Some of us had been before. Secretly, I wondered ahead of time what there would be to see in March, since the grounds were blanketed with snow. I need not have worried, because the greenhouses took all our time.

It is hard to describe just how wonderful they were. The sheer size of 4 acres under glass is mind boggling, but they are filled with such beauty. There were several houses devoted to blue spring flowers because it was their "Winter Blues Fest". They are especially proud of the blue poppies.

Other themes included the Orchid Extravaganza, a bonsai display with some specimens over 100 years old, and a Clivia show. Who knew that you could buy a clivia in the (very nice) gift shop for \$299? Or not...

The Wall is a particular feature of Longwood -- a great sweeping hallway with live plants growing on walls on either side -- mostly ferns, completely covering the surfaces. We had a close look to see how they did it. Although there were a lot of people, somehow the greenhouses did not feel crowded.

Longwood Gardens was started in 1907 by Pierre DuPont. The Conservatory opened in 1921. Since then, it has been expanded and improved, and has a \$50 million annual budget. The mission statement reads "Longwood Gardens is the living legacy of Pierre S. du Pont, inspiring people through excellence in garden design, horticulture, education, and the arts." We agreed the 1300 employees and volunteers have accomplished that mission.

I will certainly try and return at some time to see the outdoor gardens and to enjoy the 400 acres that are open to the public.

We headed back to our Hootie Ride for the ride home, everyone agreeing it was a great trip. Thanks again Lisa!



A Visit to the Botanical Garden of Curitiba in Brazil

By Sharon Eifried

A few years ago, I was lucky enough to squeeze in a stop in Curitiba which is the largest city in southern Brazil and the capital of the State of Parana. Of course, the attraction for my husband was a train with a steam engine; the attraction for me was the *Jardim Botânico de Curitiba*.

The beautiful Botanical Garden, laid out in the style of French gardens, opened in 1991 and covers 59 acres. The flower-lined path from the entrance of the Garden leads to a stately art nouveau-style glass and metal greenhouse that contains many tropical and sub-tropical plants under an impressive triple-domed glass roof. Steps inside the greenhouse allow visitors to climb to an upper level and view the plants and the garden from many different angles.

In addition, there are fountains, sculptures, waterfalls, lakes, and ponds throughout the garden. One of the fountains is the site of the *Maternal Love* sculpture created in 1907 by the Polish-Brazilian artist, Jan Zak. The sculpture was donated to the Garden in 1993 by the Polish colony of Brazil to honor all mothers of Parana during the celebration of the 300th anniversary of the city.

A large collection of native Brazilian flora can be found in a wooden structure known as the Botanic Museum. The inventory of native plants attracts many researchers from around the world and is the cornerstone of one of the campuses of the Federal University of Parana. A forest that surrounds the greenhouse includes vegetation native to the moist Atlantic forests of eastern Brazil.

In 2008, the Botanical Garden added a "Garden of Sensations", where approximately 70 plant species fill the space with various smells, textures, shapes and sizes. Within the half-acre sensing garden, there is a meandering path where all plants are labeled in braille. The garden is surrounded by trees and hidden by a fence of bamboo to screen out noise. Many groups, including school children, visit the sensing garden to walk the path with blindfolds, using their other senses to identify plants.

The Sensing Garden was one of the highlights of the visit for me. Our tour guide had to get special permission for us to visit as the space has a locked gate and a reservation is required. While we were there, a group of children and adults arrived to experience the garden. The children listened to a short introductory class and then donned blindfolds and wove their way through the plants. I enjoyed watching them as they experienced the smells and feel of the many plants such as lavender, lamb's ears, dill, basil, mint and so many others.

People of all ages can enjoy a beautiful and educational experience at the Botanical Garden of Curitiba. The same can be said for the Botanical Garden in Rio de Janeiro, but that is a topic for another day!



Learning From Experience

By Susan Perry

There's an old saying, "You learn from your mistakes." So my question is, "How come I'm not a genius by now?" After all, I can't deny that I've certainly made my share of mistakes – with a few real lulus mixed in. I guess I'm just the epitome of learning the hard way.

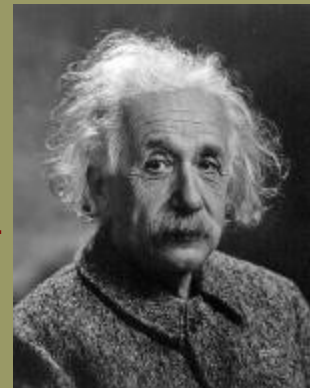
Let's take garden design. I know what looks good when I see it, but my poor plants are beggin' for mercy by the time I get done with them. Every spring, I tweak and move them in an effort to get them placed "just right" – again, I'll know it when I see it. Sometimes I move them two and three times each season, sometimes only a few inches away from their former location. The poor plants, no wonder they're a bit tired and puny. But each time, ever the optimist, I'm certain that "this is it," that I "have it," and that my back yard will finally look as good as the Hahn Horticulture Garden. Ha!

Then, there are my many adventures with plant care. Finally, I've learned that there are reasons based in experience, fact, and reality why gardeners are advised to perform specific plant maintenance. I now know that just like doing "regularly scheduled maintenance" on a car, doing regularly scheduled plant maintenance makes one's life much easier than solving the problems caused by not doing maintenance. Sadly, this is one lesson I'm apparently destined to learn in more than just the gardening arena of my life. Twenty years ago, I neglected to change the oil in my car and kapow! Let's just say I have experience in replacing an engine.

On the gardening front, gardeners are often advised to refresh lilacs annually by trimming 25 – 33% of the plant (preferably old wood) down to the ground. Doing this promotes healthier growth by allowing light and air to all parts of the lilac, and by ridding the plant of the oldest, most vulnerable wood. But let me tell you, after you've enjoyed a lilac's blooms for a while, it's so darn hard to prune it back as recommended. I kept telling myself "next year, next year" but that turned into a few years and ultimately, lilac borers. Of course wouldn't you know, getting rid of the lilac borers involved pruning to the ground, application of a special insecticide during a specific 3 week period, and a lot more heartache and effort than if I'd just trimmed the darn thing as recommended!

I'm certain the universe is thankful I'm not a chemist, because who knows how many labs I would have blown up by now! Reading and following instructions are a critical component of gardening (and life), and this is another area where I apparently needed remedial training. I blame it on heredity, since we Perry's have a genetic pre-disposition to not reading instructions that has provided us with numerous hilarious family stories over the years. The result is always lopsided shelves, failed plumbing projects, or the inevitable run-ins with computer software installations. For my part, I struggled for a number of pre-Master Gardener years of applying herbicides during the heat of summer to finally learn (at a class, because who needs to read instructions anyhow?) that the best times of year to apply herbicides are typically spring and fall, during cooler weather when the weeds will be more likely to absorb them.

Maybe the moral of this story isn't that by now I should be a genius. Maybe the moral is that everyone is human, everyone makes mistakes, and often those mistakes follow a pattern from which the discerning observer can learn. Still, I think there's a PhD in something, waiting out there for me..... just call me Einstein!



Fall Flowering Perennials at the Hahn Horticulture Garden

Based on Presentation by Dr. Holly Scoggins

Written by Sharon Eifried

In September 2017, I attended a "Learn at Lunch" program presented by Dr. Holly Scoggins at the Hahn Horticulture Garden. It was a wonderful tour of the garden for the purpose of admiring and discussing plants in bloom. In this article I will share some of the pictures I took on the day of the tour and give you some tidbits of information that Holly shared about a few of the plants.

Our first stop was right outside the main door of the pavilion to see a beautiful pink **Japanese Anemone** (*anemone x hybrida*) in full bloom. This plant, commonly known as windflower, grows 2 to 3 feet tall, loves the sun, and makes a good foundation plant. It provides great cut flowers. Bees love this late season pollen!



Next, we discovered the **Aromatic Aster** (*Symphyotrichum oblongifolium* N). This plant reminds us of the New England Aster, but is compact and only grows 1 to 2 feet tall. The plant tolerates clay soil; deer are discouraged by its sticky and odiferous characteristics. Perfect for my garden! Butterflies are in love with the flowers that bloom August to September.



Soon we came upon the plant known as **Rough Goldenrod** (*Solidago rugosa* 'Fireworks' N). There is a perception that goldenrod causes allergies, but that is not true. It is the wind-borne pollen from other plants such as ragweed that causes hay fever. The bright yellow flowers of this cultivar resemble fireworks and attract both bees and butterflies. The plant blooms from September to October, may self-seed in the garden and tolerates clay soil, wet soil and deer. This plant would be perfect for my garden except that it needs lots of room to spread out.

As we traversed to the lower section of the garden we encountered the **Perennial Sunflower** (*Helianthus x 'Lemon Queen'*). This plant is very sturdy, loves full sun and blooms for 2 months starting in July. Good for the back of borders and combines well with ornamental grasses. This plant attracts butterflies and hummingbirds and is deer resistant.

As we approached the pond area, we were met with a sea of ever-lovely **Jo Pye Weed** (*Eutrochim purpureum*). This plant likes full sun to part shade, and loves moisture. If cut back in June there will be more compact growth for the fall. Deer do not usually like this plant, but butterflies adore it. Jo Pye Weed blooms July to September with seed heads lasting into winter.

Skipping over to the shady section of the garden we encountered **Hardy Begonia** (*Begonia grandis*), a plant that needs shade, is good with ferns, and can reseed. This begonia blooms from July to October, but does not appear until May. Because of this, it would be a good companion with blue bells which disappear early. If you grow this plant, mulch heavily over winter as it is not always reliably winter hardy. It is known to tolerate being planted with the black walnut. This is great as long as the deer also are not partial to that part of the garden.



One more plant that likes the shade, but will tolerate part sun is the Toad Lily (*Tricyrtis*). The star shaped, lily-like flower blooms in late summer to early fall. This bloom is known to provide the last fall nectar for butterflies. Holly likes to refer to this flower as an "autumn orchid"!

Lastly as we wound our way over to an area closer to the green houses, we encountered **Tall Verbena** (*Verbena bonariensis*). This plant blooms all summer and makes a great cut flower. It is also known as a "see-thru plant." This is a good thing for us during our visit because it made it possible for us to get a great view of the butterfly enjoying the tasty nectar of the verbena.

Hope you have enjoyed this little tour of the beautiful Hahn garden in fall. Perhaps next year you can venture to the Hahn Garden in the fall and enjoy these late bloomers that provide that ever needed late nectar for our friends, the bees and the butterflies.



Tips:

- Now is a good time to check your hardneck garlic and remove scapes.
- It's not too late to plant tomato plants.

What I Did Last Summer ... OR, My Own Silver Lining!

by Tracey Pouzar

Sometimes things don't turn out the way you think they will. I imagined my summer as a time of gardening, walking on the New River trail, and of course, volunteering with Master Gardeners. I mean, I had 50 hours of volunteering to get in! Unfortunately, after living with numbness in my fingers, hands and arms, an MRI showed that I needed to have disc replacement surgery. When I asked my neurosurgeon if the surgery could wait until after gardening and canning season, he said absolutely not. I was crushed. I had just started my garden and I had plans for all kinds of volunteering.

The surgery, as many of you can relate to, was not fun, nor was the recovery time. But as things go in life, I had a silver lining in my summer. I mentioned in my last article that I got to go to Europe over the summer. Well, it wasn't a planned trip. In fact, I didn't even know I was going until 2 ½ days before I was leaving! Here's my story.

I was at a cook-out with my church on a Sunday afternoon. My pastor's wife, Ashley, was talking about how she had won a trip to Europe and didn't have anyone to go with her. Her friends didn't have passports, no one could get vacation time, or they had family obligations that kept them from going. She was in a bind, so I shyly said "Um, I have my passport." Her reply was "Can you go?" I asked "When do we leave?" She said "Tuesday." After contacting my surgeon to make sure it was ok to fly, I started packing. Of course I had limitations: I couldn't carry my luggage (poor Ashley had to carry it) and I had PT exercises to do each day. Oh, and I couldn't drive much either. Next thing I knew, I was on an airplane headed to London. I mean, how fun is that? Talk about an adventure.



We saw the normal things while we were in London. Big Ben was under construction, so we had to see him chime. We went to Westminster Abbey, the London Tower, and had a fun time figuring out the Underground (the famous London subway). As we walked, and we did a lot of walking, I couldn't help but notice all the beautiful gardens. Now if you read my last article, you already know that I was not a flower person. I mean, you grow them, they die, and that is that. However, as we walked around, I was amazed at not only how beautiful the flower gardens were, but I also thought about how much work it must take to maintain all those flower beds. One of the first places we went to was Buckingham Palace and while the Palace and gates are beautiful, the gardens are amazing. The longer I was there, the more I found myself

drawn to the flowers – me, a vegetable person!



Normally, I only take photos if I or the person I am with is in the photo. I just don't take photos of scenery or objects. This all changed when I traveled. Once we got to Paris, I was taking photos of just the gardens. I took photos at the Louvre, Notre Dame, and at Square Jean XXIII. Then, I also took photos of the signs that explained the flowers and plants. I don't speak French, so any of you who speak French can translate if you don't recognize the flowers in the garden. I just enjoyed seeing them, regardless of the fact that I had no idea what I was looking at. At the end of the trip, I thought that on

my next trip, I would like to spend more time in the gardens and learn more about them. I want to talk to other people who enjoyed the gardens and learn how they came to love flowers and plants.

What the trip showed me was how much the Master Gardener program has continued to change me. I shared in my last article how I didn't have a green thumb. I also shared that I wasn't a flower person. Now I have my own pretty good-sized vegetable garden and I am taking photos of flowers. On my property, I have a limited non-vegetable garden. I have two hosta plants, two butterfly bushes, and some bulbs around my patio. What those bulbs are remains to be seen. Maybe some day lilies (doesn't everyone have those?) and some others that I would need help figuring out what they are, once they bloom this year. Who knows, maybe I will add more flowers? But it's more than likely that I will focus on turning my garden into a more vertical garden, adding rain barrels, and figuring out natural ways to keep deer out.

I am glad that my summer had that silver lining. I would also like to take time to thank my Master Gardener class for the card and for all those who sent text messages and e-mails. Life is what you make it and so is your Master Gardener experience. I encourage everyone to get out there, volunteer, and make the most of your Master Gardener experience.



"Live it up! Take photos of flowers."

FRIENDS OF PEAK CREEK: A 2018 COMMUNITY GRANT AWARD RECIPIENT

BY SHARON EIFRIED

This year the New River Valley Master Gardeners were treated to a very informative talk about the important work of the Friends of Peak Creek (FOPC). Cathy Hanks, President of FOPC, described the efforts that this nonprofit organization has taken to improve water quality and ecological habitat of the creek which has a drainage area of over 60 square miles and meanders over 26 miles from its source in Jefferson National Forest to Claytor Lake. The work of FOPC also fosters environmental awareness and provides education.

One of their ongoing projects includes planting live stakes to stabilize stream beds in an effort to repair and prevent bank erosion. Stakes planted in 2016 had a successful survival rate of 80%. In December 2017, 16 volunteers came together to plant an additional 1200 live stakes of Silky Dogwood, Elderberry, Nine Bark and Silky Willow plants. By April 2018, buds on the stakes were evident.

A recent project of the FOPC is the establishment of a Pollinator Garden at Heritage Park in Pulaski for the purpose of habitat enhancement and public education. In January, the FOPC was awarded a Master Gardener Association (MGA) 2018 Community Grant for the purpose of establishing a fence around the new garden. By May 18, 2018, the fence was up and planting had begun. The MGA also awarded a 2018 mini-grant to the FOPC for the purchase of native plants for the garden. The installation of interpretive

signage is planned for the near future.

Members of FOPC are also thoughtful to our feathered friends. Through the help of FOPC, twelve nesting boxes are in place along the Dora Bluebird Trail which runs along Peak Creek. By May 20, 2018 all the nesting boxes were occupied. Occasionally, the bluebirds had to share when the boxes became home to tree swallows, chickadees or wrens. In an effort to save ducks at the Creek from developing "angel wing syndrome," duck food dispensers offering nutritious duck food have been installed. The goal is to protect the ducks from becoming malnourished because of the ingestion of too much bread and snack food. Consumption of large amounts of carbohydrate and sugar is what causes angel wing syndrome which prevents the ducks from being able to fly and protect themselves from predators.

Additional projects undertaken by FOPC include keeping the creek free of litter, monitoring water quality, marking storm drains and installing pet waste stations. In the fall of 2016, Dora Trail which runs along Peak Creek was designated as a Virginia Birding and Wildlife Trail (SBWT) by the Virginia Department of Game and Inland Fisheries. The FOPC works with the town of Pulaski's Department of Parks and Facilities to enhance the trail along Peak Creek. Officially, Dora Trail is part of the "Lower New River Loop" in the Mountain section of the VBWT. See <https://www.dgif.virginia.gov/vbwt/sites/dora-trail/>

FRIENDS OF PEAK CREEK PROJECTS



Buds on Stakes: April 2018
Photo Courtesy of FOPC



Duck Food Dispensers: May 2018
Photo Courtesy of FOPC



Pollinator Garden: May 2018
Photo Courtesy of FOPC

MASTER GARDENER PHOTOS

Courtesy of Ruth Ann Whitener



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A special thanks to everyone who contributed to this issue of the newsletter.
You know who you are!