

The Naturalist

March 2025 Newsletter | Volume 21, Number 03
Historic Rivers Chapter of Virginia Master Naturalists

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Feature Photo: Eastern Painted Turtles (*Chrysemys picta*), at Greensprings, 03/23/25 by **Martha Moss**.

A Message from the President

by Janet Harper

I think we can all agree that the March in-person meeting was a lot of fun! It was great to see so many of you there! Kudos to the Basic Training team for successful graduation of another cohort. Big thanks to Donna and Marie for the yummy cake and other refreshments. And of course, big thanks to Judy Jones for keeping track of our milestones and bling! The evening was certainly a team effort, and we really do have a great team!

Thank you again to all those who rotated off the board this past month; I enjoyed working with all of you and appreciate all your efforts toward running the chapter! If you didn't read about these helpful people in last month's newsletter, please do so. They made many contributions.

Congratulations to all the new HRC graduates. Your group has already contributed many volunteer hours, and we appreciate your efforts. Congratulations to the 6 William & Mary students; we hope you'll find projects you enjoy doing. Hospitality will be reaching out to you once we have all your contact information.

Congratulations and thanks to all the newly elected board members. Alice Kopinitz, Rick Brown, and Dean Shostak are familiar faces returning to the

board. The three brand-new to-the-HRC board folks are also fairly new to our chapter. Laura Grove just completed basic training and will be our Media/Historian. Cynthia Ferrentinos (Outreach co-chair) and Linda Hughes (Secretary) both transferred into our chapter. For all of you, your willingness to serve the chapter is so appreciated. You can find the list of the current 2025-2026 Board on the [last page of the newsletter](#) and posted on Better Impact if you need it in the future.

I'm including the link to our new Projects page on our chapter website for you to review. This is a work in progress and not "open" to the public yet. We don't need a lot of detail about 'where and when' for activities that are not open to the public. You'll notice there are some short descriptions of projects we want to let the public know we are doing as well as longer descriptions of Bassett Trace Trail, and what we've accomplished at Brickyard Landing and Greensprings Trail (and soon Paspasheg Town) to encourage the public to come and see these "improved" places. We don't want every single project noted but can group projects such as wildlife mapping with a description of what the overall project entails. We would like to keep the descriptions fairly concise to not

overwhelm the reader. Check out the QR code in the Bassett Trace Trail section. Rick Brown is the contact person for this project and we will schedule a Zoom meeting for anyone who wants to provide a writeup or see how the QR codes and links can be used to provide more information "behind the scenes". <https://www.historicrivers.org/projects>

Now that the weather is better, our small group is trying to get back into doing [Birdability Surveys](#) of our parks. So far, we've done York River State Park, Croaker Landing, Jamestown Loop, and Gloucester Point Beach Park. By the time the newsletter goes out, we hopefully will have completed New Quarter Park. This is a great way to enjoy the outdoors and to look more closely at what the parks have to offer from a different perspective. Please consider joining us to do these surveys. Contact Adrienne Frank or me for more information.

A lot of our seasonal activities such as Bluebird monitoring, Osprey Watch, and native plant sale prep are well underway now, and Project FeederWatch will be ending April 30. Spring is such a wonderful time of year, get out there and enjoy the beauty of the season. Hope to see you outside.

Janet

On the Calendar

See Better Impact and HRC Google Group monthly Continuing education (CE) emails for more opportunities.

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|-----------|----------|---|
| Wednesday | April 9 | HRC General Meeting 6-7:45pm at JCC Library and via Zoom CE portion: "Plight of the Diamondback Terrapins" by Dr. Randy Chambers |
| Saturday | April 12 | CE/Outreach at " Spring into Conservation " 9am-12pm at Freedom Park |
| Thursday | April 17 | CE Birding Bassett Trace with Nancy Barnhardt 8-10am Details on page 4 |
| Saturday | April 19 | Earth Day Park Maintenance at Charles Brown Park Details on page 4 |
| Sunday | April 20 | CE Bird Walk 7am with Hampton Roads Bird Club at Newport News Park |
| Saturday | April 26 | CE Bird Walk 8-10am at New Quarter Park Binoculars available |
| Saturday | May 3 | VNPS Plant Sale 9:30am-2:00pm at Community Building Details on page 4 |

Weekly Wildlife Mapping: Hope to see you at one of the upcoming events at York River State Park (every Monday), New Quarter Park (2nd and 4th Tuesdays), Greensprings Trail (2nd and 4th Thursdays), Jamestown Island (3rd Wednesday for April), and Yorktown Battlefield (Last Sunday). Check email for last-minute changes.

Congratulations Cohort XVIII Graduates

by Basic Training Committee, photos by Lisa Cumming

After 15 evening classes, 6 field days, 1 Volunteer Service Day, countless hours at home spent on Class Topic Explorations (CTEs) and a final exam we now have 15 new full members of the Historic Rivers Chapter of the Virginia Master Naturalists from Basic Training Cohort XVIII. Seven members of the group were able to also earn their VMN certification by doing an additional 40 hours of service and 8 hours of continuing education beyond their training requirements. Be sure to welcome these newest members. We look forward to volunteering with you in the months and years to come. MANY THANKS to Tory Gussman and Jim Leech for leading the team with the help of the five mentors, Shirley Devan, Jennifer Trevino, and Barb Neis.

Pictured below: Mentors with their mentees after graduation at the March 12 Annual Meeting.

Row 1, photo 1: Emily Argo (mentor, Cohort XV), Cameron Garrett, Joanne Benecki, Liz George (certified).

Row 1, photo 2: Dan Foster (certified), Janie Moyers (mentor, Transfer 2017), and Anne Annala (certified).

Row 2, photo 1: Donna Benson (mentor, Cohort XVI), MJ Freeman, and Laura Grove (new Publicity Chair).

Row 2, Photo 2: Eric Beckhusen (mentor, Cohort XVII), Gail Peterson (certified), Donna Dodenhoff, Dorothy Geyer (certified), Jamie Serafin.

Row 3, Photo: Janelle Anthony, Karen Creef (certified), Claire White (mentor, Cohort XII), Mitch Dannon, Jennifer Smith (certified).



Save the Dates: Spring, Summer 2025



Thursday, April 17—Birding Bassett Trace at 8am with Nancy Barnhardt

Great news for birders and for folks who love Bassett Trace! We are combining these two worlds into the amazing experience of Birding Bassett Trace with Nancy Barnhart, president of the Williamsburg Bird Club! Yes, Nancy is offering a walk in the woods, listening for and spotting birds at the Trace. It is open to any and all folks.

No RSVP is necessary. Just show up at the trailhead near Griffin Gold Hotel to walk with us.

Come join Nancy for a wonderful opportunity to see, hear, and appreciate all the beauty of the birds at Bassett Trace! In the meantime, check out The Friends of Bassett Trace Nature Trail at Colonial Williamsburg "Bird of Bassett Trace" photo collection at experience.plantsoon.com/explore/zudhq8478s



Saturday, April 19—Annual Earth Day Cleanup at Charles E. Brown Park

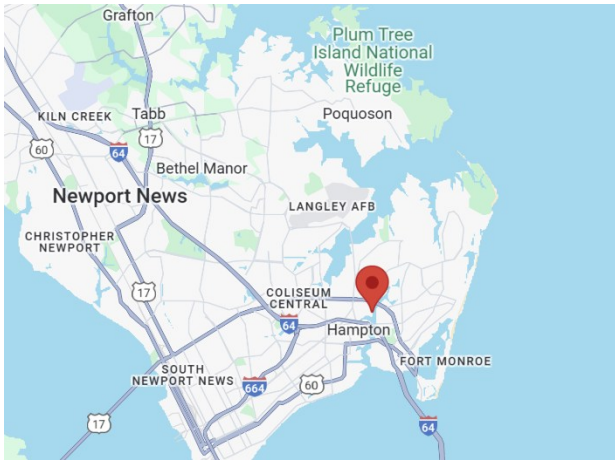
Please join your HRC friends and make some new ones on April 19 at **Charles E. Brown Park** (1950 Old Williamsburg Road, Yorktown, VA 23690) for our 3rd Annual Earth Day Trail and Park Cleanup.

We'll be spreading mulch near or on the trail, weeding and pruning around the trail and park perimeter (there are invasives), and picking up litter. The county will provide trash bags and grabbers and 2 sets of iron rakes, leaf rakes, shovels, and wheelbarrows, but we could use more of each if anyone can bring their own.

We are scheduled to do this with the Peninsula Chapter, so come out and meet some fellow naturalists! We've set the time for 9 am-1pm, but feel free to leave when needed and to take breaks. Please let Janet Harper know ahead of time if you plan to come so we'll have plenty of snacks.

Saturday, May 3—Annual Native Plant Sale by John Clayton Chapter, VNPS

The **2025 Annual Native Plant Sale** is closer than you think. It's never too early to start thinking about plants that you need and about volunteering for the sale. HRC members should log hours volunteering under **Flora "Virginia Native Plant Society Support- VNPS."** Contact Adrienne Frank for more information. The sale will run from 9:30 a.m. to 2:30 p.m. at the Williamsburg Community Building (401 N. Boundary Street, Williamsburg, VA 23185).



Thursday, May 8—Start of Living Shoreline Oyster Sill Project at Pine Cone Harbour, Hampton, VA

Join the Chesapeake Bay Foundation (CBF) for the installation of a 1,000-linear-foot living shoreline oyster sill at Pine Cone Harbour Condominiums along the Hampton River. This part of the project will involve placing 4,692 oyster castles, 720 bushels of recycled oyster shells, 650 Natrx Basalt Shell Bags, and 22 coconut fiber coir logs, each measuring 12 feet by 16 inches. This work will require bending, heavy lifting, and getting dirty—skip the gym for a day or two while assisting CBF with our largest shoreline project to date.

Register for one day or several days online at cbf.org/events/virginia/pine-cone-harbour-project-events.html

HRC members should log their hours under “Oyster Restoration- CBF” in Better Impact. This project is open to anyone, feel free to invite family, friends, and co-workers. Registration deadlines apply. All dates are weekdays, shifts range from 2.5-4 hours depending on the activity.



Project Prep: May 8-9

Oyster Castle Weeks: May 12-13,
May 19-23, June 2-7, June 9-11

Basalt Shell Bag Week: June 16-20

Loose Oyster Shells Weeks: June 23-27,
June 30-July 3

Monitoring Equipment Install: July 8-10

Saturday, May 10—JCC Williamsburg Master Gardener Annual Plant Sale

Visit the Williamsburg Botanical Garden, located within Freedom Park (5537 Centerville Road, Williamsburg, VA 23188) for the annual plant sale from 9am-12pm. Rain or shine.



Sat, May 17—Cookies and Conversation

Wed, June 25—Ice Cream Social

Be on the lookout for an update from your Historic Rivers Hospitality Chairs Judy Jones and Alice Kopinitz for upcoming opportunities to connect with fellow members at local parks, along with sweet treats. Details and times to be announced at monthly general meetings and via listserv.



Saturday, July 12- Southeast VMN Roadshow, Machicomoco State Park

All Virginia Master Naturalist members are welcome at any of the four “Roadshows” occurring across the state between June 7 and July 13. The one closest to Williamsburg will take place on Saturday, July 12 from 1:00-3:00 pm at the picnic shelter at Machicomoco on the Middle Peninsula.

Each Roadshow is a come as you are, arrive and leave when you can, rain or shine event. There will be a short program with special guests, photo ops, the State Office staff, and birthday cake at every location. These are social events and not intended for continuing education or service hours.

Welcome William & Mary Cohort 4 Master Naturalists!

Six William & Mary college students completed the “Coll of the Wild” Master Naturalist training program with Linda Morse, senior lecturer of Geology at W&M and Historic Rivers Chapter (HRC) Member, Cohort VII. These students can become full HRC members after completing their chapter applications in Better Impact.



Pictured left to right: William & Mary “Coll of the Wild” Cohort 4 on March 5 during HRC Board Meeting **Zoom:** Madeleine Fernandez (Freshman), Thu Luong (Junior), Davey Mazur (Freshman), Amelia Connally (Freshman), and Lily Shriner (sophomore). Missing Jenna Ajello.

National Wildlife Refuge (NWR) Tree Planting by Jim Leech and Gail Peterson



Pictured Above: Master Naturalists at James River NWR tree planting on March 22 included three Historic Rivers (HRC) members and several **Riverine** members: Jim Leech (HRC), Dan Foster (HRC), Walt Auburn, Jill Auburn, Susan Peacock, Heidi Jack, Gail Peterson (HRC), and Laura Woody. Photo taken by Cyrus Brame, FWS.

Under the supervision of Cyrus Brame of the US Fish and Wildlife Service (FWS) and with the help of a couple of other FWS staff, volunteers were able to plant 300 hardwood saplings in 4 hours as part of a reforestation effort on the James Rivers National Wildlife Refuge. Using a 20-foot spacing between trees over about two thirds of the field, we planted red and white oaks, black walnuts, black cherries and dogwoods. As additional funding becomes available Cyrus hopes to secure more seedlings to complete planting the previously farmed

field. Additional monthly FWS volunteer event dates include April 21, May 15, June 24, and July 16. See the calendar for specific details on the tasks and locations of these events in Better Impact under "**Trails and Trash- National Wildlife Refuge- USFWS.**"

Gail Peterson had this to share about the tree planting process: We were asked to try and not plant any two of the same species next to each other. Jim measured the correct distance and placed the markers. Some worked in pairs, some went solo. I worked with someone, and he would dig the hole where Jim had placed a marker. The hole was dug deep enough to hold the root system without bending the taproot. The bare root sapling was then placed in the hole and the soil was backfilled making sure to keep the root flare in the correct spot and the roots spread. Then each newly planted sapling was covered with a tube to help protect it from the elements and wildlife while encouraging the tree to grow upward. The tube was anchored to the marker with zip ties to provide extra stability. There were not enough tubes for each of the saplings.



Pictured Above: Volunteers look on as Cyrus demonstrates talks about the tree planting process. Photo credit Gail Peterson

Brickyard Landing is Coming to Life by Judy Kinshaw-Ellis

Workdays: Mondays and Thursdays from 9 am to 11 am, 990 Brickyard Road, Toano



Photo above: A team of scouts spent about 90 minutes moving mulch closer to where we needed it, saving us a lot of time.

It is an exciting time of year at the Brickyard Landing Riparian Buffer Demonstration Garden and Meadow. Our team got back to work in March. To help start off the growing season, we had a group of 14 scouts and their parents move mulch to areas that made it easier for us to access. We are trying to get the naturalized wooded area mulched so that it will be easier for the ground crew to mow and reduce weeds.

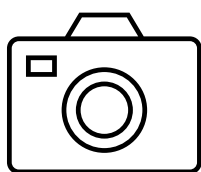
The heavy rains in March have shown us where rainwater flows, so we can plan additional plantings to better slow the stormwater. We will be using some of the grasses we have in our nursery beds, which we also used to show the edge of the meadow.

The meadow, which was seeded in December and planted with some plugs in November, is showing signs of life. It looks like many of the plugs are growing. The seeds will be slower to sprout than the plugs, but we hope

to see some new growth soon. This month, we will be planting about 160 perennials purchased with a grant from Ford's Colony Garden Club. We also will be seeding some non-native zinnias and cosmos, which are annuals and will fill some space while the perennials develop. We also hope to entice some butterflies with the annuals.

Volunteers have also caged all of our blueberries, which are loaded with blossoms. They have caged some of the small trees, too, to help deter all of the critters. We planted several seedlings right at the riverside as well. Seedlings on the bank included marsh mallow, witch hazel, silky dogwood, and button bush, and along the tree line, sumac. It is exciting to see the garden come to life. Come take a look if you are out for a drive and come work with us for a day if you have the time. For more information: Contact Judy (kinshawellis@gmail.com) or Donna (mid520@mac.com).

Annual Photography Contest Open by Ted Sargent



This year's Historic Rivers Chapter- Virginia Master Naturalist members photography contest begins on April 1 and ends June 15. The judges will be looking for unusual angles and creative approaches. Get down, look up, try to surprise us with your distinctive perspective! Our winners will be displayed in an exhibition called **'Through the Eye of a Naturalist,'** so show us how uniquely you see our world! The five top entries judged in each category will be printed and framed to be displayed in the Williamsburg Regional Library

Gallery at the Library Theatre (515 Scotland Street, Williamsburg, VA) from July 30 to August 29, 2025.

2025 PHOTO CATEGORIES:

- Babies – Bird Category
- Babies – All other fauna
- Swamp Flora
- Trees in Flower
- High Tide and Low Tide – must be taken on the same day and the same location (two photos are considered one entry) – and, GREAT NEWS, we have super moons in both April and May!!!!)

PHOTO CONTEST RULES:

- All flora and fauna must be native to Virginia.
- All pictures must have been taken in the state of Virginia.
- Photographs taken in prior years are allowed.
- Contestants may submit five entries in each of the categories.
- Label all entries with your first initial, last name, and category. For example,
 - T. Sargent Swamp Flora 1
 - T. Sargent Swamp Flora 2
- Submit entries to Ted Sargent by June 15, 2025, at midnight using one of the following methods:
 - Email your entries as attachments (NOT EMBEDDED in the body of the message).
 - Drop off a thumb drive of images to Ted's home in Toano



Questions should be directed to Ted Sargent via email (wanted@aol.com) or phone. See [Better Impact for Ted's full contact information](#) or refer to the email sent on March 27 by Judy Jones.

TREX Bench Install at James River Elementary School

by Pat Murphy, JRES Nature Explorers Club Leader



Photos: (Left) The Dynamic Duo of Karen Hines and Bill Grass installing the bench. **(Right)** Nature Explorer Club Volunteers Elizabeth Myers, Gail Peterson, and Robert Ambrose enjoying the new bench.

At the end of January, Karen Hines (the reigning Princess of Plastics) reached out to me to see if James River Elementary School (JRES) would like to receive a beautiful green TREX bench received for our chapter's plastic bag collection drive. In early February at the Saturday Dolphin Giveaway, James River's Principal, Angel Washington and I selected the perfect spot to install the bench—to the right of the school entrance.

On March 6th, the bench was delivered by Bill Grass and Karen Hines to James River on a makeshift trailer pulled by a Box Turtle plated vehicle. The late Karen Grass who volunteered with me at James River years ago would have loved seeing her

husband pull up like this! I couldn't help but chuckle. I pointed the way, and this dynamic duo got to work making sure that this bench would be sturdy and secure in its new home.

I wish I had snapped more pictures as I looked on in awe. At one point, Bill hooked a portable battery pack to his car battery to operate a handheld electric saw which he needed to cut a metal security cable. Yep, that's stuff I have in my car, NOT! What an amazing team! Thank you, Karen Hines and Bill Grass, for doing all that you do behind the scenes and thank you VMN HRC for choosing James River as a bench recipient! James River Elementary is very thankful!!!

#Treemendous20th: Wild Spotter Surveys in Virginia State Forests, Wavyleaf Grass iNaturalist Survey and Other Tree Service Projects



As a part of the 2025 VMN Tremendous 20th Anniversary please consider working on service projects that relate to and benefit trees and/or forests. In your Better Impact hours entry include “#Treemendous20th” along with your description for any tree projects that meet this initiative. See the newly approved “Wild Spotter Surveys” and “Wavyleaf Grass Surveys” tree projects listed in the Flora Category of Better Impact as “**Invasive Plant Removal- Multiple Partners.**” Quickly learn about these projects by watching the

Department of Forestry YouTube videos linked at <https://bit.ly/Treemendous20thDOFprojects>



Cornwallis' Cave Invasives Removal

by Ginny Broome and Jeff Honig

On March 26 Ginny Broom shared photos to the left and reported: Jeff Honig, Cohort IX, has been involved with invasive species removal for some time and now he is tackling English ivy at Cornwallis' Cave at the Colonial Historic National Park. Jeff is an experienced climber and follows safety procedures. I was able to spot him while he was working the ropes. It's a big job!

In response Jeff Honig shared this about the project: At the December National Park Service Annual recognition dinner, the head of volunteers and natural habitats asked me to prioritize removing invasive species above Cornwallis' Cave ahead of the projects that we had discussed in November. The National Park Service (NPS) had hired contractors to remove the invasive bamboo around the cave but there was concern that the heavy equipment could collapse the historical cave. I was super excited since the invasive species had almost completely covered the area and I had been requesting the NPS to let me remove them for several years.

Most of the area was covered with English ivy, Japanese honeysuckle, thorny olive and Chinese privet covered by native cat brier and poison ivy intermeshed to 3' high coverage for the ~1/3 acre. The removal work was done out of sight until March. Then I needed to get over the edge of the cliff. Since it was undercut, I couldn't see below so I needed spotters to protect tourists and other visitors below me. My wife took one shift and Ginny Broome happily volunteered to take the other shift. At this point, about 1/3 of the area has been cleared.

If anyone is interested, I can show you the progress. Let me know by text or come to my Yorktown Wildlife Mapping on the last Sunday of the month. I'll give before and after pictures and additional details in a future newsletter.



William & Mary Invasive Removal Update

by Tracy Matthew Melton

It's been a busy winter and early spring removing invasive plants on The College of William & Mary (W&M) campus. While mapping the bamboo patch that covers more than four acres adjacent to Berkeley Middle School (and visible from Monticello Avenue), I discovered a wisteria patch tucked behind it, in the **College Woods**. Wisteria vines blanketed approximately an acre of forest. They had killed several large trees and were strangling dozens of others. The roots and runners were so taut and so thick that in places the ground felt like a trampoline.

Keith Navia and I met with Berkeley Principal Tsigaridas and Assistant Principal Traver and secured permission to work on the wisteria running onto school property and to access the patch from the school parking lot. We surveyed the site with Tony Orband, W&M director of Grounds & Gardens.

Keith, Jennifer Smith, and I have been working over the last few months to remove the wisteria. We have cut all of the currently accessible large vines and pulled up or cut 1000+ large roots and runners. The work continues as the vines begin to leaf out.

Together with HRC Master Naturalists Linda Morse, Jeff Honig, Kim Owens, Gary Driscoll, and Adrienne Franck, we have collaborated with W&M students on several projects. W&M students Madeleine F. and Davey M. secured a W&M Green Fee grant to remove Japanese privets (*Ligustrum japonicum*) along Harrison Avenue and replant the area with native plants. On March 1, Keith and I worked with a half dozen or so students to cut down approximately 100 privet trees. On March 22, Kim and I helped students plant numerous natives supplied by Grounds & Gardens.

On March 2, Keith, Linda, and I went out with approximately fifteen W&M students, primarily from the APO and CKI service organizations, and removed 150 Chinese parasol trees (*Firmiana simplex*) from the woods across from the McLeod Recreation Center, near Kaplan Arena.



Photos above: (Top) Wisteria patch behind Berkeley MS, Williamsburg. Note the numerous roots & runners visible on the ground. **(Bottom)** Pile of roots & runners removed from the College Woods, behind Berkeley Middle School. All the vines hanging behind the pile have been cut.

On March 22, while Kim and I helped with the planting, Jeff, Keith, Jennifer, Gary, and Adrienne helped with a project that Linda had organized to remove bamboo on Crim Dell, behind Landrum Hall. Students, including Linda's Master Naturalist student group and several from APO, joined them. Grounds & Gardens hauled off a massive pile of bamboo and another very large one from the far side of the dell. I will be doing follow-up work on the site.

In early May, HRC Master Naturalists will be supporting W&M students Libby H. and Dylan G. in a very large planting around the ravine across from the W&M Alumni House and Laycock Football Center. Over the last 2+ years, chapter Master Naturalists have worked with students to remove an enormous wisteria infestation extending for roughly 100 yards. Now, students will replant with native plants provided by Grounds & Gardens. This project is also funded by a W&M Green Fee grant.

Reptiles and Birds at Clara Byrd Baker: Glimpse at Nature Explorers Elementary School Club by Marie Robertson



Tuesday, March 25th we focused on reptiles, with Jennifer Smith (pictured above with Robert Ambrose) sharing important information about Virginia reptiles and items from the CAR. We then went outside to search for snakes under the logs around the pollinator garden. They found a Northern Ring-necked snake (*Diadophis punctatus edwardsii*) and a Rough Earthsnake (*Virginia striatula*), pictured top right. The students also had time to practice using Jennifer's snake hook to move a rubber Eastern Rat Snake into a bucket.

The third photo shows some of the birds' nests the students made using just a pincer grasp on one hand. This was one of three activities that we did on Tuesday, March 18 as we focused on birds, their adaptations, and the importance of camouflage for caterpillars to survive predation.





Photo above: Transplanted Northern Spicebush (*Lindera benzoin*), a traditional medicinal plant, in bloom in Paspahegh Town.

Paspahegh Demonstration Garden: A Bridge to Harmony & Healing by Linda Hughes

Like our nation's Native American peoples, Virginia Master Naturalists have a goal of building communities of people committed to harmony and healing our ecosystems. In collaboration with the Jamestown-Yorktown Foundation (JYF), an educational agency of the Commonwealth of Virginia, Linda Hughes & Dan Foster, Historic Rivers Virginia Master Naturalists, established the Paspahegh Demonstration Garden in December 2024. The project will educate school groups & visitors on the plants used at “**Paspahegh Town**,” a Powhatan Indian outdoor interpretive site at Jamestown Settlement.

The Paspahegh were a tribe within the Powhatan Confederacy. Their territory was located on the James River near the English settlement of Jamestown. Our goal is to show how indigenous inhabitants used wild & cultivated plants pre-1607 and during the early colonial years. Like many indigenous cultures, the Paspahegh tribe considered plants to be gifts from nature used for food, medicine, building, hunting & ceremonies. They also “manipulated” their environment through controlled burns and encouraged useful plants in and around their campsites.

Our Demonstration Garden will reflect a naturalized woodland atmosphere. We've left fallen leaves & existing

natives to benefit pollinators & wildlife, and to suppress invasive, nonnative plants. Just as any pocket of native plants can serve as a bridge in a habitat corridor that supports pollinators, native plant demonstration gardens can be a steppingstone to build interconnected communities of people committed to healing our ecosystems, a practice valued by Native Americans. We hope it may inspire others to transform their own gardens into sustainable, low maintenance landscaping practices and encourage dialogues around food & medicine sources.

So far, our team has identified and mapped Invasive and Native plants at the site using the Flora of Virginia app & iNaturalist. We've confirmed invasive plant identifications with Blue Ridge Partnership for Regional Invasive Species Management (PRISM), and fact sheets from the Virginia Department of Forestry and Virginia Department of Conservation and Recreation. We've also developed an Invasive Management Calendar with multiple control strategies, including engaging JYF's licensed pesticide applicators for herbicide control of invasives in places where physical removal isn't feasible, to avoid soil disturbance, and minimize re-growth. Additionally, we investigated land use history to check for lurking invasive seed beds and conducted a soil test.

Our big deliverable, however, was researching historically used natives suitable for our site's part shade conditions. Dan & Laura aimed for an historic basis for determining the plant usage based on archaeological findings nearby, oral tradition from Virginia's state & federally recognized tribes, and descriptions & illustrations recorded by English colonists in the 17th century. Our Jamestown-Yorktown partners Bain Schultz, landscape supervisor, and Carol Weirs, historical interpreter, contributed to the list and shared it with the regional Tribal

Council. A member of the Monacan tribe also reviewed it (see sidebar). With our JYF partners, Dan and I etched out a very rough-scale planting plan to guide our efforts:

- Loosely divided the garden into sections: Edible, Medicinal, Ceremonial & Utilitarian.
- Allowed for natural foot paths for maintenance & regular invasive removal.
- Used onsite logs & rocks to break up the eyeline, prevent erosion, establish pedestrian boundaries, and create pockets for planting.

We began planting in March and will continue through early May and again in the fall. In addition to buying some plants locally, we transplanted plants from areas around JYF lands. We'll maintain the garden with regular watering and invasive removal.

Currently, the team is investigating signage to fit with the historical context of Jamestown Settlement. A native landscape may look weedy and unmaintained during its first year or two while plants are maturing. A Pollinator-Habitat-in-Process sign may educate visitors that native plants put their energy into growing deep roots during their first years, rather than into blooming paying off in long-term resiliency. Signage can also help people understand that a "messy" winter garden doesn't mean it's neglected. "Leaving the leaves" provides winter forage & nesting sites. The team is also considering QR codes on signs linking to more in-depth information. The challenge is how to make this work with a "Living History Museum" atmosphere. To further help guide the Historic Interpreters, we're creating a detailed plant factsheet.

Our vision will be implemented in phases over several growing seasons to work out challenges. Building welcoming & inclusive spaces for people of all abilities, race, ethnicities, and socioeconomic status is one of the core values of Virginia Master Naturalists. Following in the footsteps of the Native American people, the Paspahugh Demonstration Garden's goal is to build community and restore our ecosystem.

Did you know? Besides attractive non-native plants, the Europeans also brought tough and persistent weeds—dandelions, thistles, plantain, nettles, nightshade and some sedges. These wreaked havoc on the Indians' domesticated plants. These non-native plants came to America mixed in with hay and grain for livestock and then were deposited in the soil through manure. Some botanists estimate that 258 of the approximately 500 weed species in the United States were imported from Europe.

Paspahugh & Monacan: Tribes with Much in Common

The Paspahugh people were a part of the Powhatan autocracy and spoke the Algonquin languages. The Monacan peoples were Siouan-speakers who were originally from the western part of the country and moved east to the Blue Ridge Mountains' Piedmont area down to the Fall line at Richmond.

The two First American "tribes" traded with each other and some accounts (English) say they occasionally skirmished. But they had much in common: Similar dome-shaped village structures, getting from the wild (berries, nuts, animals), and domesticating a wide variety of plants for food. Their semi-permanent villages were also on the James River, though the upper portion. Many of the plants they used from the wild and domesticated at their village were the same and for similar purposes (food, medicine, ceremonial & utilitarian).

In November, Linda met Victoria Ferguson, Program Director Solitude, Presidential Ambassador to Native Nations, Office for Inclusive Strategy and Excellence at Virginia Tech. She is an author¹ & member of the Monacan tribe. They talked about our Demonstration Garden project at Paspahugh Town. The Monacans had a similar-type re-creation at Natural Bridge.

Ferguson suggests the coastal tribes probably grew a different corn than her people, likely the Virginia Gourd seed variety (still available). She also said the Paspahugh people had access to Tuckahoe (*Peltandra virginica*), a plant of the arum family known as green arrow arum, and her people did not.

"FOOD PRACTICES OF EASTERN WOODLAND/EASTERN SIOUAN OF THE INTERIOR MID-ATLANTIC: LIVING OFF THE LAND" by Victoria Persinger Ferguson for the Archeological Society of Virginia's Quarterly Bulletin, June 2024.

Shorter Shares from HRC Members and Beyond



3/08 Greensprings Litter—by Suzanne Stern

This photo is from our cleanup of the Greensprings Trail Saturday, March 8, the first day we displayed the new “Volunteers at Work” sign. **Pictured from left to right are** Bob Kaplan, Keith Navia, Judy Tucker, and Gail Peterson. The crew are displaying some of the more interesting finds for the day, including the Elmo booklet Bob is holding.



3/20 Powhatan Creek Litter—by Lisa Cumming

Our small but mighty crew picked up trash at Powhatan Creek Park on March 20th. **Pictured:** Jeanette Navia, Lisa Cumming, Frank Smith, and Cheryl Roettger.

Nancy Barnhardt Featured in Local Magazine

The March 2025 issue of *Williamsburg's Next Door Neighbors* magazine (Volume 19, Issue 3) features stories of people who are passionate about ‘The Great Outdoors.’ Historic Rivers Chapter member and Williamsburg Bird Club president Nancy Barnhardt and her passion for birding is featured on pages 28-30. The article is online at williamsburgneighbors.com/issues/march-2025/

Meet up with Nancy on April 17th for Birding Bassett Trace, in Colonial Williamsburg. No need to RSVP, simply meet at the trailhead near the Griffin Gold Hotel (behind the Tavern Parking Lot).



3/24 DWR Grant Awarded to Historic Rivers Chapter

The **Virginia Wildlife Grant Program** “provides organizations with a common mission of connecting people to the outdoors and supports activities such as... wildlife viewing.”

In January, HRC Board members Marie Robertson, Tory Gussman, and Brad Glasebrook took on the task of creating the proposal for the DWR grant. On March 24, HRC president Janet Harper was notified that the chapter was awarded the grant. With the funds, we'll be purchasing 50 backpacks and stocking them with wildlife viewing references and tools and distributing them to parks and schools (& book mobile) in our area. Purchasing will begin in April, once the funds are deposited.



3/27 Tree Giveaway— by Linda Hughes

Judy Kinshaw-Ellis hands out bareroot tree seedlings at the James City County Native **Tree Seedling Giveaway** event March 27th at Freedom Park. This is a new initiative to provide residents with native trees to benefit humans, wildlife, and the environment.



3/27 Greensprings: Citizen Science & Conversation— by Jeanette Navia

While wildlife mapping on Greensprings Trail March 27, we learned that we have two newly published fiction writers in our chapter! **Dan Foster and Jan Marry** (pictured above) have both received “authors copies” of their respective first novels. Chapter group projects and events are great times to learn more about fellow members.



3/30 HRC Field Trip to Wahrani Nature Trail

Fourteen HRC members participated in a field trip to Wahrani Nature Trail (17485 Eltham Rd, Lanexa, VA 23089) to learn more about spring flowers, ferns, fungi, and mosses, led by HRC members Adrienne Frank and Gary Driscoll. A trail map can be found online at newkent-va.us/309/Parks-Facilities

Pictured left to right: Daniel Keener, Anne Annala, Gary Driscoll, Brad Glasebrook, Adrienne Frank, Janet Harper, Alice Kopinitz, Liz George, Jeanette Navia, Judy Zwelling, Mary Haines, Babs Giffin, and Keith Navia. **Not pictured:** Sieg Kopinitz. Photographer Credit: Lindsay Boswell of the Middle Peninsula Master Naturalists.

The **Virginia Master Naturalist** Program is a statewide corps of volunteers providing education, outreach, and service dedicated to the beneficial management of natural resources and natural areas within their communities. Interested Virginians become Master Naturalists through training and volunteer service. The program is jointly sponsored by seven state organizations including the Virginia Cooperative Extension and is based in the Department of Forest Resources and Environmental Conservation within the College of Natural Resources and Environment at Virginia Tech.

Virginia Cooperative Extension programs and employment are open to all, regardless of age, color, disability, gender, gender identity, gender expression, national origin, political affiliation, race, religion, sexual orientation, genetic information, veteran status, or any other basis protected by law. An equal opportunity/affirmative action employer. Issued in furtherance of Cooperative Extension work, Virginia Polytechnic Institute and State University, Virginia State University, and the U.S. Department of Agriculture cooperating.

Learn more about our chapter at historicrivers.org

The Naturalist is the monthly newsletter of the Historic River Chapter (HRC) of Virginia Master Naturalists. Other organizations may not publish material from the newsletter without express permission from the chapter. Newsletter contributions should be emailed to HRCeNewsletter@gmail.com by the end of the month. If you have a submission in the works, please notify the newsletter editor. Photos should include concise captions and credits to photographer(s).



Contacts (5 / 5)

Access the contact information of all HRC members in the Files section of Better Impact found at <https://app.betterimpact.com/Volunteer/StoredDocuments>

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