

# GARDEN CLUB OF VIRGINIA JOURNAL



Winter 2026 | Volume LXXI | No. 1



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GARDEN CLUB  
OF VIRGINIA

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## THE GCV JOURNAL

The Garden Club of Virginia *Journal* is published quarterly and is designed to address the interests and promote the activities of the Garden Club of Virginia and its member clubs. Organized to enhance and strengthen communication within the GCV, the *Journal* focuses on the mission of the organization: conservation and beautification, horticulture, restoration, and education. Approximately 3,500 copies of each issue are mailed to members and subscribers.

A PDF version is available online at [gcvirginia.org](http://gcvirginia.org).

## SUBMISSIONS

The *Journal* welcomes submissions by GCV committees, clubs, and club members, as well as article ideas related to the GCV's mission and its initiatives and events. As a matter of editorial policy, all submissions will be edited for clarity of expression, space, style compliance, grammar, syntax, structure, and messaging. Unsolicited material will be considered, but submission does not guarantee publication. For questions, please contact [journal@gcvirginia.org](mailto:journal@gcvirginia.org).

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Sarah Blackburn, Interim *Journal* Editor c/o Garden Club of Virginia (GCV)  
12 East Franklin Street, Richmond, VA 23219

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2/15/2026

## THE MISSION OF THE GARDEN CLUB OF VIRGINIA:

To conserve the gifts of nature, to restore and preserve historic landscapes of the commonwealth, to cultivate the knowledge and love of gardening, and to lead future generations to build on this heritage.

## GCV JOURNAL 2026 COMMITTEE

The Garden Club of Virginia *Journal* is produced by a broad group of individuals, including several contributing writers. Their names are included in the article bylines throughout this publication. The editing and advertising team consists of the following:

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The Garden Club of Danville

### GCV 2ND VICE PRESIDENT/ JOURNAL LIAISON TO THE BOARD OF DIRECTORS

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The Hunting Creek Garden Club

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Sarah Blackburn

### GCV COMMUNICATIONS & PROGRAM COORDINATOR

Ann Heller



ABOVE LEFT  
*SNIPS Member Club News*

ABOVE RIGHT  
*Board of Governor's Meeting 2025*

COVER ART:  
*In My Neighborhood by Jo Silvers*



TOP  
*Girl and grandmother in Grace Arents  
Garden during A Million Blooms,  
Photo by Scott Elmquist*

ABOVE  
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Annual Conservation Forum in Portsmouth*



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- GCV's 2025 Board of Governors Meeting:** Fellowship in South Hill, and Congratulations to the 2025 Massie Medal and Common Wealth Award Recipients
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## SNIPS

- Clubs in all six GCV districts spotlight their programs and activities!** Submit your club's news on the GCV website by selecting "Submit Stories"

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ON THE COVER: ARTIST SPOTLIGHT



JO SILVERS

*The Garden Club of Danville*

Jo Silvers, this issue's cover artist, has been a member of The Garden

Club of Danville for 43 years. Jo is a self-taught artist who has seized the opportunity to create art inspired by the landscapes of all the places she has lived and visited. Danville is no exception.

Jo and her husband moved to Danville in 1980 seeking a small town environment to raise a family. That small town did not stop Jo from exploring a hobby creating art infused by international travel and teachers – she learned to paint through books and took classes from noted artists. She is not a particular fan of social media or Zoom but extolls the virtues of technology providing opportunities to learn from internationally recognized artists. Her longtime commitment to refining her art began with oil painting, transitioned to watercolors,

and now has manifested in her use of soft pastels to interpret landscapes inspired by their novelty, colors, and light. Jo also paints using gouache, and fall and winter are her favorite seasons to capture. The *Journal* cover painting, "In My Neighborhood," uses soft pastels on sanded paper. The piece is Jo's interpretation of the stunning contrast of the warmth of the decaying leaves and the cool blue sky in this winter scene.

It seems as though Jo's receptors are always on high alert. Educated as an accounting major, and professionally a dental hygienist, she has balanced the right and left sides of her brain to produce beautiful art. Jo says her art is a somewhat solitary endeavor and her gratification comes from the process of making art rather than exhibiting. Her studio walls are papered with her works. She described her supply table as a two-foot-by-four-foot guilty pleasure filled with pastels "in all their vibrant colors like boxes of candy."



Jo Silvers' pastels: *Wintergreen Sunset* (above) and *In My Neighborhood* (right and on the cover)



Jo is a lover of the outdoors who enjoys gardening, biking, and snowboarding. As the horticulture committee chairman for The Garden Club of Danville she began encouraging the planting of native plants a number of years ago. She is pleased with the direction the GCV has taken to reflect the intersection of horticulture, conservation, and artistic design to plant natives, use environmentally sound garden mechanics, and choose garden materials when arranging. 🌿

— **Laura Francis, GCV Second Vice President, The Hunting Creek Garden Club**

GCV BOARD OF DIRECTORS 2024-2026

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**District 4 (2024-2026):** Martha Anderson, Mill Mountain Garden Club

**District 5 (2025-2027):** Katie Harvard, The Little Garden Club of Winchester

**District 6 (2025-2027):** Ellie Gordon, The Garden Club of the Eastern Shore

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A SEASON OF REFLECTION

Dear Members,

As winter settles over our beautiful commonwealth, I am reminded of the quiet resilience of our gardens and the steadfastness of our community. While the landscape may appear dormant, beneath the surface lie anticipation and preparation

for the renewal that spring promises. It is in this season of rest and reflection that we find inspiration and opportunity to nurture not only our plants, but also our friendships and shared passions.

This past year, the Garden Club of Virginia has continued to grow — thanks to your enthusiasm and creativity. From garden tours to educational workshops, your active participation has made a meaningful impact on our environment and in our neighborhoods. I am grateful for the energy and dedication you bring to every endeavor.

Winter is a wonderful time to dream and plan. As you gather with loved ones and savor the beauty of winter gardens, I encourage you to explore new ideas, revisit old favorites, and think about the ways we can work together in the coming year. Let us use this quieter season to deepen our knowledge, inspire each other, and prepare for the vibrant days ahead.

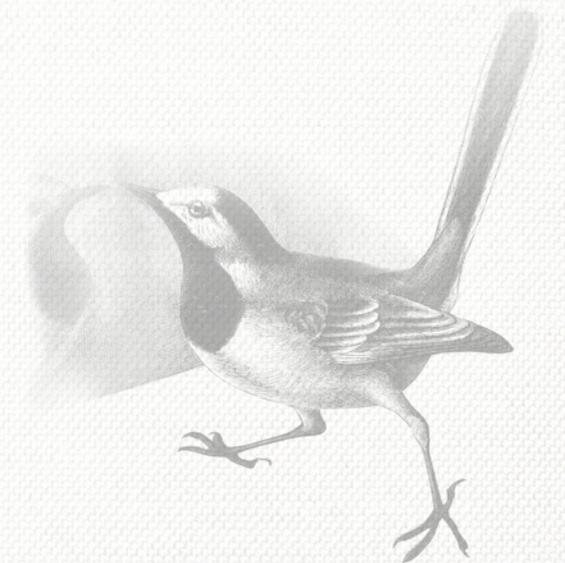
Thank you for your continued support and stewardship. I wish you a peaceful winter filled with warmth, hope, and anticipation for the growth to come.

My best,

*Kris Carbone*

**Kris Carbone**

*GCV President, 2024–2026*



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## Nina Mustard's Labor of Love — *Follow the Green Arrow III*

Former GCV President and Massie Medal recipient Nina Mustard, a member of The Williamsburg Garden Club, has built a fascinating timeline and rich history of the Garden Club of Virginia — *Follow the Green Arrow III (1995-2020)*. Divided into biennial histories of Former GCV Presidents and member club highlights, this online, illustrated scrapbook is delightful. A labor of love, Nina devoted five years to this project, documenting board meetings, Annual Meetings, Board of Governors meetings, as well as member club highlights. Filled with amusing anecdotes, *FTGA III* is a must read for GCV members and friends and can be found on the GCV website under "About: GCV and Club Histories."



Former GCV Presidents Nina Mustard (L) and Jean Gilpin (R)

While serving as GCV Historian, Nina was asked to edit the third volume of *Follow the Green Arrow*, following *FTGA (1920-1970)* and *FTGA II (1970-1995)*.

*"I hope the histories strengthen the mission of the GCV and show an appreciation for the member clubs which carry that mission forward," says Nina.*

Known for her technology and organizational wizardry, Nina is credited with leading the GCV into the digital age — serving as GCV webmaster and online chairman and unifying member clubs with the GCV. In addition, she created a donor management system enabling the development office to track gifts and acknowledge them easily.

Former GCV President Jean Gilpin adds, "Nina Mustard's remarkable rendition of *FTGA III* is nothing short of spectacular. Nina's creative lens offers our membership an insightful journey through our past, reinforcing the values we stand for and in which we believe. What a gift to the Garden Club of Virginia."

— **By Julie Grover, The Blue Ridge Garden Club**



Berril



## Bartlett Tree Experts Day of Service at the Mary Washington House in Fredericksburg

On Aug. 25, 2025, Mary Washington House was a recipient of a day of professional tree care services provided by GCV's longtime partner, Bartlett Tree Experts.

George Washington purchased the house in 1772 for his mother, Mary Ball Washington, who lived there for her last 17 years. The house, in Fredericksburg's Historic District, boasts a garden that Mary Washington once tended. It has been a Garden Club of Virginia restoration site since 1968.

Earlier in the season a hackberry tree at the rear of the property collapsed under its own weight and threatened more damage. Jason Coiner, an ISA Certified Arborist for Bartlett, guided work to reduce the weight on the wide-spreading limbs and added four cables to help support the massive spread of the tree. Bartlett's three-person crew first focused on reducing the weight of limbs overhanging the vegetable garden,



compost heap, fence, and a neighbor's yard and shed.

A judicious pruning of the tree on the street side provided the vegetable garden and fig patch with more badly needed sunlight. The tree canopy was also opened to reduce weight, eliminate cross branching, and make way for the support cables. I was surprised and amazed to learn about the science and engineering behind the support cables.

On the ground, Jason was on hand to personally illustrate for his crew where variously sized cables and bolts needed to be configured to form a triangular support system. Even though the tree's structure looked dramatically different from above, the crew expertly performed their gravity-defying work, slinging ropes aimed at the very summit of the colossal tree with precision and lowering heavy branches to the ground without damaging nearby trees, structures, or the garden beds below.

A crew member on the ground managed the safety of the operation, the ropes, and directed placement. Throughout

the day, I heard the team actively communicating, "How close to the branch union?" "How about here?" or "Drill right there!" It was impressive to watch.

On October 16, Jason Coiner presented an overview of the work to The Rappahannock Valley Garden Club. He shared knowledge regarding scientific tree care and new techniques in evaluating tree risk and structure with tomography, a future option suggested by the gaping cavity in the neighboring hackberry.

Bartlett Tree Experts and the Bartlett family are extraordinarily generous in their work, continually giving back to the community and helping highlight GCV's restoration sites across the commonwealth. The managers at the Washington Heritage Museums and GCV's Restoration Committee are grateful for the gift of this Day of Service and eager to help Bartlett promote good practices in scientific tree care.

— **Jo Catron, The Rappahannock Valley Garden Club and GCV Restoration Committee Liaison to Mary Washington House**





## Battersea – the Historic Landscape Research Fellowship site chosen for the program’s 30th Anniversary year



IMMEDIATELY ABOVE: Battersea 1940 – Courtesy of the Library of Virginia

ABOVE: Battersea 2025 – Virginia Department of Historic Resources. Photo by Calder Loth

2026 marks the 30th anniversary of the establishment of the Historic Landscape Research Fellowship funded through the Restoration Committee and from Historic Garden Week proceeds. Thanks to this fellowship, 32 historic sites in Virginia have been researched and documented.

This year’s fellowship site is Battersea — a prominent Colonial-era estate with ties to the Revolutionary War — in historic Petersburg.

Battersea was the home of Colonel John Banister, a member of the House of Burgesses, the Revolutionary conventions, and the Continental Congress, as well as framer of the Articles of Confederation and Petersburg’s first mayor. Sited on a high bluff overlooking the Appomattox River, the elegant five-part house, begun in 1768, perhaps best displays the Anglo-Palladian influence on Virginia’s Colonial plantation homes. The broad terrace of the mansion’s south yard is believed to have been an extensive formal garden. Recent archaeological

investigations have revealed evidence of walks and planting beds. Battersea is listed on the Virginia Landmarks Register and the National Register of Historic Places.

The focus of the summer 2026 fellowship study will be to research and design a conjectural reconstruction of the 18th-century formal garden at Battersea.

*Applicants must be candidates in a master’s degree of landscape architecture, historic preservation, landscape or architectural history, archaeology, anthropology, history, or horticulture. Spread the word about this important and well-regarded program.*

**Application deadline: March 20, 2026.**

*Learn more about the Historic Landscape Fellowship, including the online application, archive of past reports and site plans, and a list of fellowship facts at [gcvirginia.org/fellowships](http://gcvirginia.org/fellowships).*

— By Candy Crosby, Chair, Historic Landscape Fellowship Committee, Albemarle Garden Club

## Behind the Scenes of Garden Club of Virginia’s Daffodil Day

Long before the first visitor arrives, volunteers are working quietly and steadily to prepare for GCV’s annual Daffodil Day. The finished event looks polished and effortless, but behind the scenes is a hands-on learning experience that merges horticulture, artistic design, photography, and community.

A major part of the work begins with the daffodils themselves. Volunteers quickly discover the remarkable variety of blooms — trumpets, cups, doubles, jonquillas, miniatures, and more. They learn to recognize form, proportion, and color distinctions that judges evaluate.

Floral design preparation is another essential element. Each class in the schedule has specific dimensions, themes, and staging requirements. Volunteers support exhibitors and organize staging areas so designers can focus on creativity. Watching concepts transform into arrangements provides insight into the structure and discipline behind each display.



Photography adds another layer to the show. Exhibitors refine lighting, backgrounds, and composition to highlight the character of individual blooms. Volunteers observe how a well-planned photograph can reveal texture, symmetry, and detail that might otherwise go unnoticed.

While technical learning is valuable, many volunteers say the most rewarding part is the camaraderie. Working side by side fosters conversation, shared problem-solving, and new friendships. The show is not only a celebration of daffodils, but also a celebration of the people who make it happen.

Serving behind the scenes offers a richer appreciation for the show — and for the community that grows around it each year.

*The Sign Up Genius is now on the GCV website. Please consider volunteering for a few hours. You will leave with new friends and a greater appreciation of the value of the Garden Club of Virginia.*

— By Dawn Byrd, Daffodil Day Committee Co-Chairman, The Garden Club of the Eastern Shore



GARDEN CLUB OF VIRGINIA

### Award Nominations Deadlines

**MARCH 1**  
Common Wealth Award  
de Lacy Gray Memorial Medal for Conservation  
Horticulture Award of Merit

**JUNE 1**  
Conservation Educator Award  
Dugdale Award for Meritorious Achievement in Conservation  
The Helen and Tayloe Murphy Conservation Leadership in Government Award

**NOVEMBER 1**  
Bessie Bocock Carter Conservation Award

For award descriptions, nomination details and forms, past recipients, and additional award information visit [GCVirginia.org/awards](http://GCVirginia.org/awards).



MARCH 25, 2026

# Daffodil Day

AMERICA THE BEAUTIFUL

FREE & OPEN TO THE PUBLIC | [GCVIRGINIA.ORG](http://GCVIRGINIA.ORG)  
Virginia Wesleyan University, Jane P. Batten Student Center,  
5817 Wesleyan Drive, Virginia Beach

GARDEN CLUB OF VIRGINIA



## Introducing the “Native MVP” Program

Patsy Smith, GCV Horticulture Committee Chairman, Winchester-Clarke Garden Club; Virginia Gillock, Historic Garden Week State Chairman, The Augusta Garden Club; Mary Beth Horton, GCV Conservation and Beautification Committee Member, The Garden Club of Norfolk

Garden Club of Virginia’s founding goals included conserving plants and preserving Virginia’s native beauty. From its earliest days GCV has worked to educate the public about preserving the state’s wildflowers, native trees, and shrubs. Today that mission continues through GCV’s new Native Most Valuable Plant program. At the Oct. 15, 2025, Board of Governors meeting, the chairmen of the Conservation, Horticulture, and Historic Garden Week committees announced this new program and 2025-2026 Native MVP, *Baptisia australis*, commonly known as blue false indigo or blue wild indigo.

Thanks to advocacy efforts led by Katie van Buren of The Garden Club of Norfolk, every April will now be Native Plant Month in Virginia. In celebration, GCV will name a Native Most Valuable Plant and promote it during HGW and other events throughout the year.

This year the Native MVP was selected by a working group consisting of members from the Conservation, Horticulture, and Historic Garden Week committees. Going forward, future Native MVPs will be selected by a vote of GCV member clubs.

This year’s Native MVP selection, *Baptisia australis*, is an excellent pollinator-plant providing nectar and pollen for bats, bees, hummingbirds, moths, and butterflies. It serves as a crucial host plant for the larvae of wild indigo duskywing, orange sulfur, clouded sulphur, frosted elfin, eastern tailed blue, and hoary edge butterflies. Various birds, beetles, and mammals relish the seeds within the striking seed pods, and as an added bonus, *Baptisia australis* is a nitrogen fixer, meaning it can convert atmospheric nitrogen into soil-enriching nitrogen, improving conditions for itself and its neighbors.

### GCV'S NEW NATIVE PLANT ICON

This icon was initially developed for HGW 2026, where it will be featured on garden stakes to mark native plants.

Keeping in mind GCV’s mission to conserve the gifts of nature, the HGW, Conservation and Beautification, and Horticulture committees have recently collaborated in a new and exciting way to highlight conservation. Look for this new icon accompanying conservation-minded activities throughout GCV.



Easily grown, *Baptisia australis* reaches three-to-four feet tall and wide. It grows throughout Virginia and is not particular about soil or water needs once established. This plant likes a sunny to partial shade location, is deer resistant, long lived, and is a great cut flower for arrangements. *Baptisia*’s blue lupine-like flowers bloom in late April to June, but its blue green leaves and fall seed pods provide near year-round interest.

Seeds may be sown in late fall or spring without a cold treatment. Plant seeds 1/2 inch deep. Plants grown from seed take several years to establish and bloom. Trimming or shearing after blooming helps maintain rounded plant appearance

but eliminates seed pod development, and can disrupt the life cycles of the insects supported by the plant. This plant is supported by long roots adapted to dry rocky soils and can aid in erosion mitigation. However, these same traits can make transplanting mature plants difficult.



PAIRING THE KINGSBLOOD TULIP WITH THE BLUE BAPTISIA BLOOMS will create a patriotic duo to celebrate Virginia’s 250th birthday.



Plant companions include coneflowers, milkweed, Rattlesnake Master, Joe Pye weed, native asters, ironweed, Culver’s Root, and Golden Alexanders. *Baptisia australis*’ blue blooms pair beautifully with the Kingsblood tulip which will be a highlight of the 2026 Historic Garden Week and Colonial Williamsburg’s Governor’s Palace restoration project. Pairing the Kingsblood tulip with the blue baptisia blooms will create a patriotic duo to celebrate Virginia’s 250th birthday. GCV welcomes over 24,000 visitors annually to HGW, and we are excited to maximize this opportunity to share the value of native plants such as *Baptisia australis* with them.

Doug Tallamy, keynote speaker at GCV’s 2020 Conservation Forum, made a plea for reinstating native plants into our urban landscapes. In stark contrast to the West, with its many vast national parks, the East Coast has a scarcity of wild areas and is comprised mostly of private yards, commercial parcels, and farmland. This leaves our part of the country with a preponderance of turf, exotic nursery plants, and rotating crops, providing little ecological support for wildlife. The complexity of contributions that native plants make is truly astounding and highlighting a particular one each year will build

### WHY YOU SHOULD PLANT BAPTISIA AUSTRALIS IN YOUR GARDEN:

- Easily Grown
- Likes Sunny to Partial Shade
- Deer Resistant
- Long Lived
- Great Cut Flower
- Can Be Used for Erosion Mitigation
- Seed Pods for Year-Round Bloom Interest
- Excellent Pollinator
- Nitrogen Fixer for Itself and Neighbors



knowledge, appreciation and, hopefully, use of them among Virginians.

*We look forward to celebrating Native Plant Month and GCV’s Native Most Valuable Plant with you each April.*

# Renewal

GCV 2026 Lily Show  
June 16-17, 2026

Hosted by The Tuckahoe  
Garden Club of Westhampton



*Lilium philadelphicum*



# Board of Governors

## The Brunswick Garden Club Welcomes the GCV for the 2025 Meeting at The Dogwood in South Hill

Photos by Megan Ames and Susan Morris

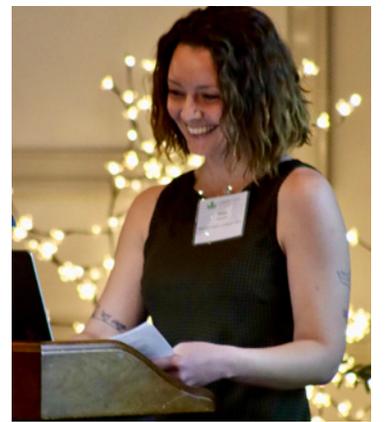


The GCV's 106th Board of Governors meeting was hosted by The Brunswick Garden Club on Oct. 14-15, 2025, in beautiful southside Virginia. The meeting was held in The Dogwood at 313 Franklin Street in friendly South Hill. Sunshine and blue skies blanketed us with perfect fall weather both days. On Tuesday afternoon, an optional tour took guests to the Brunswick Byways Visitor's Center and to the site of historic Ft. Christanna in Lawrenceville. Local history was highlighted at the visitor's center, and local resident and historian, Gay Neale, delighted guests with the history of Ft. Christanna and her special sense of humor at the site of the former fort. Guests took a brisk hike along the trail around the fort site, including the Tree Stump Learning Center, partially funded by a Common Wealth Award. A welcome reception and dinner was held that night, with a dress code of Denim and Pearls. Another short bus ride took guests to Rosemont Vineyards and Winery, a picturesque local venue, located in the countryside of La Crosse. Rosemont wines were served with assorted cheeses, fruits, and delicious country ham rolls. Dinner featured barbeque and would not have been complete without a cup of Brunswick Stew from Brunswick County, the home of the original Brunswick stew. Guests enjoyed

visiting with friends as they mingled and dined in a beautiful, relaxed atmosphere. Colorful pumpkin flower arrangements added the perfect fall touch to the black and white checked tablecloths.

Wednesday morning had attendees at the meeting site, The Dogwood. The venue is inside a former high school converted into a multi-use site which also houses a popular restaurant and apartments. The former school auditorium,

complete with the original stage, proved to be an elegant setting suited to our needs. Horticulture exhibits were placed along one side with morning refreshments and buffet service along the opposite side. The presentation of forest exhibits featured unusual and creative artistry. The morning session included reports from officers and committee chairs, highlighted with updates and developments.





Guest speakers on the topic of Restoration included Jenny Lauer and Nathan Roth with Nelson Byrd Woltz and Grace Donnelly, the 2025 GCV Historic Landscape Research Fellow, who presented on her work during the year.

An Awards Luncheon replaced the Awards Banquet for the one-day meeting format being followed this year. Excitement and applause followed the announcement of The Garden Club of Danville as the recipient of the Common Wealth Award for their project rehabilitating Danville's historic Grove Street Cemetery. Celie Harris presented the Massie Medal Award to Former GCV President Cabell West. A buffet lunch followed with attendees encouraged to sit by districts and enjoy fellowship and share information.

The afternoon session presented us with helpful information on events in 2026, and concluded with an invitation from The Franklin Garden Club to the 2026 Board of Governors.

The Brunswick Garden Club enjoyed planning for the BOG and your visit to South Hill and the surrounding area. It was our honor to host this meeting. Our small club was united even more as we were provided with opportunities to come together, for both work and fun. We have new memories and hope you have fond memories of your time in beautiful southside Virginia. We enjoyed having you in our little part of the state and hope you will make a return visit in the future. 🌿

— Mary Smith, 2025 Board of Governors Chairman, The Brunswick Garden Club



## 2025 Massie Medal for Distinguished Achievement

**CABELL GOOLSBY WEST RECEIVES GCV'S PRESTIGIOUS AWARD**

The 2025 Massie Medal for Distinguished Achievement was joyfully presented at the Board of Governors meeting to Cabell Goolsby West of The Tuckahoe Garden Club of Westhampton. The inscription reads, "With deep gratitude for the vision, passion, and determination as a tireless champion of the GCV."

To say that Cabell has given deep and broad service to the Garden Club of Virginia is only



**Cabell Goolsby West**  
*The Tuckahoe Garden Club of Westhampton*



### HISTORY OF THE MASSIE MEDAL



The Massie Medal is the Garden Club of Virginia's oldest and most prestigious award. It was inaugurated by Suzanne Williams Massie during her presidency in 1928 and was given by her until her death in 1952. Since then, it has been presented by the GCV in her memory. The recipient of the Massie Medal may be an individual member or member club who have served the Garden Club of Virginia with unusual dedication and distinction. They must have been effective in promoting the betterment of the GCV, demonstrated excellence in horticulture, restoration, preservation or conservation of the commonwealth's natural resources.

Proposals and endorsements from member clubs must be submitted to the Massie Medal chairman. Guidelines can be found at [GCVirginia.org](http://GCVirginia.org).

Proposals due Dec. 1, 2026

to begin to tell the story. Over 40 years, she has held more than a dozen positions, some more than once. The variety of jobs points to her versatility. The span of time over which she has done them reflects her ongoing dedication and devotion to this organization.

In development and finance, Cabell supported the start of the Annual Fund and worked to increase the Endowment Fund. In the area of conservation, she worked to strengthen relationships with the Virginia League of Conservation Voters and the Southern Environmental Law Center. She encouraged participation in Conservation Legislative Day and "demystifying advocacy." She is a dedicated supporter of Historic Garden Week. Apparently, the number of HGW tours she has taken over the years is almost too many to count. Cabell had a leadership role in replacing the deteriorated wood balustrade at the Kent-Valentine House with a long-lasting synthetic material. The plan at first was denied by the city's Commission of Architectural Review. She and her team persevered and, eventually, to no

one's surprise, the Richmond City Council overturned that decision. Cabell has been hard at work in the broader community, as well. She served on the steering committee for Capital Trees. Her networking skills have helped it grow into the impactful organization it is today.

Cabell has been described as tough but fair minded. As a leader she listened to others but stood her ground when she thought it was necessary. Her success has been credited to her pragmatism, enthusiasm, and attention to detail. As GCV president from 2008-2010, she led during a period called "Tradition in Transition." It is said that in many ways she helped to bring the GCV into the 21st century. The standing rules for the Massie Medal Award say, in part, "The recipient in the judgment of the Committee must have served the Garden Club of Virginia with unusual dedication and distinction." That certainly is true of Cabell West. 🌿

— Celie Harris, Massie Medal Committee Chairman, Winchester-Clarke Garden Club

#### SOME QUOTES FROM ATTENDEES' THANK YOU NOTES:

*"The Denim and Pearls dinner at the Rosemont Winery was exceptional – especially the Brunswick Stew."*

*"I loved finally seeing Fort Christanna and hearing of the rich history of Brunswick County."*

*"I found the entire community so welcoming."*

*"Most of all I loved the hugs and smiles and the well wishes for a safe trip home. That's Virginia Hospitality."*





# 67TH ANNUAL CONSERVATION FORUM

## *Healing Rivers to Build Healthy Communities,* PROTECTING OUR WATERWAYS

By Anna Galusha Aquino, The Boxwood Garden Club

The 67th Annual Garden Club of Virginia Conservation Forum, held at the historic Woman's Club of Portsmouth, brought forward topics causing gasps and hard swallows in the audience. The forum title is uplifting and highlights the progress that has been made restoring Virginia's rivers. Yet, as the speakers noted, much remains to be done for restoring these vital waterways. Despite the daunting challenges, participants left inspired, hopeful, and ready to take action.

America's "Founding River" is the James River. In 1975 Governor James Godwin shut down 120 miles of the James from Richmond to the Chesapeake Bay due to extreme pesticide pollution.

The James River Association (JRA), founded the following year, biennially publishes "The State of the James" report. Its grades have risen from a D to a B over the JRA's tenure. Forum speaker and JRA President and CEO Bill Street explained some of the river's biggest challenges — turbidity that impacts the growth of underwater vegetation vital for wildlife, oxygen saturation that is too low to sustain native wildlife, and shockingly that 80% of the James' fish biomass is comprised of introduced enormous-growing invasive catfish that eat native flora and fauna, dramatically impacting the health of the James. "America's Founding Fish," shad, Atlantic sturgeon, striped bass, river herring, and most indigenous migratory fish are

absent or appear in alarmingly low numbers. Mr. Street encouraged us to become "James Changers," joining the JRA's efforts. The JRA urges practicing James River watershed stewardship by preventing sediment erosion and eliminating domestic pesticides like lawn chemicals and so-called "mosquito sprays" that detrimentally impact wildlife from amphibians to birds and beneficial insects as well as humans, especially children.

Wetlands Watch Executive Director **Mary-Carson Stiff's** presentation stunned attendees. She shared the magnitude of estimated sea-level rise; based on greenhouse gas emissions, one-to-three feet of rise is

*Despite the daunting challenges, participants left inspired, hopeful, and ready to take action after hearing from the inspirational speakers. JRA President and CEO Bill Street explained some of the James River's biggest challenges and encouraged us to become "James Changers" and practicing James River watershed stewardship by preventing sediment erosion and eliminating lawn chemicals and "mosquito sprays" that detrimentally impact wildlife.*



*This year's Forum was held at the Historic Woman's Club of Portsmouth*

estimated by the year 2100 with commitment to climate action measures. With unchecked emissions, however, sea level is projected to rise six feet in the same time frame. Both rates of sea level rise are faster-moving than impacted wetlands can adapt, either through vertical growth or migration, resulting in catastrophic loss of wetland areas. A dire National Science Foundation report predicts a 90% loss of wetlands globally by the end of the century. Wetlands Watch recommends urgently and dramatically reducing greenhouse emissions, facilitating unimpeded wetland migration, managing sedimentation, and reconsidering construction in fragile coastal ecosystems. The organization



Lacy Shirey

has also partnered closely with the Elizabeth River Project on creative solutions.

**Lacy Shirey**, the executive director of the Elizabeth River Project, concluded the Forum by sharing the story of how their

organization has used community partnerships to transform the Elizabeth River while also preparing for the rising sea levels and other challenges. Wetlands Watch partnered with ERP, pioneering initiatives like the first-of-its-kind Rolling Conservation Easement. If private property is flooded to an agreed-upon degree due to sea level rise, all privately owned structures must be removed, and the former land is returned to the publicly owned water body. One of the first sites to institute this type of easement is the remarkable Elizabeth River Project's Ryan Resilience Lab. Following the presentations at the Woman's Club of Portsmouth, Forum attendees were invited to a lunch at the Ryan Resilience Lab.



# 67TH ANNUAL CONSERVATION FORUM

In addition to a delicious lunch, former Virginia First Lady Pam Northam led members on a fascinating educational tour of this amazing facility.

Despite the rainy weather, GCV members and guests enjoyed a day of warm hospitality in Portsmouth. Local GCV members, especially Ellen Upton and Sharon Knowles, made everyone feel welcomed at the event and showcased both their community and a fascinating program on river health with tremendous success. GCV members from every community left inspired to make both personal and community decisions that would continue the progress of improving the health of Virginia's rivers.

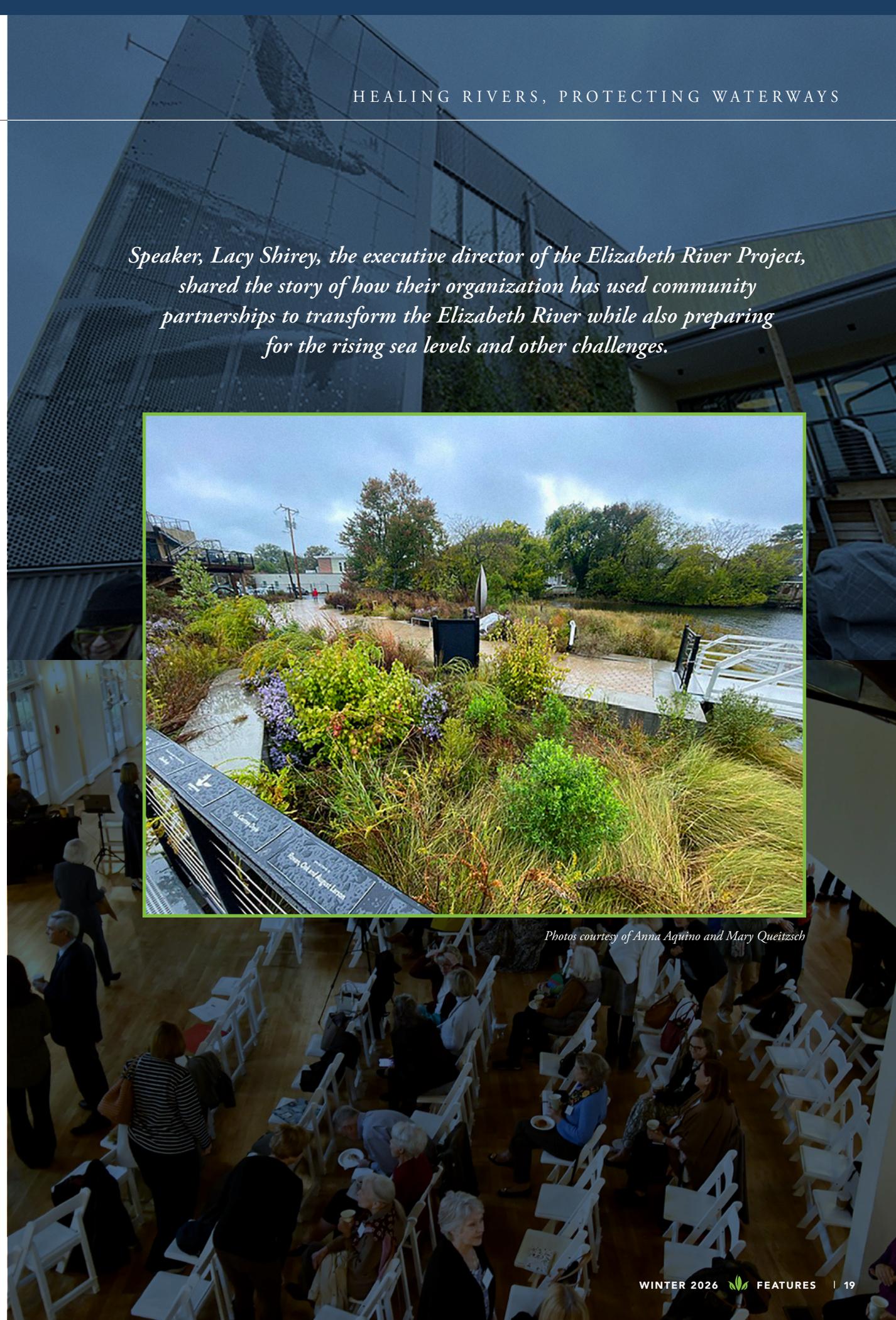


Attendees and award recipients at the 67th Annual Conservation Forum in Portsmouth. Photos by Mary Queitzsch, Dolley Madison Garden Club.

*Speaker, Lacy Shirey, the executive director of the Elizabeth River Project, shared the story of how their organization has used community partnerships to transform the Elizabeth River while also preparing for the rising sea levels and other challenges.*



Photos courtesy of Anna Aquino and Mary Queitzsch



GARDEN CLUB OF VIRGINIA  
66TH ANNUAL  
**CONSERVATION FORUM**

*At this year's Conservation Forum, the winners of the Conservation Educator Award, the Elizabeth Cabell Dugdale Award for Meritorious Achievement in Conservation, and the Helen and Tayloe Murphy Conservation Leadership in Government Award were honored and celebrated.*

**By Sarah Hellewell, Conservation Awards Chairman, Hillside Garden Club**  
*(Sarah is pictured with the award recipients)*

## Conservation Educator Award

The 2025 Conservation Educator Award was presented to Dr. Miriam Westervelt. Dr. Westervelt has demonstrated a lifelong passion and commitment to conservation and conservation education. Dr. Westervelt was one of the first Virginia Master Naturalists in Loudoun County, holds a certificate in Permaculture Design from Oregon State University, and earned a Doctorate in Human Ecology in 2017 from University College, London. She began her teaching career at the elementary level in Loudoun County before changing to the high school grades, where she taught Environmental Science and AP Environmental Science and was chairman of the Science Department for Tuscarora High School. Dr. Westervelt worked extensively in many capacities with The Phillips Farm, a 144-acre property in conservation easement open to the public, helping develop management plans, establishing riparian buffers, and monitoring wildlife and water quality. She also established The Peterson Young Naturalist Program, administered in



**Dr. Miriam Westervelt**  
*Conservation Educator Award*

collaboration with the Loudoun County Public School System and Loudoun Wildlife Conservancy, that seeks to teach students observation and recording skills for nature journaling and research. Dr. Westervelt has established teaching and working relationships with a Maasi village in Kenya, the Mikmaq people of Nova Scotia, as well as continued local connections with children in Loudoun County through programs and classes taught at The Phillips Farm.

Finally, she has led several professional development workshops for her fellow educators, teaching the teachers how to facilitate environmental and outdoor learning. Thank you to Leesburg Garden Club for the nomination of Dr. Westervelt and for highlighting for the GCV her many wonderful accomplishments. Congratulations to Dr. Miriam Westervelt! 🌿

## Elizabeth Cabell Dugdale Award for Meritorious Achievement in Conservation

The 2025 Elizabeth Cabell Dugdale Award for Meritorious Achievement in Conservation was given to Robert Whitescarver. For many decades Mr. Whitescarver has been a leader and advocate for environmental stewardship in Virginia. Mr. Whitescarver, in his position as president of Whitescarver Natural Resources Management LLC, works one-on-one with landowners to restore watersheds and riparian buffers, in addition to the implementation of environmentally friendly livestock practices, with the result being cleaner waters, thriving habitats, and revitalized lands. Prior to his work with Whitescarver Natural Resources Management, Mr. Whitescarver worked with the USDA Natural Resource Conservation Service, helping to secure permanent grassland easements and pioneering the green payment programs to reward farmers for environmentally

friendly practices. Mr. Whitescarver is an adjunct professor at James Madison University, where he teaches Natural Resources Management and is an award-winning author of many articles, books, and blogs about conservation. He also serves on the boards of the Downstream Project, the Virginia League of Conservation Voters, and co-founded the Valley Conservation Council, a land trust committed to the preservation of the Shenandoah Valley's rural heritage. The Garden Club of Virginia's Conservation Awards Committee thanks The Augusta Garden Club for its nomination of Mr. Whitescarver for the Dugdale Award. He is certainly an exemplary candidate who has and continues to have a profound impact on conservation in the commonwealth. Congratulations to Mr. Robert Whitescarver! 🌿



**Robert Whitescarver**  
*Elizabeth Cabell Dugdale Award for Meritorious Achievement in Conservation*

## Helen and Tayloe Murphy Conservation in Leadership in Government Award

The 2025 Helen and Tayloe Murphy Conservation in Leadership in Government Award recipient was Senator Emily Jordan. Senator Jordan was first elected to the House of Delegates in November 2017 and now serves as the Virginia Senate representative for the 17th district, which includes Suffolk, Franklin, Isle of Wight, Greensville, Southampton, Emporia, Dinwiddie, Chesapeake, and Portsmouth. During her tenure as a state senator, in addition to her many duties as a member of the General Laws and Technology, Rehabilitation and Social Services, and Courts of Justice committees, Senator Jordan has been an advocate for conservation issues for her district and for the entire commonwealth. She sponsored legislation to make April Native Plant Month. She has sponsored legislation to address flooding issues in the Hampton Roads region and has been recognized by Virginia Sea Grant for

her work to address the issues important to coastal communities. She has supported the efforts to help the seafood industry address food safety and aquaculture and supported the creation of the Oyster Replenishment Fund. Senator Jordan is also chairman of the Virginia Rural Caucus and vice-chairman of the board of trustees for the Center of Rural Virginia, an organization that works with federal, state, and local policymakers and private entities to improve economic opportunities in rural Virginia with a focus on best land practices and preservation. Thank you to The Garden Club of Norfolk for the nomination of Senator Jordan for the Helen and Tayloe Murphy Conservation Leadership in Government Award and congratulations to Senator Jordan for all her accomplishments in the area of conservation! 🌿



**Senator Emily Jordan**  
*Helen and Tayloe Murphy Conservation in Leadership in Government Award*

*Pictured: Jeff Elmore, staff of Senator Jordan, who accepted the award on her behalf.*



GARDEN CLUB OF VIRGINIA  
*Historic Garden Week*<sup>SM</sup>

THE NATION'S ONLY STATEWIDE HOUSE & GARDEN TOUR  
**CELEBRATES VA 250**

*The Garden Club of Virginia has completed 130 restorations across the commonwealth, including several related to the nation's 250th anniversary, made possible through funding from Historic Garden Week.*

The Garden Club of Virginia's Historic Garden Week offers a special opportunity during the nation's 250th anniversary to visit many sites connected to early Virginians who helped shape American history. From Washington to Jefferson, the indigenous peoples who originally inhabited these lands, and the enslaved Africans who contributed to the construction of many of the sites open for touring, Virginia reflects its founding ideals through these individuals, making it a great place to learn about our country's beginnings.

The owners of nearly 130 of Virginia's most stunning private properties will open their homes for tours to help raise funds for restoring and preserving public gardens and landscapes from April 18-25. Historic Garden Week features 29 unique tours this spring, plus additional gardens at Little Oak Spring and Morven.

Showcased properties span four centuries of history and architecture, featuring everything from farmhouses and manors to urban townhomes and mid-century masterpieces. Each



*Williamsburg, Photo by Donna Moulton*

tour offers a captivating selection of three to five private homes and gardens, many of which are open to the public for the first time, along with access to numerous state and national historic landmarks. Prices range from \$25 to \$75 per person, with a child's ticket (ages 5-17) available for \$15 to more than half of the tours, which is new this year.

More than just a fundraiser, this statewide event is a treasured springtime tradition for the Garden

Club of Virginia members who organize it and for over 24,000 attendees. Last year, visitors from 42 states and 16 countries traveled to Virginia to participate in what is also the nation's oldest house and garden tour. In addition to garden restorations, proceeds support a historic landscape research fellowship program celebrating its 30th anniversary this year.

The Garden Club of Virginia has completed 130 restorations across the commonwealth, including several related to the nation's 250th anniversary, made possible through funding from Historic Garden Week. While other organizations were called upon to preserve the homes of Virginia's Founding Fathers, the Garden Club of Virginia plays a crucial role in restoring and interpreting the landscapes and key garden features at these sites, as well as at others linked to Virginia's early history.

Examples include George Washington's Mount Vernon, Thomas Jefferson's properties Monticello and Poplar Forest, James Madison's Montpelier

and his birthplace at Belle Grove, and the Mews at St. John's Church, located on Richmond's Church Hill, the site of Patrick Henry's famous call to arms. Many of GCV's restoration sites have ties to the nation's early history and its expansion, shaping Virginia's and the country's development. Some lesser-known sites include Burwell Morgan Mill, co-owned by Daniel Morgan, a key general in the American Revolution, and Fincastle Presbyterian Church, one of the gateways to the west.

Featured on the 2026 *Guidebook* cover, the Williamsburg tour showcases the Governor's Palace while marking the nation's 250th anniversary and the 100th founding of The Colonial Williamsburg Foundation. Situated next to the palace garden, visitors will learn about Garden Club of Virginia's newest restoration project, a collaboration with the Colonial Williamsburg Foundation to reestablish the Bowling Green based on landscape architect Arthur Shurcliff's 1930s restoration plans for the site. 🌿



*Monticello, Albemarle County, Photo by Catriona Tuder Erler*

**AMERICA 250.  
 VIRGINIA 250.  
 GCV 250!**

Throughout America in 2026, people will share their personal stories, recount history associated with their cities and towns, salute the American flag, and send fireworks into the sky to

commemorate the 250th signing of the Declaration of Independence.

As the VA250 Commission tags it, "America: Made in Virginia." Indeed, the proud state of Virginia had a seat at the table in the founding of our nation.

Several member clubs, numerous historic sites and GCV restoration properties, and the Garden Club of Virginia will add their voices to the celebration.

The Historic Landscape Research Fellowship will celebrate its 30th anniversary of supporting the work of emerging landscape architects. The Garden Club of Virginia will once again partner with the Virginia Museum of History & Culture to celebrate History Blooms, offering flower arranging opportunities with a schedule to interpret Revolutionary Gardens. Daffodil Day will keep our creative talents focused with the schedule America the Beautiful. And, thanks to each GCV member's hard work, the Restoration Committee in partnership with Nelson Byrd Woltz, GCV's landscape architect of record, will restore the Governor's Palace Bowling Green in Colonial Williamsburg, one of the most visited sites in the restored Colonial town, in time for the July 4 celebrations.

"The Semiquincentennial is not simply about our past; it reflects how our founding continues to shape our present and future," VA250 Commission. "The goals are to educate, engage, and inspire."

So, if your club has planned activities for the coming year to celebrate America's 250th, share those with your fellow member clubs. Announce an activity in *Membership News* or send what you have done to the *Journal* for publication in SNIPS for all to be inspired. And for a list of events and programs taking place throughout Virginia, visit [va250.org](http://va250.org). 🌿



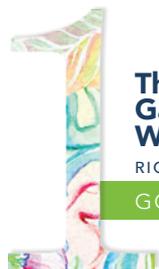
*Poplar Forest, Lynchburg, Photo courtesy of Poplar Forest*



*Family at Maymont, Photo courtesy of Maymont*



*Montpelier, Photo by Jacob Neff*



## The Tuckahoe Garden Club of Westhampton

RICHMOND  
GCV DISTRICT 1

The Tuckahoe Garden Club of Westhampton sponsored the delightful and brilliant Dr. Aruni Bhatnagar, leader of the Green Heart Louisville Health Research Initiative, at the Science Museum of Virginia on Nov. 19. His one-of-a-kind, \$15 million grant-funded project studies

how trees affect air pollution, sleep, stress and anxiety, blood pressure, and cardiovascular health. Since 2018, Dr. Bhatnagar's team has planted more than 8,000 trees and shrubs and collected detailed health data from nearly 500 residents. Working with collaborators around the world, he has spearheaded the new field of environmental cardiology, which links the risk of heart disease to natural, social, and personal environments. Dr. Bhatnagar is a Professor of Medicine and Distinguished University Scholar at the University of Louisville.

— Anna Aquino



GCV DISTRICT 2

## Dolley Madison Garden Club

ORANGE

On a bright November afternoon, Dolley Madison Garden Club sat down to a fascinating demonstration by Helena Arouca, senior master in the art of Ikebana at the Sangetsu School. Arouca began with an explanation of the five core principles of Sangetsu Ikebana: arrange flowers naturally, arrange flowers quickly, arrange flowers as if you were painting a picture, arrange flowers in harmony, and arrange flowers with joy.

Working her way through seven arrangements, she jumped from



one to another as though the containers were begging for a specific material. All the while recounting her experiences with arranging, teaching, and exploring her craft. Arouca has been practicing and teaching since 1994. She recently began making her own ceramic vases which further emphasize her artistic vision.

The five principles of Sangetsu were fully on display through the hands of Helena Arouca, and everyone in attendance left charmed, inspired and, yes, joyful.

— Heather L. McCullough



## Three Rivers Garden Club

NEW KENT & CHARLES CITY

In November, Three Rivers Garden Club had the pleasure of attending a demonstration by Annette Ernst of Ikenbana of Richmond. She demonstrated five different forms of arrangements along with the history and culture of each. Members greatly enjoyed the presentation and were able to take home flowers!

— Karen Lange



GCV DISTRICT 3

## The Garden Club of the Northern Neck

NORTHERN NECK

In early December, members of The Garden Club of the Northern Neck came together to help decorate the town of Warsaw for its fifth annual Christmas Town festival. This festive event features a variety of attractions, including entertainment, food, craft vendors, and carriage rides. While the Public Works Department manages most of the decorations, our members focused on creating seasonal displays for the directional sign and the park gazebo. It was a wonderful way to spread holiday cheer!



## The Spotswood Garden Club

HARRISONBURG & ROCKINGHAM COUNTY

In October, members of The Spotswood Garden Club of Harrisonburg-Rockingham County gathered at the Highlands Building at Sunnyside Retirement Community for their monthly meeting and to display exhibits for the club's annual October flower show.



Many members paired up to design and construct their arrangements after choosing a category from the overall "Architectural Icons in Bloom" theme. Specific artistic design categories included Taj Mahal, Parallel; Eiffel Tower, Italian Renaissance; Panama Canal, Underwater; Sydney Opera House, Construction; and Tower of Pisa, Line.

The members' creations were judged by Marie Thomas and Susie Lendermon of The Augusta Garden Club. The judges commended both the teamwork and originality shown in the displays. They also recognized the club's efforts to give members the opportunity to design, whether individually or with a partner, as valuable preparation for other judged GCV events such as Daffodil Day and the Lily Show. Two additional (and unconventional) awards were presented – one for an arrangement containing only garden materials and one for the most pristine plant materials.



The flower show was open to the public later in the afternoon, and a steady stream of friends, family, and visitors – many of whom have been attending for years – came to admire the beautiful arrangements.

— Lynn Oddenino



GCV DISTRICT 3

## The Garden Club of Gloucester and Mathews

GLOUCESTER & MATHEWS

The Garden Club of Gloucester and Mathews enjoyed a busy and engaging fall, highlighted by visits from Garden Club of Virginia leaders and successful



club events. At our October meeting, we welcomed GCV President Kris Carbone during our biennial joint gathering with The Williamsburg Garden Club. This year's meeting included GCGM's annual Plant Exchange, followed by a luncheon with members of both boards. "We are grateful to have this time together every two years," shared board member Carol Nyce.

In November, we were pleased to host Historic Garden Week State Chairman Virginia Gillock, who spoke about the history and economic impact of HGW across Virginia. Our 2026 and



2027 HGW chairmen especially valued the opportunity for conversation with her.

The club also held its annual fundraiser on October 9 at J. McLaughlin in Williamsburg, generously hosted by Susan Howard, Ginger James, and Helen Van Orden.

Additionally, Conservation Chairman Paula Mooradian and Beautification Chairman Vicki Dreelin attended GCV Conservation Day, continuing GCGM's strong commitment to conservation education. — **Lynne Manning**



## The Rappahannock Valley Garden Club

FREDERICKSBURG

Marion Zimmerman joined The Rappahannock Valley Garden Club 20 years ago and has been sharing her floral design expertise ever since, regularly leading design workshops for our members and their children. Some of her "Blossom Buddies" students became proficient enough to assist her in decorating for Christmas services at the Washington National Cathedral, where she has been a flower guild member for 37 years.



With decades of experience as a teacher and native of England, Marion studied at the Jane Packer Flower School in London. As a cherished member of the RVGC, Marion's workshops are a wonderful opportunity for new and seasoned members to learn and practice GCV artistic design styles.

Her favorite GCV style is "Naturalistic Landscape," and our HGW tours often feature her favorite style, as she collaborates with younger RVGC members to create beautiful designs that are memorable to our HGW guests each year. — **Kathy Wirtala**



## The Hampton Roads Garden Club

HAMPTON ROADS

On September 23, The Hampton Roads Garden Club's Fundraising Committee hosted a delightful High Tea and Fashion Show at the Mounts Bay Recreation Center in Williamsburg. The afternoon combined style, friendship, and purpose, offering members and guests a memorable experience in



support of the club's ongoing community initiatives.

The Mounts Bay Recreation Center was transformed into a scene of elegance and cheer, beautifully decorated in vibrant shades of pink and orange. Guests enjoyed champagne, tea, and an array of delicate sweets.

The highlight of the day was the fashion show, featuring stunning pieces curated by Shannon Olsen of Cricket, a beloved local boutique. Adding a personal touch, HRGC members Ann Fisher, Mary Kay Lawson, Sue Morgan, Jane Quinn, and Rita Quinn modeled the ensembles with poise and charm.

Special thanks go to the dedicated Fundraising Committee — Donna Herbert, Ann Moir, Birgit Kingsbury, Chairman Teresa Robinson, Mary Kay Lawson, Carrie Karnes,



Photos courtesy of Amanda Graham

and Val Bowen — for their creativity and hard work in orchestrating such a successful and elegant event. The afternoon was a celebration of beauty, generosity, and community spirit. — **Molly Trant**



GCV DISTRICT 4

## Roanoke Valley Garden Club

ROANOKE

As the first garden club in the Roanoke Valley, we blossomed into existence in April 1925, organized by Mrs. Blanche Rorer Davis, and with Miss Minnie Stone as our first president. As the 16th member club of the GCV, we were added the same year as HGW. In Roanoke, our successful foundation sowed the seeds for seven more garden clubs to take root — Mill Mountain, Magic City, Greenwood Road, Alleghany, Wasena, Mountain View, and Big Lick.

In April 2025, we turned 100 and decided to celebrate this



achievement at Hollins University's Beale Garden, a GCV Restoration project funded with HGW proceeds. Although the rain kept us inside during our annual meeting on May 21, we heard the story of the Beale Garden, and many of our members braved the weather for a tour of the gardens.

On October 22, Roanoke Valley Garden Club members met at the historic Fishburn Mansion for tea while sitting at ten beautiful, different-themed tablescapes, created by our member teams. The prompt was to artistically arrange flowers, centerpieces, and decorations to present a coordinated concept. We were inspired by a similar event our



club members held in 1931. Members voted for their favorite tablescape. Tea, finger sandwiches, and petite desserts were served at the end of the meeting.

Roanoke Valley proudly recognizes our accomplishments — three GCV presidents, three Massie Medals, two Common Wealth Awards, and one de Lacy Gray Medal for Conservation, as well as countless Blue Ribbons and Tri-Color Awards for flower arranging and abundant horticulture ribbons. Our members' hard work and vision has beautified Roanoke city parks and streets for 100 years, heeding Miss Minnie Stone's original motto, "Happy Gardening."

— **Katherine Fulghum Knopf**



GCV DISTRICT 4

## The Garden Club of Danville

DANVILLE

It has been a busy fall season, with gardens carefully prepared as we now await winter's peaceful display. Nearly 100 perennials

and grasses were planted in the Grove Street Cemetery Garden, litter was collected, and restoration of the Price Plot ironwork fencing was completed. The Perkinson Rose Garden is already looking ahead to its 20th anniversary in May 2026.

We were honored to host our sister clubs, Gabriella and Chatham, for a beautiful and educational orchid presentation by Art Chadwick of Chadwick &



Sons. All three clubs enjoy supporting one another's fundraising efforts, including our offering of watercolor native pollinator cards created by member and artist Amanda Griffith.

To further community education, Bee City signage was installed at the downtown Pollinator Garden, helping raise awareness of the importance of pollinators and native plants.

— **Amanda Griffith**



GCV DISTRICT 6

## The Garden Club of Norfolk

NORFOLK

The Garden Club of Norfolk has created a wonderful opportunity to delight and spread cheer with flowers to health care workers and patients. Tina Dolan, club member and owner of Virginia Floral Design & Events, is using flowers that would be thrown away and repurposing them into arrangements. She and other club members often gather on a Monday morning in her studio to upcycle flowers, transforming them into



beautiful arrangements that are delivered to rehabilitation centers, long-term care facilities, hospitals, and senior care providers. Adding a special touch, some wedding parties have generously donated their flowers to be reused for others to enjoy. Blooming Acts of Kindness has blossomed into a fun, fulfilling, rewarding experience for our club, helping to spread hope, happiness, and emotional healing throughout our community. What a beautiful way to brighten the day for those needing it the most!

— **Katherine Knaus**



## Harborfront Garden Club

NORFOLK

Lee Snyder has been a member of Harborfront Garden Club since 1974. She has twice served as president and has held various other leadership roles throughout the years. To honor her service, the club created a Life Member category. Life Members must have been in the club for 50 years.

Harborfront also renamed its floral design cup "The Lee Snyder Floral Design Award" to honor her talents. It is given to the member with the most points in floral design at the end of the year.

Each spring, Lee arranges for HGW. A mentor for new members, she often conducts workshops in flower design basics. Even for the seasoned arrangers, she is a valued resource offering feedback and advice. — **Latane Avery**



GCV DISTRICT 5

## The Garden Club of Alexandria

ALEXANDRIA

On Dec. 2, members of The Garden Club of Alexandria continued our annual tradition of

donating holiday arrangements, horticulture, and photography to residents of Goodwin House Senior Living. Staff members first carefully select pieces for health care units and for residents who are homebound, and then remaining offerings are made available to all residents. Jennifer Bennett, Events Coordinator at Goodwin House Alexandria, shared a

note of thanks: "From the beauty of your arrangements and photographs to the living



promise of a paperwhite, amaryllis, or topiary, each contribution is deeply appreciated." Club members consider this December event as one of our most treasured opportunities.

— **Hartley Hobson Wensing**



## Leesburg Garden Club

LEESBURG

In September, the Leesburg Garden Club held its second annual flower show at Spring Arbor, a senior, assisted living community in Leesburg. The

show followed Garden Club of Virginia guidelines and included Artistic Design (three classes plus a challenge class, with 18 entries), Horticulture (15 classes, 33 entries), and Photography (two entries). Points earned will be applied toward the club's annual Artistic and Horticulture Achievement Awards.

Several local GCV clubs contributed to the show's success. Members of the Fauquier and Loudoun, Warren County, and Winchester-Clarke garden clubs served as certified judges.

The club was especially pleased to welcome longtime member



Martha Lynch, an accomplished arranger, teacher, judge, and mentor, who traveled from Florida to participate. The event was enjoyed by Spring Arbor residents, club members, and visitors alike.

— **Judy Gerow**

# Cultivating Change:

HOW ONE WOMAN'S POLITICAL EXPERTISE IS BLOOMING IN THE GCV

When Olivia Garrett moved with her family from Richmond to Martinsville in 2020, she brought more than just a passing love of peonies and native plants. She carried a decade of legislative expertise honed as Chief of Staff for Delegate Betsy Carr, experience that now enriches her work with The Martinsville Garden Club and the Garden Club of Virginia's Conservation Committee.

Olivia's path to conservation advocacy began in the halls of the Virginia General Assembly, where she managed legislative development and constituent services for Delegate Carr. "She's always been a big advocate for conservation policy," Olivia recalls of her former boss, noting their work on groundwater protection and close collaboration with organizations like the Sierra Club and League of Conservation Voters. But Carr's influence extended beyond policy briefings. A passionate gardener herself — whose mother was involved with horticulture at the Governor's



Mansion — Carr introduced Olivia to the art of flower arranging, always creating her own arrangements for events.

This unique blend of legislative know-how and horticultural appreciation found new purpose when Olivia joined The Martinsville Garden Club shortly after relocating. What she describes as her "novice" gardening skills belied her professional strengths: The organizational acumen, people skills, and policy expertise that quickly made her an invaluable member. Members like Olivia demonstrate how professional experience in fields like policy, education, or business can enrich garden club work, adding new dimensions to established traditions of botanical excellence. Currently serving as the club's secretary, Olivia has become known for her welcoming presence at Historic Garden Week, where she spent several years as a procurer

before finally "forcing herself" to try arranging for HGW 2025.

The transition from Richmond's Fitzhugh Avenue to small-town Martinsville during the pandemic proved unexpectedly smooth for Olivia, her husband — a Martinsville native — and their two young children, Nellie and Ward. "It kind of felt like 2022 was when I got more into the Martinsville social scene," she reflects, noting that COVID created "a social reset" that eased her integration. Growing up in West Virginia as a minister's daughter and living in rural South Carolina had prepared her for the pace of small-town life, though she admits Richmond moved faster than Martinsville.

But Olivia discovered that Martinsville's network of community organizations — garden clubs, book clubs, arts groups — kept her just as engaged as she'd been in the capital city. The Martinsville Garden Club proved particularly welcoming, with veteran members generously sharing their expertise. "The first couple of arrangements I brought, there were always a few ladies that were like, 'here, let me show you what we could have done differently,'" she recalls with appreciation.

Olivia's legislative background found its perfect application when she joined the GCV Conservation and Beautification Committee's Legislative Subcommittee. Leveraging her experience from the General Assembly, she developed an improved tracking system for conservation legislation,



making it simpler for members to monitor bills moving through the legislature. This session, she's working to make the tracker available on the member side of the GCV website, democratizing and improving access to legislative information.

In her current role as Chief Advancement Officer at New College Institute, a state higher education center, Olivia continues to "wear all the hats" — managing legislative and government relations, marketing, public relations, and serving as executive director of the



institute's foundation. The position, she notes, allows her to blend the people dynamics and organizational skills that serve her equally well — whether she's navigating state politics or Historic Garden Week.

Her interest in native plants, fostered through involvement with Bee City Martinsville and the Southern Piedmont Native Plant Committee, reflects her broader commitment to environmental stewardship. Though she laughingly admits to being "still a novice in the gardening department," Olivia tends raised beds with her children and maintains an array of herbs on her back porch. And in her grandmother-in-law's backyard, she's been steadily expanding a collection of peony bushes — adding beauty to a landscape while building on the legacy of those who gardened there before her.

Olivia Garrett is a shining example of how garden clubs thrive when members bring diverse professional backgrounds that complement traditional horticultural expertise. From groundwater legislation to garden club governance, she proves that the skills of effective advocacy bloom wherever they're planted. 🌱

— Madeline Mayhood, The James River Garden Club

OPPOSITE: Olivia Garrett in her garden (top) and Olivia Garrett with her family (bottom)

ABOVE LEFT: Olivia Garrett and Cindy Edgerton, The Martinsville Garden Club

ABOVE: Del. Betsy Carr and Olivia Garrett

LEFT: Jen Rabon, Olivia Garrett, and Carrie O'Hare, The Martinsville Garden Club



### Texture in Photography

Texture can be discerned by touch and sight. Think of the smooth surface of a glass marble, the fluffiness of a young chick, or the roughness of a walnut. David Luria, renowned professional photographer, defines texture in photography as “any method that gives a three-dimensional quality to an image and makes the image seem so real to you that you want to reach in and touch it or eat it.” He points to examples such as the pores and veins in the face of an old man, the scales on the skin of a frog, a beautifully plated crème brûlée, and the unique bark of a tree.

Capturing and defining texture are important aspects in the world of photography. A two-dimensional image of a three-dimensional subject can be enlivened with visible texture in color, black-and-white, or monochrome photographs. Luria suggests that texture is best captured with side lighting to create shadows and highlights.

The capture of texture in color photographs can lift images into more interesting realms. Amy Thalhimers blue ribbon-winning photograph in GCV’s 2025 Winter Photography Challenge accomplishes this with the beautiful pop of color of the



*Camellia and Ice, photo by Amy Thalhimers, The Boxwood Garden Club*

camellia with its perceived soft, velvety petals juxtaposed against the hard edges of the icy crystals.

Texture is of utmost importance in black-and-white or monochrome photography. Mary Queitzsch’s photograph in the 2024 Lily Show

displays an intriguing contrast of the background cloth against the smoothness of the lily petals, while the roughness of the grains of pollen enhances the lily. Lighting plays a crucial role in creating the three-dimensional quality.

Texture can elevate an image to an intriguing dynamic creation and should play a role every time a photographer composes a photo.

*Find more tips from David Luria and the GCV Photography Committee in the new “Photography Resources” section of the GCV website at [gcvirginia.org](http://gcvirginia.org). Members log in, and under “Member Resources” find the box titled “Photography Resources.”*

— Susan Morris, GCV Photography Committee Chairman, The Martinsville Garden Club and Mary Queitzsch, GCV Photography Committee Co-Chairman, Dolley Madison Garden Club



*Solo Lilium, photo by Mary S. Queitzsch, Dolley Madison Garden Club*

## SAVE THE DATES

- February 16** | Historic Garden Week tickets go on sale
- February 20-22** | History Blooms, Virginia Museum of History & Culture, Richmond
- February 23** | Daffodil Day Workshop, Kent-Valentine House
- March 1** | Award Deadlines: Nominations for de Lacy Gray Memorial Medal for Conservation  
| Nominations for Horticulture Award of Merit  
| Applications for Common Wealth Award
- March 9** | Cultivating Conversations “The Artistic Design Judging Program”
- March 15** | *Journal* Submission Deadline – Spring Edition
- March 25** | Daffodil Day, Virginia Beach
- March 31** | GCV 101 Orientation, virtual and available to all members
- April 18-25** | Historic Garden Week
- May 11** | Cultivating Conversations “Celebrating Historic Garden Week’s Fabulous Floral Arrangements”
- May 19-21** | Annual Meeting, Hosted by Mill Mountain Garden Club, Roanoke
- June 1** | Award Nomination Deadlines for: Conservation Educator Award,  
| Dugdale Award for Meritorious Achievement in Conservation,  
| The Helen and Tayloe Murphy Award in Conservation Leadership in Government Award
- June 4** | Presidents Day, Kent-Valentine House
- June 9-10** | Horticulture Field Day, Charlottesville
- June 15** | *Journal* Submission Deadline – Summer Edition
- June 16-17** | Lily Show, Richmond
- June 25** | HGW Boot Camp, Kent-Valentine House
- August 14** | Photography Summer School
- September 8** | *Journal* Submission Deadline – Fall Edition
- October 20-21** | Board of Governors Meeting, Hosted by The Franklin Garden Club, Franklin

## SUBMIT YOUR ARTWORK

Featuring the work of GCV artists on the cover of the *Journal* is a long-standing and much anticipated tradition. Our issues mirror the seasons—spring, summer, fall, winter—and cover art corresponds to those seasons accordingly. If you’d like your artwork to be considered, please email high-resolution jpg files to [journal@gcvirginia.org](mailto:journal@gcvirginia.org).





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