

# HORTICULTURE HAPPENINGS

*A Publication of the Colonial Williamsburg Landscape Department*

## Spring has sprung!

Much has happened in the landscape department, not to mention the world, since our last newsletter. I hope that you and your families are doing well during these uncertain times. As you most likely know, the COVID-19 outbreak resulted in Colonial Williamsburg's closure of most of our public sites and Hospitality properties through April 30<sup>th</sup>. However, as essential personnel, the landscape staff, along with our colleagues in the Operations Division, are on site full time to preserve our gardens and buildings. While the horticulture staff is adhering to social distancing, the plants are not, so we have plenty of work to keep us busy! I've highlighted just a few of the tasks that kept us busy over the winter on the following pages.



*The gardens are bursting with color as seen in the Alexander Craig garden.*

*(Endowed by Sylvia J. Boecker and Michael J. Jackson)*



The white tulips complement the shell walks in the Palmer garden.

*(Endowed by Shirley Michels and Bernard G. Rethore)*



## Earlier this year . . .

Horticulturist **Preston Armstead** retired in January after 40 years in the landscape department. Known for his attention to detail, thoroughness, and congeniality, Preston will be missed both in the gardens and at Christmas, where he was a lead designer.

Preston's fellow Christmas designers were among the many that came to honor him at his retirement party at King's Arms Tavern (L-R: **Diana Lorence, Laura Colgary, Carol Polifone, Barb Landa, Preston, Barbara Ricketts** and **Carol Fryer**).



The saying, *"What goes up must come down"*, applies to the 100's of decorations that adorn the Historic Area buildings throughout the holiday season. It takes a team of volunteers and Operations staff to carefully remove the decoration and then inspect each piece to salvage reusable materials and store for next year. Thanks to **all of you** that helped us throughout the Christmas season – we could not do it without you (L to R: Carpenter **Steve Bynum**, irrigation tech **Dave Stull**, nurseryman **Scott Hemler**, painter **Timothy Liakakos**, and horticulturist **Melody Mosbaugher** prepare to disassemble the decorations.



Every year our arborists prune the one-year old branches from some of our large sycamore trees which the costumed historic gardeners then use at their interpretive site to make wattle fences and plant supports. This ancient type of pruning, called pollarding, allows continual harvest of wood from the same tree while keeping it healthy.

Shell and gravel pathways are replenished in the winter months. Before more material is put down, the horticulturists use string lines to clearly define the edges as seen at the Everard garden.



The landscape department recycles all our garden debris to minimize our carbon footprint and reduce material costs. Each winter over 140 tons of leaves are grinded into compost and over 450 tons of woody debris is shred into hardwood mulch.



Landscape managers, **Jon Lak** and **Joanne Chapman**, and landscape director, **Laura Viancour**, visited Virginia Tech in March to meet with students and faculty in the Horticulture and Forestry curriculums to promote our garden internships. Thanks to the generosity of donors Barbara Chappell, Ruth Cobb, and the Colonial Triangle Unit of the Herb Society of America, we are able to hire much needed interns.



Due to CoVid-19 restrictions, our volunteers have been asked to stay home. In their absence, our gardeners have taken on their responsibilities in the gar-



The next few weeks staff is focusing on the streetscape—from replenishing paving materials to spreading our freshly made compost around the trees—the Operations division is busy sprucing up the Duke of Gloucester Street! Above, horticulturists **Lance Street**, **Johnnie Stafford** and **Jake Eisenhart** (L-R) level and prepare beds for the addition of bankrun.