

April 2023

# HORTICULTURE HAPPENINGS

*A Publication of the Colonial Williamsburg Landscape Department*

## Seasonal Changes

After a mild and uneventful winter, the magic of the spring season has been on full display in the Historic Area this week. It has been quite a show with dogwood, red buds, fruit trees, and tulips all blooming at the same time! No wonder our visitors love strolling through the Historic Area at this time of year!



Governor's Palace Ballroom Garden 4-6-2023

## Landscape Department Transition

I want to bring you up to date on the changes taking place with the Landscape Department. Last November the Colonial Williamsburg Foundation Board of Trustees voted to bring landscape maintenance services back in house for the Historic Area, Merchant Square, and the Museum properties. Nineteen new positions were created and added to the 2023 Landscape Department budget, and landscape manager and I have been extremely busy interviewing to fill new lead horticulturist, horticulturist, groundskeeper, arborist apprentice and irrigation technician position. Three horticulturists, **Patrick Nee**, **Johnny Stafford** and **Jacob Eisenhart** were promoted

to Lead Horticulturists and **David Stull** was promoted to the Irrigation Technician position.

The Landscape Department assumed landscape maintenance responsibilities for Merchant Square and the Art Museum on March 1 and the Historic Area on April 1. Many of the new groundskeeper and horticulturist positions have been filled at the time of this writing, but there are a few more to fill before we are fully staffed.

We are in a state of transition, but it is an exciting time for the department.

**Gallery**



**New Lead Horticulturists: Patrick Nee, Johnnie Stafford, and Jacob Eisenhart**



**New Irrigation Technician: David Stull**



**New Horticulturists: Kaitlin Altland, Shomari Horton and John Ryan**



**New Arborist Apprentice: Tristyn Hosford**



**New Groundskeepers: L-R Jameel James, Cole McGee, James Griffin, Robert Coles, Rolanda Atkins, Katie Barnes and Corey Jenkins**

**Garden Programs** continue to highlight horticulture at Colonial Williamsburg. Several DIY floral arranging workshops were offered early spring, providing registrants tips on decorating in the Williamsburg style with spring flowers. Our new tour, *Bassett Hall Trace*, has been well received since it was launched in April. Offered on Saturday mornings, the tour focuses on Virginia's wildlife and native habitats and ways to conserve Virginia's forests. Colonial Williamsburg's Arboretum Tour in the Historic Area discusses the colonial uses of trees and their importance in our ecosystem today. During the summer, the Arboretum Tour will be led around the Griffin Hotel and focus on best practices for maintaining trees. We hope you can join us on a tour soon.



*Master Naturalist, Shirley Devan leads the weekly Nature Walk on the Bassett Trace Nature Trail, Saturday, April 22nd for a group of 13 visitors to Colonial Williamsburg .*

**Production Nursery Update**

Colonial Williamsburg's production nursery had an amazing Christmas season. Our annual wreath sale was very successful and produced a record profit for the landscape department. The beautiful decorations were completed by our wonderful volunteers, and they were hung with the joint efforts of the landscape department and our capable carpenters. Before we knew it, Christmas was over and put away for next year, and we started on our spring crop for the historic gardens. So far, we have been able to grow almost 2,500 vegetables, 650 herbs, and 1,000 flowers, with many more to come. A new covered hoop house was built to hold plants outside that aren't quite ready for the full strength of the elements. This hoop house is

complete with irrigation, electricity, as well as roll-up sides, which we have rolled up now that the weather has warmed up a bit. We held a Master Gardener training class for new Master Gardeners at the nursery, where Scott, Melody, and Goldie taught them how to propagate plants asexually via cuttings as well as how to sow seeds in our greenhouse setting.



*Covered hoop house provided protected winter storage for boxwood and other plants*

Currently, we are arranging plant pickups for the historic gardens, having meetings about our long-awaited and necessary new greenhouse improvements, and gearing up for hosting the Garden Symposium at

the end of the month. Scott, Melody, and Goldie will be demonstrating various plant-related topics, so maybe they'll see you around!



*Thousands of vegetable and flower seedlings in the production greenhouse.*

## Donor Event

On March 25<sup>th</sup>, the Landscape Department was happy to host a tour of the Landscape Production Nursery for the Burgesses and Goodwin Society donor groups. Goldie Daniels demonstrated our seed starting procedures, Scott Hemler shared his Pelargonium collection and toured the group through the greenhouse full of the beautiful plants, Charles Gardener explained how he has established a small tree nursery that supports the Arboretum, Melody Mosbaugher shared the trial garden area where we test new plants that may be used in Historic Area gardens and we concluded with Jon Lak sharing the plans for the renovations that will be taking place at the Nursery in the next year or two.

We received so many positive comments from the group and they enjoyed their afternoon with us and we are quite sure the Landscape Department made some new friends. 😊



*Melody Mosbaugher discussing heirloom plants.*



*Goldie Daniels demonstrating seed starting of heirloom plants.*



*Jon Lak sharing the plans for the improvements of the production nursery.*



*Scott Hemler's Pelargoniums in the glass house.*

## Volunteer Highlight

Our wonderful Arboretum volunteers do so much for Colonial Williamsburg Foundation and the Landscape Department. During the past two years their team of twelve Master Gardener Tree Stewards have led 51 Arboretum tours reaching more than 1,000 visitors on the tours.



They completed inventories of all 310 acres of the Historic Area, plus the Griffin Hotel Campus, Bassett Hall Garden and the newly expanded Art Museum landscape and a large portion of the greenspace areas. They have identified over 560 distinct species of plants that make up the Arboretum inventory and placed 750 plant identification tags on trees and shrubs. During one of their regular workdays the team planted new azaleas and camellias on the Rockefeller Vista behind Bassett Hall. Due to the deer pressure in the area, all the plants need to be protected with wire cages until they are fully established. It was quite a logistical task and required a great deal of physical work, but the volunteers worked tirelessly and were able to get half of the 40 plants in the ground and protected by cages before they ran out of wire. The remaining 20 plants will be planted at their next workday scheduled in a week from now. Thanks to the efforts of our Arboretum volunteers, the Rockefeller Vista is becoming a real show place for blooming shrubs. The mature rhododendrons on the site should start blooming very soon.

