

# HORTICULTURE HAPPENINGS

A Publication of the Colonial Williamsburg Landscape Department

## It's Planting Season

The flower beds throughout the Historic Area are being changed out for the season with over 42,000 bulbs and 12,000 cold-hardy annuals. The largest flower beds are at the Governor's Palace in the North Garden. A total of 3,000 tulips and 4,000 annuals are planted in the two central beds, and an assortment of 8,000 bulbs and 1,600 annuals are planted in the perennial beds that surround them. An additional 1,400 bulbs are planted along the base of the arbors (Photo 1).



Photo 1



Photo 2

This year the central beds in the Palace North Garden are being planted with two kinds of Dianthus (Photo 2). Dianthus also called "pinks", were a favorite of 18th-century English florists, who developed many forms in a wide range of color and fragrance. Today, we think of the word "pink" as a color, but in the 18th Century the term referred to the "pinked" or notched edges of the petals.



Photo 3



Photo 4

King's Arms Tavern, a favorite garden of the horticulture team that tends the East Historic Area, is planted with several cold-hardy plants, including the following flowers: foxglove, johnny-jump-ups, and snapdragons (Photo 3). Earlier in the season, cold-hardy vegetables were planted in succession, as can be seen with the cole crops in the foreground which were planted six weeks after the greens growing in the back bed (Photo 4). Cole crops, also known as cruciferous vegetables, belong to the mustard (Brassica) family. Cole plants, such as cauliflower, cabbage, kale, broccoli, and similar green leaf vegetables are all descendants of wild cabbage and are grown in all our kitchen gardens. The word *cole* is derived from the Latin *caulis*, denoting the stem or stalk of a plant. "*Cruciferous*" references the shape of their flowers, whose four petals resemble a cross.

## TREE NURSERY

To support Colonial Williamsburg's arboretum, our production nursery now has an area dedicated to growing native tree species that are not commonly found at commercial nurseries. This fall we planted 43 trees that will be nurtured along until they reach a size (1.5" caliper) that can be planted in the Historic Area. To get them off to a good start, an automated irrigation system was installed and the trees were planted in 15 gallon grow bags with a mixture of bio char, Colonial Williamsburg leaf compost and topsoil. Biochar (charcoal used as a soil amendment) can increase soil fertility, agronomic productivity, and provide protection against some diseases.



BEFORE



AFTER

Colonial Williamsburg's arborist, Charles Gardner, recently finished performing a canopy thinning of the oaks that line the front entrance to Bassett Hall. Raising the canopy, along with the removal of deadwood and crossing branches, accentuates the guests' view of Bassett Hall from Francis Street. A root drench of nutrients will follow to help the trees thrive.



**It's that time of year again when leaves drop and blowers drone. Although noisy, leaf blowers are a necessity to gather up all the leaves before Grand Illumination so that we can have fireworks. We need to also keep walkways leaf-free so they don't become slippery to walk on. Thank you for your patience and understanding as we prepare the town for our holiday guests.**