

# HORTICULTURE HAPPENINGS

*A Publication of the Colonial Williamsburg Landscape Department*

## *Seasonal Changes*

This has been Spring season to remember! The Williamsburg area has experienced cooler temperatures and plenty of rain this season and as you might expect, the gardens of Colonial Williamsburg have responded beautifully. As we move into the summer months, the Landscape and Horticulture staff is busy changing out seasonal vegetables and flower gardens, renovating existing gardens, bringing irrigations systems back online, mowing and performing turf maintenance, and performing much need Arboretum tree care. The tour guides for the Meet the Gardener, Basset Trace Nature Walk and Arboretum tours are finishing up training and final touches for the summer tour schedule, and we are introducing our first summer workshop where guests will learn the history of and make a Nosegay also known as a tussie-mussie.



*James Blair Herb Garden 4-21-2023*



*Benjamin Powell Herb Garden 5-11-2023*

This spring we completed two garden restorations at the Moody House Garden and Custis Tenement Garden. In July of '21 we discovered boxwood blight in the Moody House Garden. We removed only the leaves from the infected boxwood attempting an alternate method to save the remaining boxwood. Unfortunately, the blight spread the following year and we had to remove the remaining boxwood. Once boxwood has infected a garden, best management practices prevent the use of boxwood, even boxwood blight resistant varieties in the garden for seven years! Because the Moody House is a popular Colonial Guest House, we chose to restore the garden using yaupon holly now rather than wait five years to allow the use of boxwood.



*Moody House Garden August 2022*



*Moody House Garden April 2023*

And we were so fortunate to receive generous gift funds to restore the Custis Tenement Garden. Located on Duke of Gloucester Street, directly across from Bruton Parish Church, Custis Tenement Garden is one of the most visible gardens in the Historic Area. Over the years the garden had lost its design intent as one of Arthur Shurcliff's most delightful designs and it was time to bring it back. Because the existing boxwood had not been infected with boxwood blight, we were able to restore the garden using two boxwood blight resistant varieties "Little Missy" edging the parterres and New Gen Independence around the perimeter of the garden.



*Custis Tenement Garden May 2023*

## *Landscape Department Transition*

As I mentioned in the previous edition of Horticulture Happenings, there have been some changes taking place with the Landscape Department due to the Colonial Williamsburg Board of Trustees vote to bring landscape maintenance services back in house for the Historic Area, Merchant Square, and the Museum properties. We have been busy hiring and training new staff to fill the nineteen new positions. Last issue I introduced you to three new lead horticulturists, three new horticulturists, seven new groundskeepers. Since April, we have added two more groundskeepers a horticulture apprentice, and another horticulturist to our staff. Most of the new positions have been filled at the time of this writing, but there are a few more positions to fill before we are fully staffed.



*Horticulture Apprentice:*  
**Rebecca Macke**



*L-R Groundskeepers:* **Marcos Jacobo,**  
**Simon Boyd**



*Horticulturist:* **Morgan Sensabaugh**

Another change to the Landscape Department was the retirement of Lead Horticulturist **Clyde Crew** after 32 years with the Foundation. Clyde started his career as a groundskeeper and through the years he moved up to Gardener, Senior Gardener and eventually Foreman/Lead Horticulturist. Clyde is a very talented gardener and especially loved his vegetable gardens at Kings Arms Tavern and Benjamin Powell. Clyde will be missed for his attention to detail, his leadership and most of all his wonderful sense of humor.



*Lead Horticulturist: **Clyde Crew***



*Kings Arms Tavern Vegetable Garden*

### *Department Programs*

The Landscape Department hosted two events that allowed us to show off our horticulture expertise. On May 3<sup>rd</sup> Landscape Director Joanne Chapman led a tour for a small group of employees from our People, Talent, and Culture department of CWF. Horticulture Lead Melody was posted at the Geddy Garden talking about Christmas and the landscape department’s role in decorating the town for the holidays, Laura Viancour was at Saint George Tucker discussing the evolution of the Historic Area gardens, Manager Jon Lak and Arborist Charles Gardener were stationed at the Compton Oak to talk about the Arboretum and our tree preservation program, Lead Horticulturist Jacob Eisenhart, Johnny Stafford and Sho Horton discussed and demonstrated fine gardening pruning techniques and Growers Scott Hemler and Goldie Daniels were posted at the Orr garden talking about the landscape nursery’s role in the gardens as well as the history of heirloom plants in Colonial Williamsburg. In some ways, this tour was a practice run for our next event, which was hosting the Garden Club of Virginia Horticulture Field Day June 8<sup>th</sup> for 150 club members from all over the state of Virginia. We offered the same tour for garden club members in the morning and in the afternoon, they visited the archeological dig at the John Custis site. Both groups were very impressed with how much they learned from the landscape staff and about the department.

## Production Nursery Update

We have had a very busy and productive spring season here at the landscape nursery! In April, we hosted several breakout sessions on location for the 2023 Garden Symposium. Friday afternoon Senior Grower Scott Hemler led a discussion about heirloom Geraniums and gave a greenhouse tour of the different species he has grown. Grower Goldie Daniels gave a talk about the history of kokedama and led the participants in making their own kokedama to take home, and IPM Technician Dave Stuff lead a discussion on pest control and the importance of timing. On Saturday afternoon Horticultural Lead Melody Mosbaugher led a discussion on heirloom flowers that are grown in our production greenhouses, in conjunction with a talk on native plants by Horticulturalist Haley Funkhauser. Certified Arborist Charles Gardner lead a discussion on the Arboretum and our tree preservation practices and Landscape Manager Jon Lak lead a discussion on the benefits of our in-house mulch and compost making operations. We received amazing feedback on our sessions, and plan to have just as interesting topics next year! As we have done for a few years now, Scott and Goldie made wreaths from scratch for the Memorial Day ceremony held at the palace. While all these events have been taking place, we've been simultaneously taking care of, growing, and distributing plants for the historic area gardens. This involves plenty of weeding, watering, and cutting back until the gardens are ready for them. From January to June, we have grown 13,166 plants from seed for the gardens! And slowly but surely, they are all making their way to their new homes, out of their pots and into the gardens.

## Volunteer Highlight

At the production nursery, we have 15 wonderful volunteers. Some have been here for over 30 years, while others have just joined within the last month. Our volunteers are vital to getting some

of the more time-consuming work done, and boy do they work fast! Depending on their comfort level or ability or even their general interest, we have varying tasks that we can assign for them to do. Some of the jobs they do for us are:



*Marion Zirbel potting-up young plants to larger pots before going out to HA gardens.*

- Potting-up plants into bigger pots
- Potting-up plugs
- Weeding in “the outback” as well as individual pots
- Cleaning up and cutting back overgrown plants
- Cutting and hanging flowers to dry for Christmas decorations.
- Pot washing
- Disposing of dead and dying plants
- The rare unloading of trucks

With all their help, they turn our little staff workforce of 3 into sometimes 7 on any given day. Recently, as our workload has been decreasing as more and more plants get picked up, we've been able to shift our volunteers to the gardens to help our Horticultural staff plant them. No matter what our volunteers are doing, they always show up with great attitudes and a willingness to work. We try to say it as many times as we can while they're here, but we truly appreciate all that they do for us.



*Karen Simon weeding nursery plants in "the outback".*



*Nancy Heflin cleaning and cutting back plants before potting-up to larger pots.*



*Eileen Gaughan loading nursery plants that will be brought inside to pot-up to larger pots.*