

Sustainability for HOA, Condos, Schools and Faith Communities

Panelist and Property Information for Fairlington Villages, Arlington Village, First Church of Christ, Scientist, and Campbell Elementary School

Carol Rosen (carolcolerosen@gmail.com)
Fairlington Villages Condominium Association (area of Fairlington North of 395)

Carol has been a member of the Grounds Committee for the past three years. Fairlington Villages encompasses 1700 townhouses and apartments.

Recommended References:

Our condo group is managed by Legum and Norman, and we have a staff operations manager, Mark Johnson, who oversees landscaping issues. He is a Master Gardener and former landscaping contractor himself, so he is knowledgeable about design and sustainability issues. Lancaster Landscapes <http://www.lancasterlandscapes.com>.

Specific issues addressed:

In the three years I've served on our Grounds Committee, I've seen our main tasks to be responding to residents' concerns (often erosion and drainage problems, tree issues, and some complaints about appearance) and demonstrating prudent management of our budget (looking for ways to hold down costs and supplement resources). Both tasks give us a chance to work with our contractor, Lancaster Landscapes, and with our Board and residents to promote sustainable practices.

Successes:

- We've had our grounds certified by the Audubon Society of Northern Va. as a wildlife sanctuary.
- We've had one of our large white oaks designated as a Notable Tree by the Arlington Beautification Committee. The tree now has a plaque, and we organized a spring nature walk last year to visit the tree and other "legacy" oaks on the grounds to discuss their value to local wildlife and good tree maintenance practices, etc.
- We have five rain gardens that have been supported by Arlington StormwaterWise grants (all requiring native plantings). We've added more native plants in those areas to showcase the seasonal beauty of native plants.

Key Lessons Learned:

Much of our progress has been incremental, but we do try to educate them all about the benefits of native plants, rain gardens, water conservation, limited use of pesticides, etc. (newsletter articles, semiannual "walk-throughs" of the grounds to point out projects underway or problems that may need action soon, as well as themed spring and autumn nature walks to raise residents' awareness of good practices).

Other Resources Used:

- We've used Kirsten Buhls as an advisor to recommend landscaping solutions for some badly eroded slopes. We're implementing a small plan she suggested.

Photos of Fairlington are also included in Remarkable Trees of Virginia, by Nancy Ross Hugo and Jeff Kirwin, as an example of an “urban forest.”

Rodney Olsen (rfolsen@verizon.net, cell: (703) 685-0576) (Main Contact)
Lori Bowes (loribowes@gmail.com) (Alternate contact)
Arlington Village Townhouse Association, 1400 S. Edgewood St. #525-B

Rodney has been a Member of Environmental Resources Committee (ERC) since January 2008, chair since January 2009; member of Grounds Committee since January 2013, chair since July 2013; and member of Board of Directors, August 2012 to present. (Lori has been a member of ERC since 2010, and a Grounds and board member since 2011.)

Visit the ERC blog here: <https://avgreenteam.wordpress.com/>. We invite those interested to contact us for a tour of our terraced native plant garden along the stream.

Arlington Village includes 42 acres of townhouses and grounds and a 5 1/2-acre natural ravine along the Arlington Branch of Long Branch Creek, in the Four Mile Run Watershed.

Recommended References:

- **Landscape Maintenance Company:** Lancaster Landscapes, Joel Owen, President, 5019-B Backlick Rd., Annandale, VA 22003. (703) 846-0944. Website: www.lancasterlandscapes.com
- **Landscape Designer:** John Magee, Magee Design, 21438 Steptoe Hill Rd. Middleburg, VA 20117. Office (540) 687-5331, cell (703) 929-4275. Email: john@john-magee.com or euphorbia@aol.com. Website: www.john-magee.com
- Designer and native plant expert, Leigh Pickering, also provides native plant consultations and has valuable expertise in stormwater management. Email: pickering.leigh@gmail.com

Specific Issues Addressed:

In 2008, our Environmental Resources Committee (ERC) began restoration of our 5 1/2- acre ravine. We were inspired by one of our members, Jenny Ericson, who at the time was an invasive plant educator for the U.S. Department of Fish and Wildlife. We were helped by a small grant from Arlingtonians for a Clean Environment (ACE) and a partnership with Earth Sangha Native Plant Nursery. We have continued that restoration effort with periodic invasive plant removals and native plantings.

In 2012, members of ERC wished to extend their efforts to the grounds area of Arlington Village, encouraging the Grounds Committee to shift their priority to native plants, along the lines advocated by Doug Tallamy in *Bringing Nature Home*. This shift did not occur until several members of ERC were elected to the Board of Directors and other directors were persuaded of the necessity to refocus environmental concerns. Following this shift, the Grounds Committee was reconstituted, and its first action was to issue a Request for Proposal (RFP) for a landscape designer for grounds projects who was knowledgeable about native plant landscaping. We selected John Magee. Over the past two years, he has designed and supervised the installation of

six landscaping projects in the Village to combat erosion and create pollinator enclaves in the Village.

Our Grounds Committee has also taken a greater hand in helping our facilities manager oversee the practices of our landscaping management company, Lancaster Landscapes. We meet weekly with the principals of the company to find ways to implement practices that are more organic and consistent with developing a native habitat, ones that will make our grounds environment more self-sustaining.

Successes:

We have sustained our restoration efforts in the ravine, largely eliminating the usual suspects—such as English ivy, Bush honeysuckle, Multiflora rose—while being alert to new threats—such as last year’s proliferation of Stiltgrass. Our relationship with Earth Sangha, principally Lisa Bright, has deepened our understanding of the restoration process. We install no plant in the ravine that is not a local ecotype native plant. Our main challenge is to maintain our success and bring in a greater number of our residents to help us.

On the grounds, we have worked out a very good relationship with our landscape maintenance company, Lancaster landscapes. It is now suggesting initiatives that will help us become more organic and self-sustaining in our practices. They are now involved in recycling leaves and removing invasive plants from the grounds, and it participates with us in our installation of native shrubs to replace ornamental shrubs that have died.

Our landscaping projects with John Magee, which occur on a yearly basis, are gaining momentum with our community as the projects that he has designed and installed mature. This is perhaps the best way to educate residents about native plants--to have residents see how attractive native plants are and to see how native plants thrive in our landscape. We also worked with John Magee to establish a master list of approved plants and landscape design prototypes which feature native plants. You may be able to view these on our website:

<http://www.arlingtonvillage.com/ResourceCenter/16682/HOME>

Key Lessons Learned:

The key lesson is to be patient and determined. In the ravine, we have gained general assent to the idea that native plants are appropriate for natural areas, but on the grounds, we are always aware that we must persuade residents to accept practices about which they are unfamiliar. People are tied by their individual histories to a particular flora, much of which is ornamental and nonnative. We emphasize that we are not the plant police and that we are not targeting the plants they love. We are simply working in native plants wherever there is an opportunity to do so. We trust that once the native plants are in place, they will win the day.

We use all the educational resources we can muster. Our invasive pulls are means of education. Before native plant projects are approved, as they must be by our board, we knock on doors, hold Village town hall meetings, and write articles for our newsletter to inform our residents as much as possible about the projects.

The StormwaterWise program was an initial catalyst in our native landscaping efforts; our first project was a terraced native plant garden along our stream where we installed a hillside of terraces and planted several hundred local ecotype native plants entirely with volunteer labor.

Even those who don't have a native plant aesthetic have admired our terrace, which hosts hummingbirds and other pollinators and helps us slow stormwater runoff.

Other efforts we have underway include the following:

- Seasonal consultations with Leigh Pickering, a local native plant expert, to help us identify plants, issues, and opportunities on our property;
- Rain barrel installation program where we will install a rain barrel for free where residents request it and agree to use the water for plants;
- Pilot communal compost bin effort;
- Nandina replacement program where residents who wish to have it removed may select a native shrub replacement. (Nandina is invasive plant which was once planted widely and is dangerous to birds)
- Actively engaged in working with our landscaping company to improve their ability to identify invasive plants and to work with us to eradicate them using a variety of methods. This is a key area for us. Landscaping companies in general need to enhance their expertise in this area and a their customers we should emphasize the importance of this.

Other Resources Used:

We draw frequently on Earth Sangha Native Plant Nursery for inspiration, direction, and plants.

We are also lucky to have programs in Arlington County from which to draw support. Arlington Regional Master Naturalists has designated our ravine restoration as a project for which master naturalists can volunteer and earn service hours. The master naturalist program has also put us in touch with a network of experts and friends from whom we frequently draw advice and support.

We have participated in two other Arlington County programs that have enhanced our efforts—the Tree Canopy Fund program and the StormwaterWise program. Since 2009, we have received more than 40 native trees from the Tree Canopy Fund program to plant on our grounds. Since 2012, we have received three StormwaterWise grants from the county to build a buffer of native plants along our stream.

Janet Sasser (j2sass@verizon.net)
First Church of Christ, Scientist
890 N. McKinley Road
Arlington, VA 22205

Janet has been Grounds Committee Chair for 9 years. First Church of Christ, Scientist has about 2 acres.

Recommended References:

J & B Landscaping & Lawncare
1412 Aiden Drive
Woodbridge, VA 22191
703-338-0030
Jose@JBlandscaping.net

Specific Issues Addressed:

1. Lack of tree canopy in front yard
2. Lack of garden bed on one side of front doors
3. Aging, unsightly, and nonnative shrubbery in front garden bed—requiring trimming annually
4. Narrow, linear garden bed
5. No food or shelter for native species

Challenges and opportunities:

1. Research and design a new landscape plan for Church front yard to be executed within existing budget line item.
2. Obtain the Executive Board of Directors' approval of plan and implementation schedule.
3. Apply for free native canopy trees for front yard through Arlington's Tree Canopy Fund, which will be professionally planted.
4. Dig and amend a new, curvilinear garden bed on right side of front doors and plant with native shrubs and herbaceous plants to provide food and shelter for native insects, birds, and small mammals BUT ALSO to provide year-around visual beauty and interest.
5. Dig and amend a much larger, curvilinear garden bed on left side of front doors to replace the existing bed. Plant with native trees, shrubs and herbaceous plants to provide food and shelter for native insects, birds, and small mammals BUT ALSO to provide year-around visual beauty and interest.

Successes:

All five items above were accomplished over 3 years: I received full support of the Board. Two *Nyssa sylvatica* (black gum, tupelo) trees were awarded to the Church from the Tree Canopy Fund and planted in December 2012. The smaller garden bed was dug and amended in fall 2013 and planted in spring 2014. The much larger bed was dug and amended in fall 2014 and planted in spring 2015.

Key Lessons Learned:

1. I would NOT again amend the soil with the County's leaf mulch—too many hearty seeds of weeds.
2. I would plant many more native herbaceous plants in the large bed at the outset so that the immediate result is one of fullness. I added more plants this past fall.
3. Herbaceous plant choices needed to be adjusted based on availability and flexibility of design.
4. I recommend planting in the fall, as the watering and weeding needs are much reduced.

Other Resources Used:

1. Our landscape contractor dug the beds after I drew them out on the grass and amended the soil with the leaf mulch that I had ordered from the County.
2. Prior to the redesign of the Church front yard, I had attended several sustainable landscape workshops and seminars.

Pat Findikoglu (Patfindikoglu@gmail.com, 703 975 8292)

Campbell Elementary School
737 South Carlin Spring Road
Arlington VA 22204

(Property is adjacent to the Long Branch Nature Center section of the park.)

Pat was a teacher at the school and core team member for the 'The School Yard Committee,' for many years. She now supports the project as Retired Teacher and facilitates assistance from Master Naturalists on Work Days.

Recommended References:

Yes, we hired Nancy Striniste of Early Space, for about one year and Thomas Hunt of Green Earth Landscaping to do work that covered a couple weeks.

-www.earlyspace.com

-www.northernvirginalandscaping.com

Specific Issues Addressed:

The schoolyard is home to many underground springs that flow year round. The design and placement of the Wetland Learning Lab was to correct the sitting water problem, thereby contributing to the health of the Chesapeake Bay watershed; to bring the area back to its natural setting, and to provide an outdoor learning center for the students.

Challenges and opportunities:

-Raising money (in a Title I school).

-Complications of dealing with Department of Environmental Services, permits, regulations

-Complications with APS Facilities and Operation

We were doing something that appeared to not have been done before.

There was no clear path to follow, no central information regarding procedures, requirements, guiding principles. For example, we were told we raising money too early in the game, yet also told we couldn't move forward without a sound professional design plan. We got caught up on the regulations around sending out bids. It was not clear up to the final days of construction what APS was willing to contribute to the project.

Successes:

In the fall of 2012, after (after 2.5 years of work) the community of 150 volunteers planted 550 native plants in the new Wetlands.

Key Lessons Learned:

Key your eyes on the prize with a ***VISION, PERSISTENCE AND PATIENCE***

Other Resources Used:

Campbell PTA, staff and families, Long Branch Nature Center, Earth Sangha, Boy Scout Troop #648, Washington Forest Foundation, Arlingtonians for a Clean Environment, APS School Board and Superintendent, APS Facilities, Department of Environmental Services, Arlington Regional Master Naturalists, Escuela Bolivia, Virginia Native Plant Society, Arlington Parks and Recreation, Virginia's Vernal Pools, Early Space, Green Earth Landscaping, Virginia Land and Water