

61st Annual Conservation Forum

Trees: Canopy of Conservation

by Becky Balzer, Roanoke Valley Garden Club
and Allison Clock, The Hampton Roads Garden Club
Co-chairmen, GCV Conservation Forum

This year's Conservation Forum, "Trees: Canopy of Conservation," was held at Natural Bridge State Park and Historic Hotel and Conference Center on Sept. 25 in tandem with the Horticulture Show on the 24th. For some, Natural Bridge is a place of happy childhood memories and, for all, it was an escape from busyness, a time to enjoy the outdoors and to catch our breath. Horticulture, conservation and beautification, and Virginia State Parks committees combined to bring this two-day event to our membership for the first time. The happy result was that some attendees came a little earlier and others stayed longer to participate in events outside of their main interest, finding common ground.

On the first day, horticulturalists in our group enthusiastically shared with attendees their avoidance of pesticides and promoted specimens of native plants. Some of us, who identify as conservationists, dropped off entries for the show for our horticulture friends. Each committee took pleasure in sharing the stage. Our well-attended tree planting on the grounds of the state park by our Centennial sponsor, Bartlett Tree Experts, brought out local conservationists and school children to help. Local officials and former Virginia State Parks Director Craig Seaver were also on hand. All enjoyed the event next to the recently planted pollinator flower garden and the brand-new interpretive center inside, aptly named Base Camp. With the many hands-on educational displays there, the Garden Club of Virginia can be proud of our state parks grant at Natural Bridge.

On day two, across the road at the George Washington Hall at the Conference Center, we gathered for a continental breakfast sans plastic straws, cups or plates, in keeping with our pledge to avoid single-use plastics. Conservation and Beautification Committee Chairman Carrie Dorsey introduced Capital Trees Director Frazier Armstrong, who spoke on "The Evolution of Capital Trees: Urban Greening and the Benefits to the Greater Community." This landmark project was begun by members from the four Richmond clubs: Boxwood, James River, Three Chopt and Tuckahoe. Their urban Richmond renewal projects celebrate where conservation and horticulture came together. Next, in a dramatic exercise, Dr. Elizabeth Brantley of Bartlett Tree Experts, encouraged us to get on our feet and think like a tree. Together we became a canopy of trees, our limbs and roots interconnected. Our third speaker, Dr. Eric Wiseman, of Virginia Tech's Urban Forestry program, presented "The Virginia Big Tree Program." Our final speaker was Andrew Moore, author of *Pawpaw: in Search of America's Forgotten Fruit*, who spoke about "The Relationship Between Fruit Trees and Plants, Fungi and Bacteria." ❁

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The 2019 Conservation Forum

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TUESDAY & WEDNESDAY
SEPT. 24-25, 2019
NATURAL BRIDGE
STATE PARK



Past GCV President and Virginia State Parks Committee Chairman Nina Mustard (Williamsburg), Former Virginia State Parks Director Craig Seaver and GCV President Jean Gilpin with the National Association of State Park Directors Award presented to the Garden Club of Virginia.



Thanks to GCV Horticulture Chairman Wendy Walker (Eastern Shore) and committee members Kim Cory and Fran Carden (Albemarle) for the innovative native plant horticulture show.



Thank you to the Natural Bridge State Park rangers!



Natural Bridge Elementary School students assisted Dylan Kerl of Bartlett Tree Experts in the planting of a serviceberry tree.



GCV members enjoyed getting Back to Nature through tree hikes, geocaching and stargazing that evening.

Beth Brantley, Bartlett Tree Experts, got Forum attendees on their feet and swaying like trees.



Back to Nature was a collaboration between the Garden Club of Virginia's horticulture, conservation and education departments. More great photos

Back to Nature

Horticulture
& Hiking

AND

61st Annual
Conservation Forum

TREES: CANOPY OF
CONSERVATION

Beth DeBergh (Warren County) won a blue ribbon for *Asimina triloba* (pawpaw), which was also featured at the Conservation Forum the following day.



Jane (Boxwood) and Don Cowles, sporting a GCV Centennial tie, at the Creekside Dinner.



Pollenizer Plants, such as anemones, the food source for pollinators, were featured in the horticulture show.



DeLane Porter (Dolley Madison) won the Centennial Cup for sunchoke, the best horticulture exhibit in the show.



on and beautification, and Virginia State Parks committees, along with Natural Bridge State Park. at gcvirginia.org

Dugdale Award



President and CEO Elizabeth Taraski accepted the Dugdale Award on behalf of the Nansemond River Preservation Alliance from GCV Conservation Awards Chairman Heidi James. Joining them are Nansemond River Garden Club President Linda Consolvo and Judy Perry (Elizabeth River).

Conservation Educator Award



Natural Bridge State Park Manager Jim Jones received the Conservation Educator Award. With Jim are members of the Blue Ridge Garden Club: President Beth Coleman, Barbara Walsh, Margaret Samdahl, Catherine Marcus and Julie Grover.



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Member of The Lynchburg Garden Club