

FRIENDS OF FOREST HILL PARK

The Forest Hill Park Post

February 2019

www.friendsofforesthillpark.org

Flowers Will Be Blooming Soon!

Bill Shanabruach

While we have been huddling inside this winter, there are a group of “**spring ephemerals**” in the park that have been busily making preparations for blooming. Spring ephemerals are perennial plants that bloom in the late winter and spring and set seed about the time leaves appear on the trees. These plants are designed to take advantage of those warm spring days when the sunshine still reaches the forest floor. Once the weather warms up and the tree canopy shuts off the lights, the foliage of these plants dies back leaving no trace until the following year.

A classic example of a spring ephemeral that many people are probably familiar with is Virginia bluebells, *Mertensia virginica*. But there are many others and we are lucky that Forest Hill Park is still home to the plants described below. Hopefully, you will have an opportunity to appreciate them soon.

Bloodroot (*Sanguinaria canadensis*)

This is our earliest blooming spring ephemeral (late February/early March) with the largest and showiest flower. Up to two inches wide with white petals and a bright yellow center, you would think it could not be missed. But the flowers are a mere 6 inches high and last only a day or two. This is an important pollinator plant for female bumble bees that have overwintered and are looking to start a new colony. The leaves are very distinctive with scalloped edges and provide an easy means of identification after the flowers are gone.



Bloodroot

Spring Beauty (*Claytonia virginica*)

This delicate plant produces light pink flowers with darker pink stripes on the petals which are probably “nectar guides” to help pollinators find the cache of nectar at the base of the flower. The flowers are less than one-half inch across and the plant is about 6 inches tall with narrow, grass-like leaves. Like many spring ephemerals, the flowers close up at night because there are no pollinators out and about during the cold nights.

Giant or Star Chickweed (*Stellaria puberula*)

This spring ephemeral generally blooms during the month of April. Star chickweed has relatively long ellipti-

cal leaves and reaches a height of about one foot. The flowers are $\frac{1}{2}$ - 1 inch across and have 5 white petals with a yellow center. But you are very likely to think there are 10 petals. Each petal is deeply divided into halves with just a small connection at the base of the petal. Please beware there is a non-native species that is also referred to as "giant chickweed" (*Myosoton aquaticum*). One should always use the scientific name of a plant when purchasing native plants to avoid any confusion.



Giant Chickweed



Mayapple (*Podophyllum peltatum*)

The most distinctive feature of mayapples is the unique leaf structure reminiscent of a little umbrella, except for the fact that each leaf has 6-8 deep indentations. Starting in March, you can see these structures poking out of the ground and eventually enlarging until an individual leaf is up to 12 inches across. One often sees colonies of mayapples that can be derived from a

single plant spreading slowly across the landscape. The vast majority of stalks bear a single leaf; but a small percentage branch toward the top of the stalk and produce two leaves. These are the plants that will produce flowers and eventually an edible yellow fruit. (The fruits are prized by wildlife so it is usually hard to find a ripe fruit.) The flowers are about 1.5 inches in size with showy white petals. But the flowers are easy to miss because they occur at the branch point of the stem and are easily obscured by the leaves. Most mayapple foliage dies back early in the Summer except for the paired leaves that are supplying energy for fruit development.

Early Saxifrage (*Micranthes virginensis*)

This is a low-growing plant that can form a green carpet in rather harsh-looking environments such as rocky trail edges and at the base of boulders. Look for flower stalks rising a few inches above the carpet and ending with branched clusters of small white flowers. Although it blooms in early Spring, early saxifrage is not a true spring ephemeral. Its leaves may wither during a dry summer; but it is generally evergreen.



Early Saxifrage

Friends of Forest Hill Park

www.friendsofforesthillpark.org

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Common Bluet (*Houstonia caerulea*)

This dainty little plant only reaches a height of about 6 inches and blooms from April-May. Flowers have light blue to medium blue petals with a yellow center. There is a rosette of oval leaves at the base of the plant; but only a few small, narrower leaves along the flower stalk. This plant has a close relative, summer bluet (*Houstonia purpurea*), that also lives in the park and blooms in June and July.

The best “hotspot” to see spring ephemerals in Forest Hill Park is near Riverside Drive along the service road east of Reedy Creek and on the bike trail just above the service road near Riverside Drive. These areas have scattered populations of most of the plants discussed above. Unfortunately, these populations are currently under siege from invasive plants – primarily English ivy and Chinese wisteria. Please stay on the trails and do not walk on the hillsides in search of the plants. They are already stressed enough. And do not try to remove invasive plants in this area at this time of year. It needs to take place in the Fall when the spring ephemerals are dormant.

In addition to the native perennials, there are also a couple shrubs/small trees that will be blooming soon. Spicebush (*Lindera benzoin*) produces lots of small yellow flowers in March before the leaves appear. You can think of spicebush as our native forsythia and it is a great alternative for partially shaded spots. The female plants bear bright red berries in the Fall that were used as a spice in cooking by Native Americans. Paw-paws (*Asimina triloba*) bloom a little later than spicebush. The flowers are bell-shaped and have a unique dark red/maroon color.



Conservation Landscaping Workshop

Saturday, March 23, 1:00 – 4:00 pm

Stone House in Forest Hill Park

Come and learn what you can do to make your landscape more sustainable and wildlife-friendly. Topics will include:

- Native plants and their vital role in healthy ecosystems
- Native plants of **local ecotype** vs. cultivars
- Conservation landscapes serve many purposes (e.g. wildlife habitat, ease of maintenance, improved water quality, aesthetics, carbon storage, saving money)
- Conservation landscapes are flexible

- Identification and removal methods for non-native invasive plants
- Considerations in selecting a site for conservation landscaping
- Site preparation to ensure success and minimize maintenance
- Resources to select the native plants that will work for your purposes

Establishment and maintenance of a successful conservation landscape: **PATIENCE**

The workshop will also include a walk in Forest Hill Park to identify common invasive plants and a hands-on demonstration of proper planting and mulching techniques.

This workshop is FREE for members of Friends of Forest Hill Park and costs \$15 for non-members. All participants will receive a complimentary native plant from Reedy Creek Environmental and a free copy of "Native Plants for Virginia's Capital Region".

Advanced Registration is required.

Registration information at: <http://www.friendsofforesthillpark.org/>

Register for The 2019 Forest Hill Spring Classic

SPONSORED BY THE FRIENDS OF FOREST HILL PARK AND VIRGINIA OUTSIDE

ABOUT THE RACE:

WHAT: Be a part of the Forest Hill Spring Classic, a series of mountain bike races and activities for ages 2-18:

- 4 and under Push/Balance bikes: 150 yards course with turns
- 6 and under Pedal bikes: 450 yards course with turns
- 12 and under Pedal bikes: Approx. 1.5 miles Trail course
- 18 and under Pedal bikes: Approx. 3 miles Trail course



WHERE: Forest Hill Park, 4021 Forest Hill Avenue, Richmond, VA 23225

WHEN: Sunday, April 7, 1-5 PM; Rain date, April 14, 1-5 PM

TRAINING: Three training rides and instructional sessions will be provided by Virginia Outside: Tuesdays, March 19, March 26, and April 2, 5:30-7 PM, Forest Hill Park; rain dates on Thursdays, March 21, March 28, and April 4. Indicate on the registration form which training sessions you will attend.

SAFETY: ALL RACERS MUST WEAR A HELMET: NO EXCEPTIONS!!

FOOD: Big Daddy's Barbecue, Kitchenette, Baskin-Robbins - bring a blanket and chairs for a family picnic.

ENTERTAINMENT: Face-Painting, Balloon Creations, and Unicyclist provided by Belton.

RACE SUPPORT: Provided by Virginia Outside at the tent near START/FINISH LINE

REGISTRATION:

REGISTRATION: Fee is \$25 (\$30 after March 31st) which includes training sessions and a tee shirt and other information in the registration pack.

Online Registration begins Feb. 1 and ends April 6 at midnight. Visit this site to register online:

<http://www.friendsofforesthillpark.org/spring-classic.html>

or

Register by check/mail: Download the registration form , complete and mail with a check to FFHP, P.O.Box 13161, Richmond, VA 23225

Register in person on April 6, 1-3 PM at the Stone House in Forest Hill Park or the day of the race, April 7, 10 AM to 12:30 PM, but T-shirt sizes may be limited, **NOTE from Virginia Outside:**

These races are designed to get new riders involved in the sport of cycling and are a Fun-based family event. Although these races will be timed, the purpose of this event is to Have Fun! And enjoy our wonderful park and its facilities. It also promotes being outside and meeting all of our neighbors in the community. All participants will receive a completion medal, and the top 3 in each category will receive awards and prizes (provided by Virginia Outside) which will be on display at the Virginia Outside tent the day of the race. Any proceeds from the race will go to Friends of Forest Hill Park to be used in the conservation and maintenance of our beautiful Forest Hill Park.

Park Champions



January 26, 2019

Banner Day!

When these warriors left the park, there was nary an invasive plant remaining near the pyramid.

Go, park warriors!

LET YOUR VOICE BE HEARD!

FOREST HILL PARK

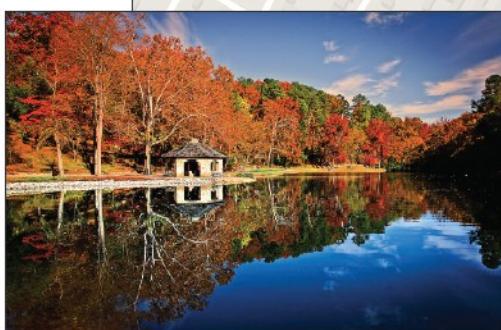
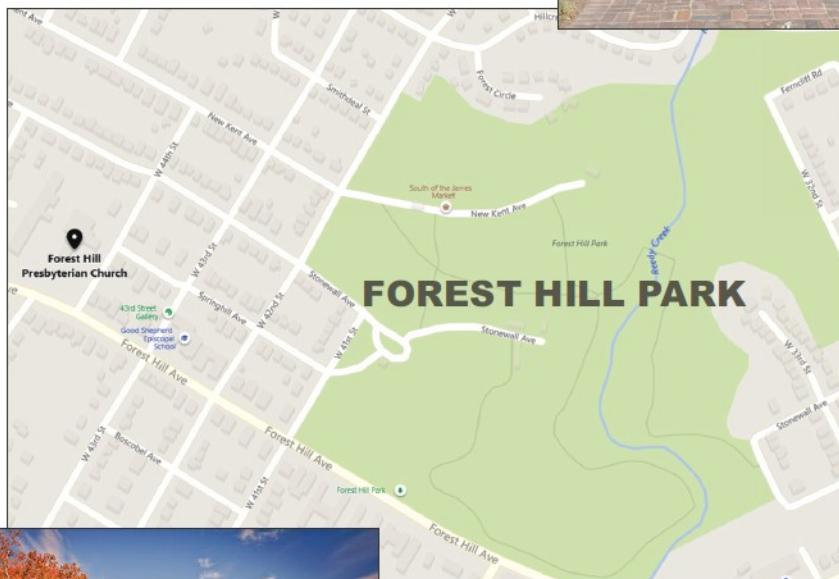
COMMUNITY DESIGN WORKSHOP

We want your opinion on what you would like to see happen with the Park over the next 20 years.

SATURDAY, FEB 23rd
10:30am - 12:30pm

FOREST HILL PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH
4401 FOREST HILL AVENUE
RICHMOND, VA 23225

Please RSVP to:
info@friendsofforesthillpark.org



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FRIENDS OF FOREST HILL PARK
and THE CITY OF RICHMOND



VCU
L. Douglas Wilder School of
Government and Public Affairs

Work is being completed by nine VCU graduate Urban Planning students. They are working as a group under the direction of Professor Jim Smither.

Work to be completed by the first week of May. Plan to be delivered to the Friends of Forest Hill Park and the City of Richmond. The workshop will focus on DESIGN improvements to the park.