

NATURE NEWS



A seasonal newsletter brought to you by the Mill Creek Neighborhood Nature Committee

VOL. 1, ISSUE 2, PAGE 1

OCTOBER 2022

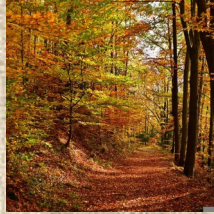
Top stories in this newsletter



Neighborhood Nature Committee meets with Marie Norwood of the Clifton Institute



Take the first step to becoming a Virginia Master Naturalist!



Join your neighbors on November 19th for a Common Area clean-up workday



Common Ground and Architectural Review Committee updates

Marie Norwood from Clifton Institute visits with the Neighborhood Nature Committee (NNC)



On October 20th, the NNC met with Marie Norwood, Clifton Institute's Land Management Outreach Associate, to tour some of Mill Creek HOA's Common Areas and discuss strategies for maintenance and natural resource preservation, including controlling invasive plants and encouraging natives. Marie was very knowledgeable and engaging as we explained our challenges and shared our goals for making the Common Areas more accessible to residents. She agreed that the pond and tributary areas needed the most work and noted that the forest area behind Timberbranch Dr was in excellent condition. Her recommendations below will be helpful as the NNC continues to plan for clean-up days and explore options for introducing more natives. This list can also guide homeowners in their yard maintenance and improvement efforts.

- ◆ Mowing of meadow areas should be done only once a year in February
- ◆ Treatment of Japanese stilt grass using herbicide (fusilade or aquatic safe generic) and/or mowing in September before it seeds
- ◆ Treatment of invasive trees (Paulownia), stumps (autumn olive), and vines (porcelain berry) - drill edges of stump (in the xylem) and inject 25% solution of roundup (glyphosate); best to target these in fall and early winter, not in the spring
- ◆ Overgrowth of vines is most likely porcelain berry but there may also be some native grapes - differentiation is difficult, look for how the berries are held - <https://dof.virginia.gov/the-vine-that-ate-charlottesville/#:~:text=The%20easiest%20way%20to%20distinguish,the%20bark%20on%20larger%20stems>
- ◆ Target vine clearing efforts on mature trees and desired species such as willow, alder, oaks
- ◆ Poison ivy is a native, beneficial plant so removal should be targeted only in areas needed for access to trails and maintenance activities
- ◆ The forest behind Timberbranch/along Biscuit Run is in great shape - recommendation to remove invasive Paulownia/Princess trees
- ◆ Deer are over browsing and preventing the growth of young trees - recommendation to install targeted fencing around desired tree species saplings and young trees (oaks, willow)
- ◆ Leave downed and standing dead trees in common area and yards if they are not a risk to homes/property - they are great for birds and other wildlife and contribute nutrients back to the soil
- ◆ Small piles of debris are good for wildlife habitat; create a "sacrifice area" for collecting large amounts of debris

CALL FOR VOLUNTEERS! If you are interested in joining the NNC or volunteering for specific projects, please reach out to Caroline Wade at carolinewade3@gmail.com.

Take the first step to becoming a Virginia Master Naturalist!



The Virginia Master Naturalist Program is a statewide corps of volunteers providing education, outreach, and service dedicated to the beneficial management of natural resources and natural areas within their communities. Interested Virginians become Master Naturalists through training and volunteer service. The local Rivanna Master Naturalists (RMN) chapter is now accepting applications for the 2023 training class. The class runs from 2/07/23 to 5/23/23 on Tuesday evenings 6 to 9pm, with field trips on some

Saturdays. We are holding information sessions both in person and on zoom in November and December. **All of the information you need is at <http://www.vmn-rivanna.org/training/>. If you have specific questions call Sandy Finley at 434-982-8962.**

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Common Area clean-up day set for November 19th from 1-4pm



The Neighborhood Nature Committee is will be hosting a clean-up day along the pond trail off of Southern Parkway and possibly in other Common Area locations, depending on the number of volunteers.

The group will primarily be focused on removing vines from trees that have been identified as particularly significant - mature trees and tree species that are important for wildlife such as willows, alders, birch, and pines. Since much of the vegetation has died back, this is the perfect time of year to more easily access these areas. From snipping aggressive English ivy and porcelain berry from around tree trunks to chain sawing through the huge vines that are threatening to suffocate and pull down the large trees, we'll need an enthusiastic crew to make progress, so please join us and bring your cutting tools!

The group also hopes to continue clearing a walking path along the pond and its tributaries. The NNC is currently soliciting input from nearby homeowners about the planned work in an effort to evaluate interest and identify any concerns. A letter was distributed to about 25 homeowners asking for comments. So far, responses from neighbors have been positive. This type of low-impact nature trail provides an opportunity for residents to experience up-close the magnificent natural resources that surround us, including wildlife such as green herons, wood ducks, pileated woodpeckers, and to discover native plants and flowers that grow in the marshy areas surrounding the pond. It will take a group effort to keep these trails accessible, so please consider dedicating some time to help.

Activities will begin at 1pm off of Southern Parkway by the big new white cable box. The NNC will provide work gloves and snacks. All are welcome, so please come out and join us! To volunteer, or for more information, please email Caroline Wade at carolinewade3@gmail.com

Common Ground Committee Update



On Sept. 28 and 29, after months of anticipation, Arborculture & Landscaping Design LLC removed trees and limbs from six different sites around Mill Creek. Some had been damaged during the Jan. 6 ice storm, while others were dead and posed a threat to life and/or property. Most visible were damaged trees at the bottom of Mill Creek Drive, along the gravel passageway from Mill Creek to Lake Reynovia, and along Southern Parkway. The company also removed several downed trees that had fallen into the pond from common area behind Stone Mill Court, causing a potential siltation issue. In some cases, trees were simply dropped in less-visible spots in the common area where they will be allowed to decompose naturally, providing cover for wildlife and returning nutrients to the soil. Other trees and limbs were chipped and are being used to define a newly forming trail along the west side of the pond.

The Mill Creek Homeowners Association evaluates requests for the removal of dead and damaged trees in the common area if they pose a threat to life or property, or if they are particularly unattractive in a public area, as budget conditions allow. **For information, email hoa@millcreekclassic.org.**

ARC Committee Update



A reminder to all homeowners who are planning home or landscaping projects - you need approval from the HOA Architectural Review Committee to remove live trees or to make changes to the exterior of your home. The request form can be found on the Mill Creek website here - https://millcreekhomeowners.org/docs/ARC_Proposal_request_form_11-2017_.pdf. The best method to submit proposals for review is via email to

arc@millcreekclassic.org or a request can be made for an address for drop-off delivery of the hard copy. Delivery by postal mail is discouraged.

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