

NATURE NEWS



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

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JULY 2022

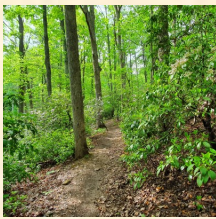
Top stories in this newsletter



Announcing the New Mill Creek Neighborhood Nature Committee!



NOW is the time to eradicate Autumn Olive!



Come on out on August 9th for a Nature Walk with your neighbors



Common Ground and Architectural Review Committee updates

Announcing the New Mill Creek Neighborhood Nature Committee!



After the presentation from Tim Padalino, Albemarle County's Chief of Parks Planning, during the annual HOA meeting in April about the proposed Biscuit Run Connector Trail, a small group of nature-minded neighbors got together to walk the trail on the Mill Creek HOA property with a goal of identifying the location of wildflower and other native plant species to help inform the County's work. The nature walk was a success and inspired additional conversations about ways that the group could protect and promote the wonderful natural resources that are, literally, in all of our backyards.

The group presented ideas to the Mill Creek HOA Board and the Mill Creek Neighborhood Nature Committee (NNC) was formally established as a subcommittee of the Common Area committee. The NNC will be sending out this *Nature News* newsletter each quarter with seasonal information that is relevant to neighborhood homes, gardens, yards, and shared common areas. Also look for details about planned common area nature walks and volunteer workdays, along with other nature-focused efforts, updates from the Common Area and Architectural Review committees, and news about the Biscuit Run Connector Trail planning and development.

CALL FOR VOLUNTEERS! If you are interested in joining this new committee, please reach out to Caroline Wade at carolinewade3@gmail.com for more information.

NOW is the time to eradicate Autumn Olive!

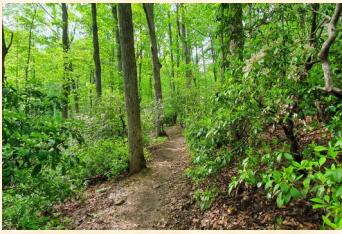


Invasive species can quickly take hold and grow out of control, pushing out native plants, and upsetting the natural ecosystem of plants and animals. Unfortunately, some of these invasive species are still being sold at local nurseries and home improvement stores as landscaping plants. One of the more aggressive invasive species that is common in Mill Creek yards and common areas is Autumn Olive, a fast growing shrub with silvery green leaves, sweet smelling blossoms in the spring, and berries that are ripening right now. The berries will continue to spread the plants, so NOW

is the time to cut them down or pull them out. The NNC has resources to help you identify and control Autumn Olive and other invasives.

Please reach out to Joyce Kaswandik at joycekaswandik@gmail.com for more information or check out this fact sheet "Destroyer of Fields, Pastures and Woodlands" at <https://blueridgeprism.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/09/Autumn-Olive-Factsheet-2021-9-9-FINAL.pdf>

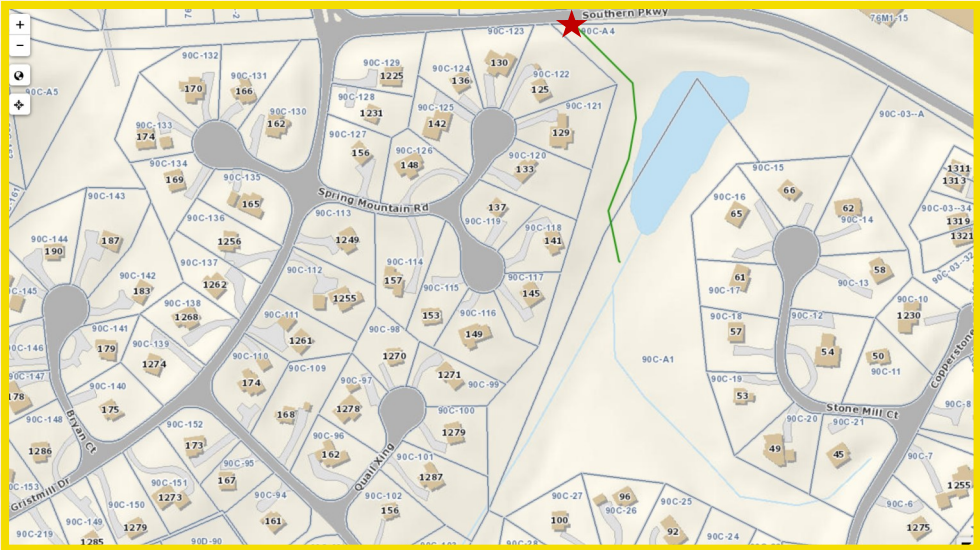
Pond Trail Walk set for August 9th at 6pm



The Neighborhood Nature Committee is excited to host a nature walk along the pond off of Southern Parkway and through the adjacent common area on the evening of August 9th. Members are excited to showcase the work that has been done behind the homes on Spring Mountain Rd to keep vines and invasive species under control and to clear a small pathway through the area. This type of low-impact nature trail provides an opportunity for homeowners 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.

The August 9th Nature Walk will begin at 6pm off of Southern Parkway by the big new cable box near the fallen pine tree. All are welcome, so please come out and join us!





Common Ground Committee Update - We're About to Blow the Budget!



Perhaps you've heard of "predator confusion," when a predator has too much available prey to choose one potential meal to chase down? That's what it has been like for the Common Area Committee, which has been wrestling with addressing the many common area trees damaged by the weather this year.

The good news: We are in the process of securing estimates for tree removal and trimming on six different sites, with at least one bid in hand that seems doable. A decision should be made shortly, with work commencing as soon as possible after that.

The bad news: The work will take all of the allotted common area budget (\$7,500) for 2022, plus some of the association's reserves. Cross your fingers that we have no more tree-damaging weather before January 1st.

Look out for a neighborhood volunteer work day or two in the coming weeks, to address other issues in the common areas. In the past, neighbors have gathered to clean up the entrance sign at the top of Mill Creek Drive and cut the English ivy off of many of the trees between Mill Creek Drive and the pond.

If you would like to volunteer for a work day or have other Common Area questions or concerns, please reach out to Dan Heuchert at uvadan86@gmail.com.

ARC Committee Update - What are the responsibilities of the Architectural Review Committee? by Naomi Aiken



This committee reviews the requests of homeowners who are making improvements to the exterior of their homes both landscaping and building additions to assure they are following the Covenants and Bylaws of our association. On average, committee members meet 1 hour each month to

review proposals and visit homes in our neighborhood. As you would expect the colder months are typically less busy for this committee.

Requests typically come into the HOA Gmail account, which is monitored by the Office Manager and committee chair. The Committee chair confirms the receipt of the request with the homeowner, requests additional information, clarifies whether appropriate boundaries and county codes and approvals are in place. Then the Committee members are sent the request via email to review, the committee convenes and typically visits the home to discuss the proposal with the homeowner.

This process has allowed homeowners to better connect with Board members and to have questions answered. Requests are either approved, approved with modifications, or denied. Forms are signed. Each homeowner receives an email confirming the approval of their request, and at the homeowner's request they are sent an electronic copy of the signed forms.

The committee chair is responsible for scanning all the documents and saving them in the HOA Google drive. The committee chair also responds to inquiries for disclosure packet by checking what requests have been submitted and approved, completing a visual inspection of the exterior of the home for any unapproved improvements, and report such to the HOA office manager who includes this information in the disclosure packet.

Important facts to know:

- The committee has 30 days to respond to the homeowner or the homeowner can presume the request has been approved
- Guidance for this committee is found in Article VII of both the Covenants and the Bylaws.
- Albemarle county has specifications that are to be followed relative to the placement of any building on a property and have specific setbacks. This information is available on their website. <https://www.albemarle.org/home/showpublisheddocument/2618/637598636229200000>
- The colors of the mailboxes, homes, doors, and trim are specified by the HOA. The HOA maintains a can of the mailbox paint for use by any homeowner. There is a notebook with the approved color samples available from the ARC Chair.
- The ARC uses the county GIS to identify the locations of lots and common ground, however homeowners are responsible for knowing where their property lines are located, and if unknown may need to have their property surveyed to locate the pins.

Please email arc@millcreekclassic.org with any questions.

Mill Creek Homeowners Association
P.O. Box 1301
Charlottesville, VA 22902
Email: HOA@millcreekclassic.org

