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State Champion Trees Identified in Arlington

The Department of Parks, Recreation and Cultural Resources (DPRCR) has announced the identification of several state champion or co-champion trees in Arlington. A state champion is the tree of a particular species that scores the most points using a formula that takes into account the girth of the trunk, the height of the tree, and the spread of the crown. When two trees have comparable scores, they are certified as co-champions.

Most of these trees were found in the course of a natural resources survey coordinated by park naturalist Greg Zell. The survey includes inventories of trees in 30 Arlington parks or school properties, at Arlington Cemetery and two private cemeteries, along the W&OD Trail, and on private properties. Altogether, some 800 trees have been documented and measured.

The survey has identified 64 **county champions**, the largest trees of their species in Arlington. Some of those county champions have also qualified as state champions, co-champions, or runners-up:

- Seven Arlington trees have been certified or nominated as **state champions** or **co-champions**: a Mockernut hickory (*Carya tomentosa*), a post oak (*Quercus stellata*), a sawtooth oak (*Quercus acutissima*), a water oak (*Quercus nigra*), a princess tree (*Paulownia tomentosa*), an American holly (*Ilex opaca*), and a deodora cedar (*Cedrus deodora*). The cedar, which had been certified earlier as state champion, was re-measured and re-certified.



Naturalist Greg Zell next to Arlington's largest

- Six Arlington trees have been certified or nominated as **runner-up state champions** (second largest in the state): a sawtooth oak (*Quercus acutissima*), a water oak (*Quercus nigra*), a Virginia pine (*Pinus Virginiana*), a yellowwood (*Cladrastis lutea*), a black locust (*Robinia pseudoacacia*), and an alternate-leaved dogwood (*Cornus alternifolia*).

The dogwood on the runner-up list is not the species that produces the Virginia state flower; the state “flower” is the blossom of the flowering dogwood (*Cornus florida*) and not really a flower at all.

In addition to Arlington’s state champions and runners-up, the 64 county champions include trees that are among the oldest and largest in the region. For example, the largest tree in Arlington is a tulip poplar (*Liriodendron tulipifera*) at Ft. C. F. Smith, with a height of 150 ft. and trunk girth of almost 21 ft.! See the photo on page 1, which shows naturalist Greg Zell sitting next to this giant after measuring it.

The natural resources survey represents the first step in implementing key provisions of the Public Spaces Master Plan (PSMP) adopted last December. The PSMP identifies protection of the County’s natural resources as a top priority and calls for development of a natural resource policy and management plan. As a basis for developing that plan, County staff and citizen volunteers need to know what natural resources remain in Arlington and where they are. The survey, together with other activities of County naturalists and urban foresters, is providing a body of information that is bringing us closer to those goals.

For further information on the natural resources survey, including trees mentioned in this article, contact Steve Temmermand, Parks and Natural Resources Division Chief, at Stemme@arlingtonva.us or 703-228-7748.

Storm Damage Editorial

Could it really have been back in June that the skies opened up and flooded many of Arlington’s lower lying areas? At a recent meeting where Park staff presented Power Point images of the damages to our park system, one woman seemed to have no recollection. As we compared war stories of the flooding, she finally remembered that she had had to leave her car and walk home because the Shirlington Bridge was closed. Ah, how quickly we forget. It was a storm that the Arlington Parks Department will not soon forget.

Damage to public and private property in Arlington from the June 24-25, 2006, storm was estimated to be about \$13 million, including about \$5 million in the parks. Steve Temmermand, director of the Parks and Natural Resources Division, acted quickly to organize staff into the

parks to remove debris from trails and assess park conditions, including impassible trails and damaged or destroyed bridges and fords. Picnic tables were found in trees and many grills, complete with their concrete shoes, were lifted out of the ground by the rushing currents of water that raced through our creeks and over our park system. Fords and playgrounds were repaired first, then ball fields were restored, and fallen trees were cleared. DPRCR is still removing debris, including fallen trees, from streams. Some bridges, concrete work, and picnic tables are still out.

So effective was our County staff that many who visited parks the week of the storm had to look for the subtle evidence of the damage.

We do need to ask if the Park staff was too effective in their response. The recent call for volunteers to help with stream cleanup was less well attended than one might have hoped from a grateful community. Arlington Dogs tried to spur dog park users to the clean up with bandana enticements but with little response. FEMA may provide some reimbursements for damages but much of the labor and restoration will have to be supported through the existing park budget

We take our parks for granted in Arlington. Few outside the parks-committed were really aware of the devastation to so many of our parks located around streambeds. A suggestion was made to one park staffer that they do assessments but not clean-up when we have another event. Perhaps when confronted with police yellow tape and closed signs, the casual user will understand the very large task that DPRCR has in maintaining our park system.

Of course that is one suggestion that will go unheeded, but the next time you see park employees or rangers, thank them for their devotion to this valuable public resource and the needs of the public.

Donaldson Run Stream Restoration

The June storm provided a severe test for the Donaldson Run stream restoration project. A key element of “natural” stream restoration is to raise the streambed so that storm water can spread out and slow down, instead of being confined in a deep channel. Reconnecting the stream with its floodplain apparently helped; Donaldson Run suffered some damage, but it appeared to handle the effects of the storm better than most streams. Moreover, the stream should be better able to withstand large storms in the future. Some changes are being made in the stream channel to increase stability. In

The Washington Post

Read Oct 2005 article about the project for background.

<http://www.washingtonpost.com/wp-dyn/content/article/2005/11/22/AR2005112202165.html>

addition, as the hundreds of small trees planted along the stream grow, their roots will help significantly in stabilizing the stream banks during future storms.

Arlington Park Bond

On November 7, once again Arlingtonians will be considering a Park Bond. The total Park Bond is for \$35,550,000. Included in that total are the following large ticket items:

Arlington Mill Community Center \$26,000,000

This project replaces the current structure with a permanent joint use facility that combines a community center with a private development. The new facility will likely be a mixed-use project that includes retail, residential and/or commercial development. The new Arlington Mill Community Center envisions space for a computer lab, library and job resource rooms, early childhood development classroom, a public health outreach room, multi—purpose rooms, a gymnasium, fitness room, game room, visual arts studio, teen and senior lounges, children’s recreational spaces, and a variety of work, storage and administrative spaces.

Parks and Open Space Land Acquisition \$8,000,000

The Land and Facility Acquisition Program funds the purchase of land adjacent to existing parks, new park locations, and unique parcels for open space as they become available. Land acquisition funds may also be used for the acquisition of conservation easements. The program funds the purchase of real property and the ancillary activities (appraisals, surveys, environmental reports, relocation, demolition, and site restoration) required.

Arlington Arts Center \$400,000

The Arlington Arts Center is one of the largest venues for emerging and contemporary artists in the Greater Washington, DC area, and has taken a leadership role in supporting visual arts throughout the region. Renovation of the center requires additional work to correct ADA deficiencies, heating and cooling performance concerns, and interior and exterior finishes.

Lee Center Site Work \$400,000

The Lee Community Center project was originally funded in FY 1997. Renovations to the building interior were completed in 2001. This funding will provide for improvements to the parking lot and eleven additional parking spaces, an accessible, well-lit pedestrian path from the parking lot to the building, improvements to site drainage, replacement of the lighted basketball court, improvements to landscaping including a butterfly and senior garden area, fencing and signage.

Washington-Lee Pool \$750,000

Arlington County Public Schools is currently replacing the existing aquatic facility during the renovation of Washington-Lee High School. The County will fund an additional two swimming lanes to increase the number of lanes from eight to ten. The additional lanes will supplement community needs outside of the scholastic requirements.

Park Bond Commentary

Park and Open Space Land Acquisition will comply with the recently adopted Public Spaces Master Plan and future land purchases will be guided by a land acquisition policy still to be developed. This year for the first time there is a separate Community Infrastructure bond that includes \$6.6 million for land acquisition. Arlington Arts Center covers renovations and upgrades to an existing structure occupied by a tenant of the County. Lee Center (at Lexington and Lee Highway) covers improvements to the parking lot with a pedestrian path, site drainage, basketball court, and landscaping. Washington-Lee pool covers two additional swimming lanes not funded in the Schools budget.

There are several aspects of this year's bond that deserve some consideration. Few large parcels of land remain for new park construction. Over the past several years, new acquisitions were planned to expand or round out existing parks, or, in the case of the North Tract, to procure a remaining large parcel. Increasingly, in the future, purchases may focus more on the bands of high-density corridors in Rosslyn, Clarendon, and Ballston where land prices will be most dear. Perhaps, additional criteria should be added for parcel selection and that would include commitments of matching funds or lands by the developers. These areas are in desperate need of softscape in the canyons of concrete.

The Arlington Mill Community Center is an admirable experiment by the County to create a mixed-use space of residential, retail and community use. It is heavily dependent upon the needs of a developer for attractive space in the Columbia Pike Corridor. The design will be heavily influenced by the private needs requirements. Currently being contemplated is a multistoried building built up to Columbia Pike but with a plaza fronting on the corner formed by the side street closest to Four Mile Run creek and Columbia Pike. The ground floor would be retail and the upper stories residential, with the community center sandwiched in between residential and retail. The gym would have to be on the ground floor. With the County land maximized to contain the building footprint, parking is planned to be underground. The existing building is an old Safeway building that was rehabbed to be shared by the Parks Department and the Public Schools. Over 70% of the space was school use. The Public Schools have opted out of the location so the entire existing space is available for Parks and Community use. At a time of waning residential market and flagging economy, it might be wiser to refurbish the existing space rather than rely on the private sector for considerable investment. . The existing space may not accommodate a gymnasium, however. County representatives assure us that land rights will not transfer to the private sector, and that is a key issue. Proponents are unsure of the number of levels of underground parking that might be possible given the proximity of the parcel to the creek. Due to the constraints of the public-private nature of the planned structure, uncertainty is the watchword for this property, though it is designed in compliance with the Columbia Pike planning strategy.

Of final concern is the assessment to Parks for an additional two lanes for the rebuild of the W-L swimming pool. Traditionally, the swimming pools have been under the jurisdiction of the School Board because they are on school property and used by the schools for swimming instruction and competition. Our three County pools are aging and outdated and poorly maintained due to the artificial arrangement of Parks management but school funding. The school Board has been notoriously slow in funding even critical repairs. W-L was recently rehabbed to improve air circulation and to accommodate the disabled. Neither Wakefield nor Yorktown is ADA compliant nor have they had the refurbishing that W-L underwent. It is then curious that the only rehabilitated pool in the County is being razed and a new building constructed. It is also curious that the School Board would expect Parks to pay for two lanes of a new pool to be constructed yet maintained by the same Board that has so poorly maintained the existing pools. At best, the School Board has been short sighted in their construction and rehabilitation efforts. Are park funds being assessed to compensate for this poor planning process? With Yorktown slated next for refurbishment, we also have to ask the fate of the one school pool in the Southern portion of the county since it is not in any planned funding provision and is in the worst condition of the three pools. We have to question if the swimming program should be transferred to the Parks program with its better record of maintenance or would Parks only be saddled with failing systems that would drain the construction budget.

Park land purchased with park bonds have always had a limited protection in that the land must be maintained as park usage and not razed and used to site a fire station or traded for private transfer. The Park Bond for 2006 unfortunately has expanded the park land acquisition language to include the term open space. The Friends will continue to monitor this change to determine if park funds are used for park use and not to supplement the needs of other County programs.

OPEN SPACE IS NOT GREEN SPACE

The Friends of Arlington Parks has introduced several logos to remind Arlingtonians of the uniqueness of our County. We have long stressed to the County Board that “You Cannot Replace Green Space” and once built upon, there is rarely the will or funding to reclaim vegetated land lost. We also touted Arlington as the “Greenway into Virginia.” With the high-density development along the Rosslyn-Ballston corridor, Crystal City, and now, the Columbia Pike and I-95 corridors, however, our greenscape is rapidly turning to concrete, brick, and asphalt.

Recently, the Clarendon Planning process has revealed a concern that park supporters should keep in mind as more of our high density urban space is developed. In many depictions of “visions of future development”, “open space” is depicted as green oases among ever towering buildings. Beware! “Open space” is not “green space”!

“Open space” includes the openings and plazas at the entrance of buildings, the curve cut island left in traffic depictions, and the median strips in the road. Incidentally, there might be a lawn set aside for Frisbee football with the hopes that it can grow as “green space” with time. What our urban corridors need is less hardscape and more softscape. We are quickly passing to a stage where people can live in a building and work in a corridor without exposure to plantings or green respites. Even the newest North Arlington housing for the elderly has little associated landscaping and no balconies to allow seniors to greet the sun and fresh air each day. On second thought, given the air quality in these corridors, maybe we are looking out for their well being.



Arlington is to be applauded for the small “pocket park” installed at the corner of South George Mason Drive and Henderson Street in a warren of apartment complexes. This green oasis with its shade trees and greenery is a welcoming invitation to rest and contemplate. It is an excellent example of the “green spaces” that can be carved in niches of the heavily concreted high-density corridors. It does not do anything! Or does it? It provides a chance for shaded rest for pedestrians in these commercial corridors. Such spots break the urban concrete facades and encourage use of the areas by a broader spectrum of able and disabled workers and shoppers. They allow users to **forget** for a moment that the heat and stress of a day. They bring the busy world back to the constancy of nature and provide respite. They can prove that “Arlington, More than Just a Cemetery” means that we can find those “green spaces” throughout Arlington.

FT. ETHAN ALLEN PARK IMPROVEMENTS

After many years of discussion, community involvement, and county-sponsored panels, the new Ft. Ethan Allen Community Canine Area (CCA) was officially opened during a ribbon cutting ceremony on Saturday, June 17th. Representatives from Friends of Arlington Parks were actively involved during the entire process.

The CCA (aka: dog park) is located in Ft. Ethan Allen Park, behind the Madison Center off N. Old Glebe Road. The CCA was previously located in another corner of the park, but was relocated to allow for historical interpretation of the former site. The new CCA includes a ground covering and filtration system that will allow for improved drainage and help protect water quality in nearby streams. Other features include water fountains for humans and canines, ample seating, accessibility features, low lights to facilitate evening use, a handsome deck carefully designed to protect the root systems of nearby trees. The CCA is completely enclosed by an attractive solid wooden fence which includes a gate where dogs can be leashed before exiting the area. In addition to the relocation of the CCA, other improvements at Ft. Ethan Allen

Park include landscaping and buffering, improved site accessibility at the Madison Center, playground upgrades, and streetscape improvements along N. Stafford Street.

Hope you enjoy the new park! Please keep your pet on a leash until inside the designated area and be sure to pick up after your pet.

For more information and to see a slideshow of the project, please visit the County's website <http://www.arlingtonva.us/Departments/CountyManager/milestone/Milestone06-06.aspx>

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Invasive Plants in Arlington

How NOT to Let Your Park Become an Invasive Plants Laboratory (or Why You Should Care About Invasive Plants) By Alison Davis-Holland, Maywood Community Association Parks Chair and President of Friends of Thrifton Hill Park

Invasive plants are not just merely weeds in the wrong place. They are the number one threat to biodiversity in Arlington Parks and can quickly take over green spaces requiring extensive efforts to get them under control. I know this, because I am the Parks Chair for the Maywood neighborhood where we are currently paying the price for years of letting nature just go its course without much intervention. Our neighborhood park, a 3.5-acre nature park called Thrifton Hill Park, was established as a county park in the 1970s and now overrun with more than 20 invasive plant species earning the dubious distinction of being one of the most invaded parks in Arlington County (aka the "Invasive Plant Laboratory." Neighbors have formed Friends of Thrifton Hill Park and have worked hard acquiring county grants, volunteering for invasive removal events, and coordinating with the county's Invasive Plant Program and Park Service to turn around this park into a sustainable area that is both beautiful and healthy. So let me save you time by passing on a few messages.

1. Elect a Park Chair in your neighborhood civic association so that that you have a central person to help coordinate with the county, educate the neighborhood about sustainable and healthy green spaces, and to generally serve as a steward for the park.
2. When it comes to invasive plants, an ounce of prevention is a pound of cure! Learn to identify invasive plants and start volunteer efforts so that you can, literally and figuratively, nip the problem in the bud.
3. Know the benefits of removing invasive plants and convey them to your neighborhood via the newsletter, listserv, neighborhood day, and any other venues. Here are some of the benefits you may see with invasive plants better controlled at your park:

-More new tree seedlings and saplings. With the dense cover of invasive vines removed, there will be room for seedlings to sprout, grow into saplings, and mature into healthy trees that provide shade canopy and improved air quality.

-Safer and more pleasant surroundings. We found at our park that the invasive bushes were actually obscuring spaces and providing hiding spots for crime and after-hours suspicious activity. An unexpected surprise after some recent removal of invasive bush honeysuckle was the view was opened up and we could see and enjoy the rest of the park.

-Healthier plants. Once established in an appropriate area, most native plant species are hardier than exotic plantings and do not require watering, fertilizers, pesticides, or intensive pruning.

-More native wildlife. Native plants will have an opportunity to thrive providing wildlife with familiar sources of food and shelter. In developed areas like Arlington, urban nature parks like Thrifton Hill Park provide essential shelter for displaced wildlife and nesting areas for migratory birds.

-Less rats and mosquitoes. English ivy forms the perfect hiding places for urban rats and moist habitat for mosquitoes. Once English ivy is gone, they do not have the habitat they are looking for.

-Less erosion. English ivy's shallow root system increases the likelihood of erosion and slope failure. With invasive removal, erosion is a concern since native plants need some time to get established. Planting suitable native plant communities and mimicking nature by allowing leaves to mat down will help secure soil and minimize erosion.

4. Know your county resources for invasive plant control. Arlington County's Invasive Plant Program helps facilitate volunteer cleanup efforts. It is funded by Arlington County Parks and run through the Virginia Cooperative Extension. Their number is 703-228-7636. Visit the county Web site at <http://www.arlingtonva.us> and type "Invasive Plant Program" for more information. Also, find out who your County Park Service Area Manager is and start working with them to help target areas to improve.

I invite you to come out to Thrifton Hill Park and take a look. The park starts at the corner of Lorcom Lane and Spout Run and the address is 2814 N. 23rd Street.

If anyone wants to learn more about identifying and removing invasive plants, come on out to our park cleanup days on Oct. 21, and Nov. 18 from 9 am to noon.

Feel free to email me at thriftonhillpark@gmail.com or visit our Website for Friends of Thrifton Hill Park for more information, directions, and resources on invasive plants in Virginia -- <http://thriftonhillpark.googlepages.com>.

Enjoy your local parks and think about getting involved to keep invasive plants controlled!

PUBLIC TREE PLANTING PROGRAM

Reprinted from the Arlington Parks and Recreation Website

Do you know of a barren spot of public land that could use a tree or two or more? Have you noticed a park, a school, library or recreation center that needs trees? Perhaps you have seen a street island or right of way that needs additional trees? If so, we would like to hear from you!

The Park and Natural Resource Division and the Arlington County Beautification Committee are accepting [applications](#) (38KB [PDF format](#)) for the **Public Tree Planting Program** from civic associations, neighborhood groups - formal or informal, civic groups, PTA's and garden clubs. County staff will review every suggested site for suitability.



For more information on submitting your ideas for tree plantings, please contact Patrick Wegeng at (703) 228-6521 or email pwegeng@arlingtonva.us.

Special Events at Our Local Parks

Calling all Dogs! Bring your owners to the 4th Annual Dogtober Day - Saturday October 14, from 1-4pm, at Lacey Woods Park, 1200 N. George Mason Dr. (Dog Lovers without dogs welcome too!)

Prizes and ribbons will be awarded in many categories from Most Adorable to Best Tail Wagger. Audience judged BEST IN SHOW will receive a special ribbon and prize. Canine organizations will be there to help you learn about training, treats, rescues, grooming and more. Raffles will be part of the excitement too! Pedigrees not required, but leashes are. On-site registration starts at 12:15 pm. Entry fee: \$6.00 per category.

Afternoon Tea at the Hendry House, Fort CF Smith Park. Sunday, October 22, seatings at 1:30pm and 3:30pm. \$23/person prepaid, adults and children 10 and up with an adult. Call for reservations 703-243-7329.

Encampment of the 3rd US Regular Infantry, Fort CF Smith Park. Saturday, November 11 and Sunday, November 12, 10am to 4pm daily. Everyone is invited to drop in and visit with the 3rd US Infantry on Veterans Day weekend. Enlisted for 5 years at \$13 a month, the Regular Units were the professional backbone of the largely volunteer armies of the Civil War. Military drilling and equipment, cooking, and ladies activities will occur throughout the weekend. FREE. No registration needed.

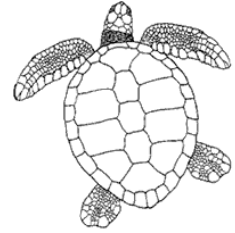
EVENING CAMPFIRE - The whole family is invited - stories, special animal guests, games, songs, and treats like s'mores. \$3 fee. To register call 703-228-4747 with Program number.

At Long Branch Amphitheater

#614403D - Sunday Oct.29, 4.00-5.15pm - Spooktacular Campfire #614403E - Saturday Nov.4, 6.30-7.45pm - Fluorescent Campfire #614403G - Saturday Nov.18, 4.00-5.15pm - Native American Campfire

At Gulf Branch Fire Ring

#612314D - Saturday Oct.28, 6.30-7.45pm - Fluorescent Campfire
#612314E - Sunday Oct.29, 6.00-7.15pm - Ghosts of Gulf Branch #612314F
- Sunday Nov.5, 5.00-6.15pm - Coyote Campfire (please bring a flashlight)



Help Take Care of Our Parks and Open Spaces

Arlington County has more than 800 acres of parkland and open spaces. There are large multiple-use parks and small neighborhood green spaces, landscaped areas, flower gardens, athletic fields, biking, hiking and jogging trails, streams and ponds etc. With this wealth of properties and increasing budget constraints, it is becoming increasingly difficult for the Department of Parks, Recreation and Community Resources to continue the high quality maintenance we all enjoy and expect.

Can you help? The department is seeking individuals, civic groups and organizations to help care for a designated County property for a minimum of one year. Some of the activities needed are watering plant materials, planting flowers, removing litter, tending new trees and shrubs. The level of commitment depends on you or your group.

This would be a rewarding way of perhaps improving a small green space in your neighborhood and keeping it attractive. Also, each person or group will receive a certificate of appreciation and a recognition sign bearing the individual's or group's name will be posted at the area. If you, or your group, would like to share responsibility for caring for a local green space, contact the department's Volunteer Coordinator at 704/358-4730 to arrange for an appointment to discuss your plans. Project guidelines, training, materials, tools and supplies will be provided.

Same Address



New Site

Friends of Arlington Parks website has a new look.

- **Sign up to get your newsletter online.**
- **Renew your membership online.**
- **Become a member on line**

www.foap.org

Friends of Arlington Parks Membership Form

To join *Friends of Arlington Parks*, or renew your membership, mail this form and payment to:
Terry Hillerich, Treasurer, 3555 N. Somerset Street, Arlington, VA 22213

Name: _____

Address: _____

City, State, Zip: _____ Phone: _____

email address: _____

Check here to get your newsletter by email _____

Add me/us to the volunteer list and contact. _____

_____ \$5 Individual _____ \$10 Family _____ \$15 Organization _____ Other contributions

Please make checks payable to "Friends of Arlington Parks"

You may also renew your membership on the web with a credit card by visiting **www.foap.org**.

Friends of Arlington Parks
3555 North Somerset Street
Arlington, VA 22213

