

2019 Founders Fund Proposals

by **Betsy Huffman**, Founders Fund Committee Chairman, Garden Club of Alexandria, Zone VII

The Founders Fund was established in 1936 in honor of the GCA's first president, Elizabeth Price Martin. The first award, in 1936, was for \$700. In the 83 years since its inception, it has grown to \$30,000 for the finalist project and \$10,000 for each of the two runners-up. Founders Fund grants recognize projects which support and advance the GCA purpose statement.

The first quarter of the year represents an important time for Founders Fund—and for GCA member clubs. In January our attention turns to the winter issue of the *Bulletin*, where the three impressive finalists for the 2019 Founders Fund grants are announced. And this announcement marks a significant GCA initiative: it not only reveals

the three Founders Fund finalists, but it also signals the launch of the voting process that will determine which clubs will be awarded finalist and runners-up grants.

The Founders Fund Committee, comprised of 12 voting members, embarked on a steep learning curve as we reviewed these projects, which involve a bobcat, a porcupine, a fox, a coalmine, and a calcareous muck fen! While three finalists were chosen, the committee commends each club which submitted proposals and knows that all are winners for their clubs and for the GCA. We thank each club that submitted proposals this year.

Founders Fund respectfully asks that *each member of every club* take a moment to read, learn, and thoroughly review the three

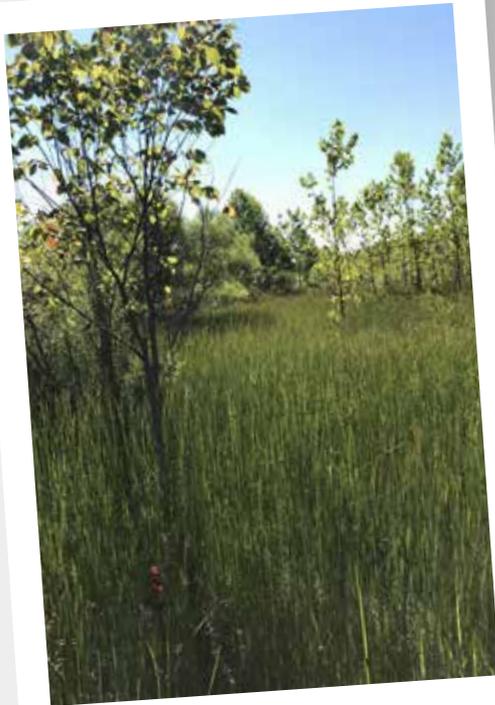
proposals in the pages that follow. Over the next several months, each club will conduct a vote and select one of the projects as its official choice for finalist. Club presidents will record their club's vote on the GCA website before the April 1 deadline, and the winning proposal will be announced at the GCA Annual Meeting in Boston in May. The Founders Fund is the only GCA program that is chosen from votes cast by all GCA clubs and recorded by the presidents.

These projects represent a significant commitment from their proposing clubs, as well as a significant contribution to their communities. They speak directly to the GCA purpose and are a tribute to the energy and dedication of club members determined to make their proposals a reality.

Seated L-R: Susanne Tobey, Anne French (Vice-Chairman), Betsy Huffman (Chairman), Lea B. Fulk. Standing L-R: Marie Thomas, Margo Dana, Debbie Murray, Holly Blake, Barbara Kehoe (Zone Director Liaison), Lisa McConnell, Denise Dufour, Helen Cohen, Anne Endler, Nancy Montgomery. Not pictured: Anna Lincoln Whitehurst



Abrams Creek Wetlands Preserve: Restoring a Calcareous Muck Fen



Not every community has a calcareous muck fen. Abrams Creek Wetlands Preserve (ACWP) is an extremely rare and unique habitat, providing safe haven for over 300 plant species and 20 state-rare native plants. Surrounded by development, the 25-acre preserve is an educational and recreational resource for the city of Winchester and the Shenandoah Valley of Virginia. A Founders Fund grant will enable us to sustain and preserve these rare species and its rare marsh habitat.

In collaboration with the Virginia Natural Heritage Program, the students and faculty of Shenandoah University's Environmental Studies Program began investigating the ACWP's ecological

communities in 1998. Since then, 304 plant species have been documented. Most are native to Virginia, and two grow nowhere else in the state. No other comparable wetland in Virginia has as many rare plant species. "We have important reasons for the city, county, citizens, and businesses to collaborate in caring for it properly," said Woodward Bousquet, Shenandoah University Professor of Environmental Studies and Biology.

Because calcareous muck fens take 10,000 years to form naturally, we must protect them if we want future generations to know them. Fens, like other wetlands, also capture pollutants, keeping them out of drinking water. Because of their limestone



Above: Since 1998, the Virginia Natural Heritage Program and Shenandoah University's Environmental Study Program have collaborated to document the preserve's special ecological communities and rare plant species.

Top left: The Abrams Creek Wetlands Preserve's marshes are being invaded by shade-producing trees, turning sunny marshes into shady swamps and threatening native wetland plants.

Middle left: The Abrams Creek Wetlands Preserve is home to diverse plant life, including blue marsh skullcap, found nowhere else in Virginia; pink spotted Joe Pye weed; and marsh thistle.

Bottom left: Local organizations, photographers, naturalists, and graphic designers donated their skills and over \$12,000 for interpretive signs, which were placed in the preserve in 2011.

All photos by Woodward S. Bousquet



Proposed by: Winchester-Clarke Garden Club, Zone VII

Seconded by: Fauquier and Loudoun Garden Club, Zone VII

bedrock, low acidity, and high nutrient levels, calcareous fens are one of the rarest natural communities in the United States. Mineral-rich groundwater and a sun-filled habitat allow distinct species of plants to thrive. Winchester-Clarke Garden Club has formed a partnership with the city of Winchester and Shenandoah University. Together our objective is to transform this wetland into a place where not only the delicate July-blooming hooded skullcap and the willowleaf asters can flourish, but also where the young minds of future botanists and the imaginations of adult nature lovers can take root.

The city of Winchester dedicated the ACWP in 2003 as its first nature preserve.

Plans include developing and providing resources to foster community support and cultivate the interest of the 30,000 children, residents, and visitors who come annually. A brochure supports and educates adjacent homeowners and businesses in being “good neighbors” to the preserve. An audio walking tour focused on this site’s rare habitats will enhance a paved Winchester Green Circle Trail running through the ACWP. An additional observation platform and signage will expand access to the lower marsh.

Winchester-Clarke Garden Club is committed to conserving, promoting, and sharing this exceptional wetland resource. The Founders Fund grant from The Garden Club of America would ensure that the



Abrams

Creek Wetlands Preserve is preserved as a place for children to learn, families to enjoy, and for rare plants and the animals that depend on those plants to thrive. The grant will sustain and protect this distinct and threatened wetland on the edge of the city by allowing Winchester-Clarke Garden Club to give voice to the rare plants that cannot speak for themselves.



Above: The preserve provides food and habitats for a wide range of fauna. Muskrats, turtles, otters, herons, ducks, songbirds, fish, fox, and butterflies are among the diverse animal species that call these wetlands home.

Top right: Since 2011, over 700 kindergartners from a local elementary school with a high percentage of low-income families have visited the preserve on annual field trips organized and led by Shenandoah University undergraduates.



A calcareous muck fen is a precious habitat because of its limestone bedrock, low acidity, and high nutrient levels. Fens, like other wetlands, also capture pollutants, keeping them out of drinking water. Originating near the preserve’s western border, Abrams Creek is part of the Chesapeake Bay watershed.

Flora and Fauna: The Jane Colden Native Woodland Garden with Animal Habitats



The Garden Club of Orange and Dutchess Counties seeks Founders Fund support to create the Jane Colden Native Woodland Garden at Trailside Museums & Zoo. This rocky woodland site within Bear Mountain State Park, NY, borders the Hudson River. The Woodland Garden forms a vital component of a redesigned visitor experience planned for 2019-20. Visitors, self-guided along this enhanced section of the Appalachian Trail, will experience new native plantings that surround rebuilt exhibits of bobcat, fox, and porcupine. Interpretive signs will help to increase understanding of these displays.

This proposal, self-seeded from our club's Partners for Plants project at Trailside,

builds on this experience. Started in 2014, our initial goals have succeeded, replacing tangled masses of non-native plants with native plantings alongside museum buildings and trails. Visitors showed interest, questioning us as we worked in the shrub thicket and sunny wildflower gardens. Trails connect these areas to the proposed Woodland Garden around animal habitats. The addition of woodland and wetland species will expand this start that breathes life into botanical history. Jane Colden (1724-1760) in her historic botanic manuscript described over 300 Hudson Valley plants, shrubs, and trees. As America's first female botanist she offers inspiration and a role model to young naturalists. Visitors will



Above: Visitors view current native animal exhibits during self-guided exploration along the trails, pioneered by Trailside (1927) for outdoor education. Each year, 100,000 visitors of diverse ages and backgrounds walk through rocky woodland landscape, looking and learning directly from animals and plants supported by information on signs along the path. Photo by Jeannette Redden

Top: We celebrate three years of growth in our Partners for Plants project at Trailside Museums & Zoo in Bear Mountain State Park, NY. Our garden club members and Trailside partners show native flowers giving life to Jane Colden's plant legacy. With Founders Fund support we plan to continue and create a woodland garden around and integrated into animal exhibits. Photo by Jeannette Redden



Plants and local history come alive! Jane Colden (1724-1760) wrote her historic Botanical Manuscript describing over 300 Hudson Valley plants while living on frontier farmland that included wild animals. Visitors are encouraged to follow her lead with seasonal signs and colorful photographs—"Look for this Plant!" Photo by Dave Mathies

Proposed by: The Garden Club of Orange and Dutchess Counties, Zone III

Seconded by: Ulster Garden Club, Zone III

understand her legacy through plants, Trailside signs, and a website with added botanical information.

Open year round, Trailside attracts a diverse community of 100,000 visitors from urban New York areas and far beyond. The Appalachian Trail Founders' intent for nature centers to demonstrate local natural history is reflected by Trailside (1927). The nature trail pioneered here for outdoor education now benefits both hikers and day visitors. New native plantings around popular exhibits of non-releasable native wildlife will draw interest to the botanical side of nature. Children come in many school and camper groups, including inner-city youth and others at risk for "nature deficit disorder." Half of

the 7,000 summer group campers come from homeless shelters. Quests and resources added to Trailside's website will aid educators accompanying these groups to inspire children to investigate their native flora and fauna. Information on Trailside signs and an enhanced Trailside website will help identify local flora for use by visitors of all ages and encourage further exploration.

This large renovation project has over \$500,000 in New York State grants and private funding for reconstructed animal exhibits. A Founders Fund award will provide critical resources to create this woodland garden and interpretive visitor materials. Trailside staff with volunteer support will care for sustainable planting. Trailside's

founders stressed the "interconnectedness of nature"—plants, animals, land, people, and climate. Our project complements this with a woodland garden that provides flora as habitat for fauna, and connects the visitor with each breath to the conservation of our woodlands, as the community's "green lungs." An interest in nature sparked for each visitor by Trailside's revitalized displays, when multiplied 100,000 times, will have a huge impact—the groundwork for a future cadre of activists-for-nature.

Our club and Trailside partners stand shovel-ready to create this project.

Top left: Trailside holds a variety of educational and community events. Pictured here is the Biodiversity Celebration at the Forest display, which draws visitors to learn and be inspired by nature. The woodland garden will provide further offerings for these events, including understanding woodlands as the "green lungs" of our community. Photo by Clare Redden

Bottom left: Summer campers participate in a nature photography competition and learn to express themselves creatively. Youth from underserved urban settings spend time at Trailside to connect with the natural world, appreciate other living things, and reduce risk of "nature deficit disorder." Photo by Jeannette Redden

Top right: The Appalachian Trail passes through Trailside with year-round free access. A full season of plants, flowers, and fruits in the Woodland Garden will provide interest to hikers and day strollers and supports the Trail's mission to educate about local natural history. Photo by Jeannette Redden

Bottom right: Spring Woodland Experience for school groups can inspire curiosity in emerging plants as part of a school-led quest or individual interest. Trailside web-based nature quests or quizzes will offer support for teachers to make the trip memorable. One spark of nature interest multiplied by 100,000 visitors could have a big impact—groundwork for a future cadre of nature activists! Photo by Fenella Heckscher



Sniff and Savor Garden at Pittsburgh Botanic Garden: Enriching Community and Revitalizing Landscape

The Garden Club of Allegheny County (GCAC) enthusiastically supports the ongoing environmental reclamation by Pittsburgh Botanic Garden (PBG) through completion of the Sniff and Savor Garden, a permanent, interactive, and inclusive garden with broad, multi-generational appeal. Part of Garden of the Five Senses, Sniff and Savor will provide an interactive, physical experience with plants, offering tremendous learning opportunities. This sensory-focused garden will create serenity and stimulate curiosity while also thoughtfully incorporating design elements supportive of individuals with cognitive and physical challenges.

Gardeners' vision, grassroots

determination, and creative environmental reclamation intersect at Pittsburgh Botanic Garden. PBG is transforming 460 acres from Pittsburgh's gritty industrial past to a compelling horticultural destination. Deeply scarred terrain, severely damaged by coal mining and overrun by invasive species, is becoming forested slopes, inviting trails, open meadows, and gardens. For this work, PBG has received environmental awards for mine remediation and environmental leadership.

Garden of the Five Senses is the newest chapter of this remarkable reclamation story. The sensory garden is designed for high conservation and experiential impact. Because nature's joys should be accessible



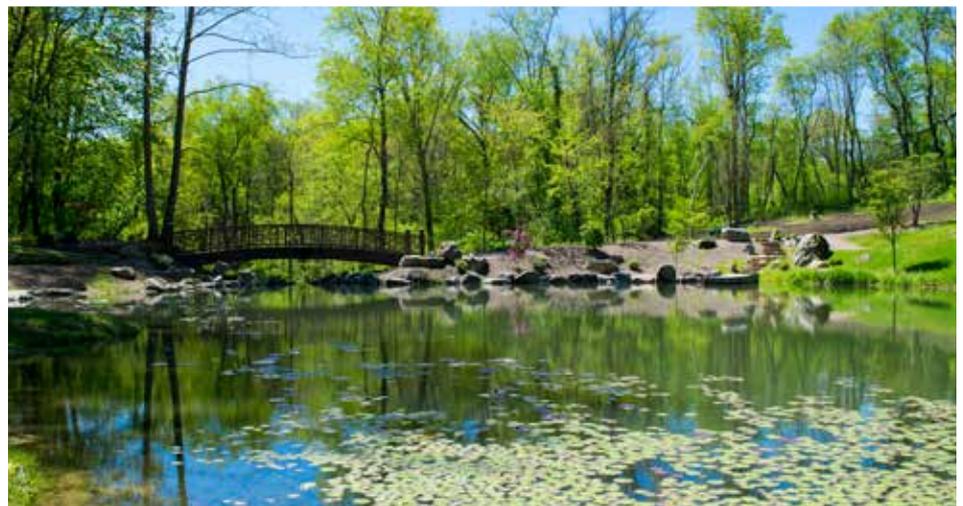
Above: Newly planted trees on a plateau where land reclamation was completed. Photo courtesy of Pittsburgh Botanic Garden Archives

Top: Construction at Pittsburgh Botanic Garden. Photo by Sarah Drake



Left: Acid mine drainage left pond water with a pH of 2. Photo courtesy of Pittsburgh Botanic Garden Archives

Bottom: Today, the pond supports aquatic life and has a pH of 7. Photo courtesy of Pittsburgh Botanic Garden Archives



Proposed by: Garden Club of Allegheny County, Zone V

Seconded by: Carrie T. Watson Garden Club, Zone V

to everyone, this garden's design specifically addresses the needs of persons with physical and sensory integration challenges and fills a growing community need. It joins a handful of public gardens responding to the challenges of autism spectrum disorder. Bright colors, soothing sounds, smells, tastes, and physical challenges will balance with spaces offering respite and retreat. This model sensory garden will become an important regional resource.

Nestled within Garden of the Five Senses, Sniff and Savor will offer a raised-bed oasis where every plant is fragrant or edible. Thoughtful modifications will improve accessibility, enabling this garden to speak to all visitors in the unique

language of plants. The garden will invite tactile experimentation and interaction, encouraging visitors to touch, smell, and taste. Scented herbs, aromatic flowers, and edible plants will populate this garden. Its design will support visitors hypersensitive to smell and taste by isolating strong smells within the garden and including clear labeling for edible plants. The garden also will introduce current and next-generation gardeners to tools and methods supporting sustainable gardening with compost bins, rain barrels, and watering cans for visitors' use. Within this remarkable garden, PBG effectively applies horticulture, environmental stewardship, education, and community enthusiasm to revitalize a

damaged landscape and enrich lives. It fulfills a mission to inspire more people to value plants and connect with the natural world.

Sniff and Savor accounts for \$91,600 of the \$1.7 million price tag for Garden of the Five Senses. PBG has raised more than 87 percent of funding for Garden of the Five Senses including \$15,000 from GCAC. Fundraising efforts will continue until all monies are secured. The Founders Fund Award would underwrite permanent garden elements and plant installation leading to new educational programming opportunities. Construction began in fall 2018 with completion planned for fall 2019. PBG will maintain the completed garden in its annual operating budget.



Above: Pittsburgh Botanic Garden welcome center and entrance. Photo courtesy of Pittsburgh Botanic Garden Archives

Top: Ongoing reclamation work at Pittsburgh Botanic Garden. Photo by Sarah Drake

Gathering Garden at Pittsburgh Botanic Garden. Photo courtesy of Pittsburgh Botanic Garden Archives