



Summer 2023
Editor: Lacie Wever



THE HERON CHRONICLE



INTRACOASTAL SUNRISE REFLECTIONS,
BATTLEFIELD PARK, LORI CASH

WELCOME

WELCOME TO A SPECIAL EDITION OF THE HERON CHRONICLE NEWSLETTER FROM THE CHESAPEAKE ENVIRONMENTAL IMPROVEMENT COUNCIL (CEIC)!

We are an eighteen-member, mayor-appointed advisory group formed in 1983. Our purpose is to promote interest in improving Chesapeake's environment, thereby making Chesapeake a greener, cleaner and healthier city in which to live, learn, work, farm, and play. We accomplish this purpose through outreach, education, and volunteer efforts. Our key focus areas include litter and pollution prevention, waste reduction and recycling, beautification, and conservation landscaping. We are an active group and generally meet monthly.

CONNECT WITH THE CEIC

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Michael E. Orloff

NOTABLE YARDS WINNERS

By Amy Weber, CEIC Chair

Notable Yards is a CEIC program that helps to recognize yards that look good and are good for nature! Important elements include:

- Visual appeal of garden design
- Healthy lawn practices
- Native trees, shrubs, and flowers
- Food gardens and/or wildlife habitat

HERE ARE THIS YEAR'S WINNERS!

GARY & SUSAN BALL INDIAN RIVER DISTRICT



Gary and Susan Ball have worked hard to create a “river-friendly” landscape that benefits wildlife. They are a RiverStar Home with the Elizabeth River Project (ERP). Gary has worked with the ERP to develop a buffer garden along their Indian River shoreline. The dense plantings help keep pollutants out of the river and discourage harmful geese from entering their yard. Trees, shrubs, and flowers border each side of the back yard, with a chemical free “freedom lawn” leading down to the river. With a mix of native and non-native plants, they are working to attract various pollinator insects. Susan has been working on a new pollinator bed by the back deck with a fun water source. Well placed bluebird houses ensure that a family of bluebirds will keep the caterpillars and other insects in check. Colorful container gardens of annual flowers line the steps to their upper-level deck. Their raised bed vegetable garden is maintained without harsh chemicals and is interspersed with pollinator-attracting flowers. Watering has been made easy with the large capacity rain barrel obtained through ERP! You don’t need to look very far to find bursts of color and beauty in the Ball’s environmentally conscious yard.

NOTABLE YARDS WINNERS

NICHOLE AND GEOFFREY CHILDERS DEEP CREEK DISTRICT



In two short years living in their Deep Creek home, the Childers have worked hard on their landscape, with an emphasis on providing a safe environment for their children, pets, and wildlife. Two mature oak trees shade the entire front yard and provide a haven for nesting birds. Several active nests were observed during our visit. Needing lawn space for their young children to play, Geoffrey has worked to improve their green “freedom lawn” by adding grass seed to bare areas and amending the soil with an organic fertilizer. The lawn is maintained with battery or manually operated lawn equipment, resulting in zero emissions. They have reduced some of that lawn by enlarging planting areas and with vegetable gardening in the back. The extensive fruit and vegetable garden is Nichole’s handywork. They are a military family, so she only uses containers that can be taken with them on their next move. She has even found a collapsible rain barrel, which will easily transport. She also uses portable compost bins to make use of compostable waste. The children get involved too and enjoy picking the fruits of their labor. The Childers family believes in sharing with others, including the resident wildlife! Nichole makes sure to plant enough to go around and happily shares with the birds, squirrels, and bunnies. No pesticides or herbicides are used on the lawn or vegetable garden, making their yard a safe place for their family and wildlife.

NOTABLE YARDS WINNERS

JEFF AND ELEANOR CUNDIFF GRASSFIELD DISTRICT



The semiformal landscape design and plantings nicely complement the Cundiffs' Victorian style home. Eleanor's love of flowers and gardening is evident in their colorful landscape beds. During our visit, several butterflies and other pollinators were seen flitting about the diverse array of flowering plants and shrubs. A pair of bluebirds nesting in the strategically placed birdhouses put on a nice show for us as well! A tall hedge of the native Northern Bayberry (*Morella pensylvanica*) borders their side yard, providing wildlife habitat and privacy, while also protecting the Cundiffs and their guests from golf balls from the adjacent green. They have reduced the use of impermeable pavement by using pavers around their pool and patio area. While not a true permeable paver, the individual pavers help runoff soak into the ground instead of into the storm drains. Mature native trees, flowering shrubs and perennials border the backyard, providing a restful and cooling retreat!

NOTABLE YARDS WINNERS

KURT AND RHONDA LEIDIG GREAT BRIDGE DISTRICT



In their few short years together, “newlyweds” Kurt and Rhonda Leidig have transformed their shady corner lot into a peaceful retreat where they enjoy entertaining friends. Large native trees provide the desired 40% tree canopy to their home and abundant habitat for wildlife. Mature flowering shrubs ensure that there is color throughout the year. Rhonda is a self-proclaimed “plant rescuer,” saving plants from the roadside or from online posts and nurturing them back to health. She finds sunny pockets here and there to place sun-loving perennials. She also rescues discarded items and gives them a new life as décor throughout their yard. You don’t have to look too far to see a fun, whimsical touch. Strategically placed bird feeders and houses guarantee the return of the many birds that visit their yard. The minimal “freedom lawn” requires only cutting, eliminating the need for lawn chemicals and regular watering. They have reduced the lawn even further by enlarging planting areas for Rhonda’s ever-expanding collection of perennials and shrubs! Hidden pathways, whimsical décor, colorful flowers, and personal touches welcome and entertain all who enter.

NOTABLE YARDS WINNERS

AUDRA SHORT WESTERN BRANCH DISTRICT



Another RiverStar Home, the Short Family landscape “checks all the boxes” for being an environmentally friendly Notable Yard. In the last few years, they have reduced lawn size by adding several trees, shrubs, and perennials throughout the property. Working with the Elizabeth River Project (ERP), they have installed two rain gardens and a conservation bed. To further reduce lawn size, Audra has added several native plant gardens and expanded the vegetable garden area. The Shorts will be beginning the next phase of lawn reduction in the coming year by maximizing all their usable space. They have also followed Chesapeake Bay Preservation Act guidelines on their property, including the wooded section adjacent to a creek connecting to the Elizabeth River (and ultimately to the Bay!). Trails throughout the woods lead to the creek and create a park-like setting ideal for the family to explore. The property also supports wildlife by providing a healthy and diverse micro-ecosystem where beneficial bugs, birds, and other creatures keep harmful pests in check. The Shorts have minimized impermeable pavement throughout the property. Recently, Audra used the Virginia Conservation Assistance Program *([VCAP Grant link below](#)) to replace their large impermeable driveway with permeable pavers. This ensures that storm runoff will soak into the landscape instead of going into the storm drains and the nearby Elizabeth River. Audra is passionate about managing the yard in a way that is both enjoyable to her family, while also making a positive impact in the local environment. She has created a diverse landscape that supports all kinds of life, while also providing beauty and function. By helping to support the native plant and wildlife communities that share their home, they have learned how to sustainably manage their landscape in a more environmentally responsible way and are eager to continue learning as this transformation progresses in the years to come.

NOTABLE YARDS WINNERS

REBECCA WEBB THE GREAT BRIDGE DISTRICT



Upon first arriving at the Webb Family home on the end of a quiet street, one feels welcomed by the diverse, colorful plantings and whimsical touches. The front lawn consists mostly of St. Augustine grass, providing a durable and safe area for their young children to play. St. Augustine is a warm season grass that requires little, if any fertilizer or water and is a great choice for our area. Tall native trees on each side of the yard provide pockets of shade for the children and habitat for several kinds of birds. Flowering plants and shrubs are tucked into every available pocket. Rebecca loves plants and happily takes those shared by friends and neighbors. She has reduced the lawn size in several areas to accommodate her growing collection. A pollinator garden along the driveway contains a mix of native and non-native plants, providing food for a variety of pollinator insects. The garden was all abuzz during our visit. Several butterfly species were also observed flitting around the bright flowers. Rebecca gives found treasures a new life with vibrant paint to give a touch of whimsy and color to shady nooks. The backyard offers even more beneficial plants and trees, including a lovely native fringe tree (*Chionanthus virginicus*). The backyard is home to their 6 beautiful hens, which provide the family with plenty of eggs. Kitchen waste is “composted” by the chickens, providing manure for the vegetable garden. Larger lawn cuttings and leaf litter are composted or layered strategically in areas of the backyard “freedom lawn,” then left to break down to begin another planting area. She has created or expanded several beds with this method. Concerned about providing a safe area for her children and resident wildlife, she only uses organic (and safe!) fertilizers or treatments throughout the landscape. Rebecca has created a lovely environmentally friendly homestead and peaceful retreat for her family and friends to enjoy.

THE CLEAN & GREEN POSTER CONTEST

By Kate Vanderpool, Parks Recreation and Tourism

The Clean & Green Poster Contest took place from December 2022 to March 2023 for Chesapeake students to promote litter prevention. Posters were judged based on originality, message impact, and visual appeal. Fifteen students created winning posters and were invited to City Hall, along with their families and teachers, for a recognition ceremony with the Mayor, City Council members, and CEIC members. The first-place winning posters are below, as well as a list of winners from all age groups. To learn more about the contest, go to cityofchesapeake.net/CEIC

K – 1st Grade Category

Hayden Ward – 1st place, Greenbrier Primary
Savannah Little – 2nd place, Western Branch Primary
Jordynn Chandler – 3rd place, Greenbrier Primary



2nd – 3rd Grade Category

Charlotte Collins – 1st place, Southeastern Elementary
Rameen Hussaiu – 2nd place, Southeastern Elementary
Isla West – 3rd place, Chittum Elementary
Dylan Sweitzer – Honorable Mention, Butts Road Intermediate



4th – 5th Grade Category

Aariz Qureshi – 1st place, Southeastern Elementary
PresliRose Hanks – 2nd place, Southeastern Elementary
Ella Leake – 3rd place, Southeastern Elementary



6th – 8th Grade Category

Scarlett Graften – 1st place, Deep Creek Middle
Londyn Link – 2nd place, Deep Creek Middle

9th – 12th Grade Category

Maja Nowakowski – 1st place, Grassfield High
Lyndsay Bates – 2nd place, Deep Creek High
Jameson Booth – 3rd place, Grassfield High



CONGRATULATIONS TO ALL THE WINNERS!