2020 Common Wealth Award Nominations Announced

The Common Wealth Award committee is happy to announce four finalists for the 2020 Common Wealth Award. This award, established by the Garden Club of Virginia in 1979, provides an annual grant/grants to fund community projects of member clubs in the areas of conservation, beautification, horticulture, preservation or education. The two-word name, Common Wealth, signifies the “wealth” that is “common” to all Virginians. Garden Club of Virginia member clubs will vote on the projects prior to the Board of Governors meeting in October, at which time the winner(s) will be announced. The finalists are as follows:

A Trail to the River at Fort Christanna
Submitted by The Brunswick Garden Club

At its creation in 1714, Fort Christanna, built by Governor of the Colony of Virginia Alexander Spotswood was “the most western outpost of the British Empire.” In the 1990s, the area surrounding the pentagonal fort was made into a natural park with a walking trail, informational signage, a welcoming kiosk and a “learning circle” for school tours. This new project would transform an undeveloped footpath into a widened, wheelchair-accessible trail that leads from the fort area to a new terrace overlooking the Meherrin River. From here, rustic steps would be built into the slope to access to the river’s edge, potential site of a canoe dock as designated by the Virginia Tourism Corporation. Natural materials would be used, and the ground would be covered by landscape cloth and crusher run to protect the site for future archaeology. Labels would identify native wildflowers and trees.

Mill Mountain Wildflower Garden: The Next Fifty Years and Beyond Enhancing the Visitor Experience Through Educational Signage
Submitted by The Mill Mountain Garden Club

High atop Mill Mountain, in the middle of Roanoke’s most visited urban park and surrounded by ten miles of hiking, biking and walking trails, is the Mill Mountain Wildflower Garden. As primary caretakers, members of the Mill Mountain Garden Club tend the iconic 2.5-acre garden weekly. To celebrate the 50th anniversary of the garden, the club has been ambitiously fundraising to restore critical features of the garden and to provide accessible pathways, improved entrances and landscaping. Building is in progress. The Common Wealth Award would provide funds for signage to enhance the education of the visitor and to highlight the mission of conservation. Along the Discovery Trail, four permanent, colorful signs will showcase Virginia native plants, wildflowers, trees, insects and pollinators and will emphasize the nexus of nature, climate science and health.

Rappahannock Valley Garden Trail
Submitted by The Rappahannock Valley Garden Club

The proposed Rappahannock Valley Garden Trail will encourage the residents and many visitors to the Fredericksburg area to explore all public gardens in the vicinity, the inconspicuous as well as the prominent. Included in the trail are three GCV restoration sites (Kenmore, Mary Washington House and
Belmont), a Tree USA campus with noteworthy gardens (University of Mary Washington), a garden designed by renowned landscape architect Ellen Biddle Shipman (Chatham), Downtown Greens community garden, the Cossey Botanical Park Arboretum, and the native plant demonstration garden at Cedell Brooks Jr. Park in King George. In addition, the annual Historic Garden Week tour will be promoted. The Fredericksburg tourism office will host and maintain the online garden trail brochure linked to its website. The paper brochure will be available at this office and at tourist destinations throughout the region.

**Living Green Wall at Brock Environmental Center’s Classroom Annex**  
**Submitted by The Virginia Beach Garden Club**

The Virginia Beach Garden Club is supporting the inclusion of a “green wall” in the Virginia Beach Public School’s classroom annex affiliated with the Brock Environmental Center. Virginia Beach City Public Schools and the Chesapeake Bay Foundation are partners in a new environmental studies program for high school students focusing on environmental science, green building practices and solutions to issues like sea level rise and degraded waterways. A classroom with the green wall is a model of sustainability. Green walls reduce energy costs and reduce noise by absorbing acoustic energy. An interior living green wall not only provides environmental health benefits associated with the outdoors but also helps students combat attention fatigue by connecting students to “outdoor nature” within the indoor environment. Green walls require greenery, a growing medium and a water delivery system.