



Natural Resources at White Gardens



Helping Our Land Heal

Fairfax County Park Authority's program to restore natural areas on park land is known as Helping Our Land Heal. Helping Our Land Heal projects rebuild, repair, and maintain quality natural areas within our park system of 427 parks. As part of the Park Authority's program, you will find two ecological restoration projects at White Gardens.

First, the grassland meadow onsite and secondly, the ongoing horticulture restoration. In alignment with the park's master plan and the Park Authority's Helping Our Land Heal program, restoration work to improve the natural resources at White Gardens began in 2016. Funding for the restoration activities is provided from the 2012 Park Bond.

Restoration projects walk the Park Authority's environmental sustainability talk and are excellent examples of creativity in the reestablishment of native flora species. Projects will enhance ecosystem services to the surrounding landscape, such as pollination and pollinator population support, wildlife habitat, soil development, and help to improve water and air quality in the Chesapeake Bay watershed.

Grassland Meadow

At the core of this environmental sustainability project was to restore the existing field to a native plant dominated grassland community and manage undesired species that had taken over. The grassland meadow was designated as a Meadow Management Zone in the Landscape Management Plan and is approximately three acres in size. The high efficiency of the project all started with an excellent design. The restoration design contained plant lists comprised of only native plants suitable for northern Virginia in the coastal plain/piedmont physiographic province. The desire for a low maintenance natural landscape was achieved by this intuitive design and creative approach.

Project goals were to ecologically restore the grassland meadow area and to manage species in accordance with the White Gardens Landscape Management Plan and Master Plan. The fact that the project was aligned with the cultural landscape dating back to the White family was an extremely creative and innovative approach to this ecological restoration. Plant species that would have been used in plant palettes at the time that the White family were investing in the horticultural resources of the property are the plants that were chosen for the meadow restoration. New wildlife has been observed in the grassland such as gold finches and monarch and swallowtail butterflies.

The meadow restoration earned the Park Authority the "Best New Environmental Sustainability Project" from the Virginia Recreation and Park Society in 2019.



Photo A

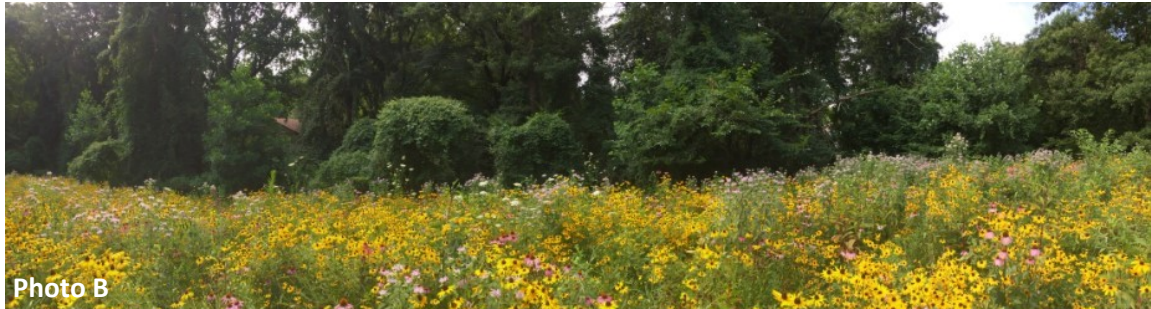


Photo B

Photo A: field at White Gardens prior to meadow restoration project

Photo B: installed meadow in bloom at White Gardens

Horticulture Restoration

In 2020, restoration work continues with focus on the plant collection in the Horticulture Management Zone. White Gardens has noteworthy horticultural resources that were cultivated by one family throughout most of the 20th century. This horticultural legacy is a key component of the site history as it conveys the cultural value of the landscape. It demonstrates the landscape's cultivation and stewardship, and ultimately, its preservation. There are a total four phases with this restoration project and Phase I and Phase II are complete. Phase I was a complete inventory of plant species in the zone, where 382 plants identified and evaluated. Phase II was a full design concept for the Horticulture Management Zone. Phase III is currently underway and is the implementation of the design work. Execution of the initial design included in Phase III will conclude in June 2022. Subsequent phases will include a mapping phase, as well as a management plan for future care.

Additional Information

For additional information on the natural resource management at White Gardens Horticultural Park, please contact staff at Green Spring Gardens.

Green Spring Gardens

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