



FAIRFAX COUNTY PARK AUTHORITY



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For Immediate Release

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Bluebell Watch Gets Underway at Riverbend Park

Winter's grip is gradually relaxing with each passing day, and something is stirring just under the surface at Riverbend Park that reminds us that warm spring days are approaching. Dark purple leaves resembling spinach are bursting through the soil and will soon blossom into a sea of blue as the park's beloved Virginia bluebells spread across the forest floor to everyone's delight. The 2014 Bluebell Watch has begun!

The watch offers many different facets and a mix of activities for families. The 2014 Bluebell Watch will be documented with photos on the Fairfax County Park Authority's blog at <http://ourstoriesandperspectives.com/2014/02/24/riverbends-bluebell-watch-has-begun> and then on Saturday, April 12, 2014, Riverbend Park will hold its second annual Bluebells at the Bend Festival from 10 a.m. until 2 p.m. Visitors will enjoy live music, wildflower walks, live animals, face painting, wagon rides and other fun family activities. Event admission is \$5 per person.

Bluebells thrive in rich floodplain soils, which are replenished each year by floods. The scientific name *Mertensia Virginica* honors German botanist Franz Karl Mertens (1764-1831). The species name refers to Virginia, where the plant was first identified. Thomas Jefferson grew Virginia bluebells at Monticello, but the bluebells at Riverbend Park were not planted by anyone; the river, wildlife, and climate have all pitched in to create this native garden. By mid-April their purplish blue blooms will adorn acres and acres of forest floor.

Riverbend Park is located at 8700 Potomac Hills Street in Great Falls, VA. For information call Riverbend Park at 703-759-9018, or visit www.fairfaxcounty.gov/parks/riverbend-park/events.htm

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If accommodations and/or alternative formats are needed, please call (703) 324-8563, at least 10 working days in advance of the registration deadline or event. TTY (703) 803-3354.