

Views From The Foothills

A Publication of the Culpeper Soil & Water Conservation District
Serving Culpeper, Greene, Madison, Orange & Rappahannock Counties
www.culpeperswcd.org

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M. Johnson

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Welcome!

You are receiving this newsletter because you receive land use tax benefits in our counties. Please call 540-825-8591 or email stephanied@culpeperswcd.org to remove yourself from our mailing list.

No Money for Best Management Practices? No Problem!

DEQ offers 0% interest loans

Producers and landowners may be hesitant to participate in the Virginia Agricultural Best Management Practices (BMP) Cost Share Program for a number of reasons. One reason may be the amount of money needed upfront to pay a contractor for supplies and labor before being reimbursed by Culpeper Soil and Water Conservation District or Natural Resources Conservation Service. Fear not — the Virginia Department of Environmental Quality is now offering 0% interest loans for exactly this situation!

Virginia's Ag BMP Loan Program is now available again. The purpose of the revitalized loan program is to help producers with cash flow for installing conservation Best Management Practices and thereby help reduce nonpoint source pollution. The Ag BMP Loan Program, part of the Virginia Clean Water Revolving Loan Fund (VCWRLF), was originally administered from 2000 to 2016. During this time, the Program provided \$46 million in 491 loans to 615 Ag BMP projects throughout Virginia. On July 1, 2019 the program resumed with additional incentives provided to producers.

Any producer who wants to install agricultural Best Management Practices is eligible. If the applicant does not participate in any state or federal cost share program they are still eligible but the practices still must meet BMP specifications.

Applicants are required to have a current nutrient management plan and a conservation plan that meets DCR or NRCS standards.

If you have any previous loans through DEQ they must be paid prior to receiving a new loan. The minimum loan amount is \$10,000 and the maximum is \$500,000. Producers can receive a loan up to 100% of eligible expenses. If a producer receives cost share funds, these funds must be applied to the loan payments immediately. Repayment periods range from 1 to 10 years. Applications are accepted on an ongoing basis and are reviewed and ranked monthly.

A brochure about the loan program can be found at: http://www.culpeperswcd.org/wp-content/uploads/AG_Brochure-tri-fold-July-2019.pdf.

For additional information contact the District at 540-825-8591.

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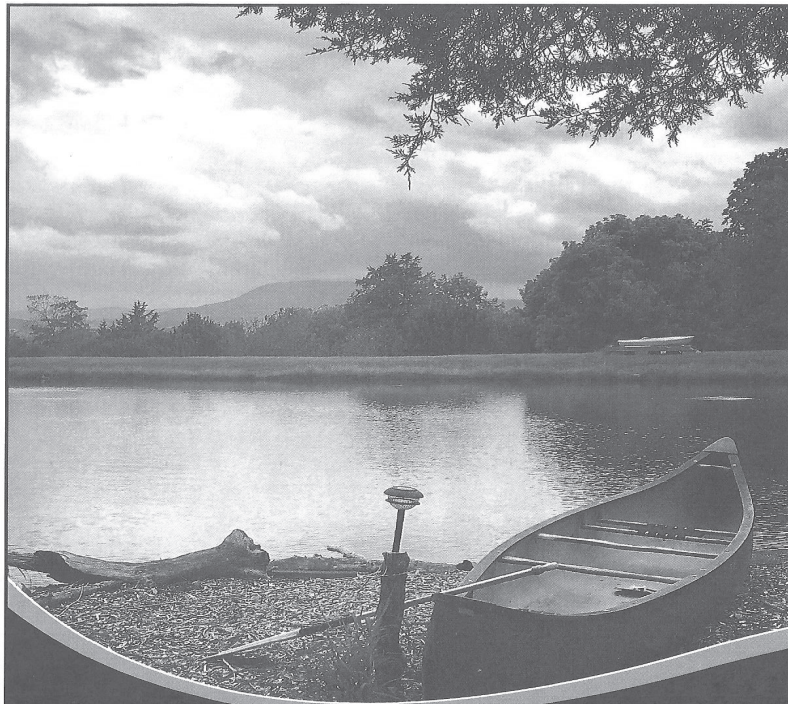
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The District carries nonwoven geotextile (filter fabric) for sale that meets most state and federally funded project requirements, as well as many on-farm needs. Geotextile is sold by the foot, which comes in 12.5' widths. Please call the Culpeper Office at 540-825-8591 for pricing and more information!



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Be Septic Smart!

One in five U.S. homes have septic systems. Yours may be one of them. If your septic system is not properly maintained you may be risking your family's health, hurting the environment, and flushing thousands of dollars down the drain. Septic Smart is a program developed by the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) to educate homeowners about septic system maintenance. Septic Smart Week is September 16-20, 2019.

- **Think at the sink!** What goes down your drain has a big impact on your septic system! Avoid harsh chemicals and use cleaners/detergents in moderation
- **Don't strain your drain!** Use water efficiently and stagger use of water based appliances (such as washing machines and dishwashers) to avoid a back up of your septic system into your house.
- **Keep it clean!** If you have a well, many things can contaminate your drinking water, such as a failing septic system. Test your well water regularly! (See page 3 for an opportunity.)
- **Shield your field!** Tree and root shrubs, cars and livestock can damage your drainfield.
- **Protect it and Inspect It!** Regular septic system maintenance can save homeowners thousands of dollars and protect public health.
- **Don't Overload the Commode!** A toilet is NOT a trashcan! Disposable diapers, wipes, feminine hygiene products, cigarette butts, cat litter and much more can damage your septic system.
- **Pump your tank!** Ensure your septic tank is pumped at regular intervals as recommended by a professional and/or local permitting authority.

More information can be found at <https://www.epa.gov/septic/septicsmart-homeowners>.

Scholarships Available for Summer Camps and College!

Do you know a young person who loves the outdoors? Culpeper Soil & Water offers scholarships to two summer camps. Camp Woods and Wildlife is held in June at the Holiday Lake 4-H Center. Youth Conservation Camp is held in July at Virginia Tech. Contact Stephanie DeNicola for more information at stephanied@culpeperswcd.org.

The District also offers college scholarships to students dedicated to natural resource conservation. Contact Stephanie DeNicola for more information at stephanied@culpeperswcd.org.

Water Testing Clinic for Greene, Madison & Orange County Residents*

- Kickoff: October 10, 2019
- Samples due: October 16, 2019
- Follow-up meeting: November 14, 2019

Locations TBA. To sign up, contact Katie Jenkins Woodward at kjenk@vt.edu or 540-948-6881.

* Open to Culpeper & Rappahannock residents too but they must deliver the sample to an Extension office in Greene, Madison or Orange.

District Grant for Meaningful Watershed Educational Experiences Wraps Up Year 1

The Culpeper Soil & Water Conservation District wrapped up a successful Year 1 of “Environmental Literacy in the Piedmont”. This program is funded by the District’s three year Chesapeake Bay Watershed Education and Training (BWET) grant from the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA). This program delivers Meaningful Watershed Educational Experiences (MWEEs) to sixth grade students and quality professional development for area teachers. The program utilizes a previously developed curriculum to deliver the three parts of a MWEE: classroom preparation and investigative question development, field investigation and reflections. Preparation activities included a virtual tour of the school’s watershed and a schoolyard assessment. Field investigations included rotations with physical, chemical and biological monitoring as well as an introduction to common trees of Virginia with the Virginia Department of Forestry and a soils investigation station led by USDA Natural Resources Conservation Service. Reflection activities included Plaster of Paris watershed models and writing letters to the editor for the local newspapers. The goal of the project is to permanently integrate watershed education into the middle school curriculum.

Year 1 launched with 136 sixth grade students from William Wetsel Middle School in Madison and 65 students from Rappahannock County Elementary School. The District hires and trains college students to deliver the curriculum so that our robust K-12 classroom programming still occurs and offer professional development opportunities to the college students. Professional development was delivered to 74 teachers between summer and fall 2018 and summer 2019.

Year 2 launches in William Monroe Middle School in Greene and Prospect Heights Middle School in Orange and returns to William Wetsel Middle School and Rappahannock County Elementary School.

Photos Left to right:

Photo 1: Rappahannock 4-H Agent Jenny Kapsa shows students tests at the chemical station

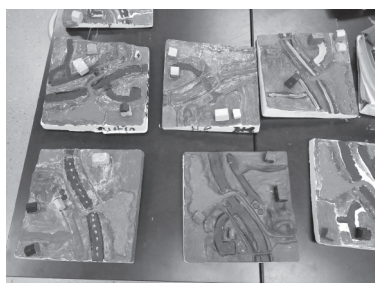
Photo 2: A student shows a macroinvertebrate found during biological monitoring

Photo 3: CSWCD Conservation Specialist Richard Jacobs leads students in a schoolyard assessment.

Photo 4: Students practice using probeware in the classroom



Students work in groups to paint their own watershed model and write letters to the editor



Reigniting a Partnership: Plant Piedmont Natives

By Elizabeth Mizell, Co-chair Plant Piedmont Natives

In 2012, a group of native plant enthusiasts and advocates joined together to launch Plant Piedmont Natives (PPN), a partnership dedicated to promoting the use of plants native to Virginia in our yards, parks, public spaces, and landscaping. The early efforts of this group generated some tools you may use today, such as the Piedmont Native Plants Database, <https://www.albemarle.org/nativeplants/> and *Piedmont Native Plants: A guide for landscapes and gardens*. PPN is one of seven regional campaigns across Virginia that are part of the Virginia Native Plant Marketing Partnership. PPN covers Fauquier, Rappahannock, Culpeper, Madison, Orange, Greene, Albemarle, Louisa, Fluvanna, Nelson, and Buckingham Counties.

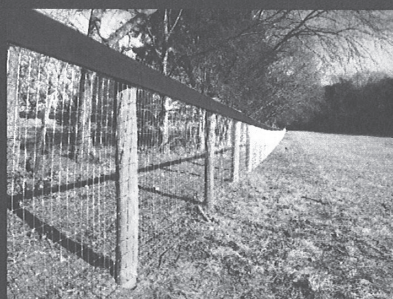
On July 17, 2019, PPN reconvened their efforts bringing together stakeholders from the 11 county region for a day of thoughtful discussion and action planning. The Jefferson Chapter of Virginia Native Plant Society and Piedmont Environmental Council hosted the event. Carol Heiser, Habitat Education Coordinator for VA Department of Game and Inland Fisheries and Virginia Witmer, Outreach Coordinator for Coastal Zone Management Program Office at DEQ generously provided additional financial support and expertise. UVA Institute for Engagement and Negotiation staff, Kristina Weaver and Mike Foreman, assisted PPN in planning and facilitating this meeting. Their skillful meeting facilitation helped us to develop four Working Groups and identify 10 new short term goals to reignite the work of PPN. We were blown away by the interest and participation of the 38 meeting attendees and inspired by the enthusiasm and ideas each one brought with them.

PPN is for anyone who works with native plants, whether you are a property owner, private consultant or designer, nursery operator, or local government. The goal is to go beyond making people aware of native plants, but to change their behavior to ask for and use native plants consistently.

Celia Vuocolo, Wildlife Habitat & Stewardship Specialist with Piedmont Environmental Council and Elizabeth Mizell, Vice President VNPS Jefferson Chapter are co-chairs for Plant Piedmont Natives. We are building a grassroots partner initiative that includes motivated citizens and volunteers, partner organizations, and local governments to promote native plants. To learn more please contact us by email at cvuocolo@pecva.org or eamizell@gmail.com. Follow Plant Piedmont Natives on Facebook, <https://www.facebook.com/PiedmontNatives/> or check out our webpage <https://www.plantvirginiannatives.org/plant-piedmont-natives>.



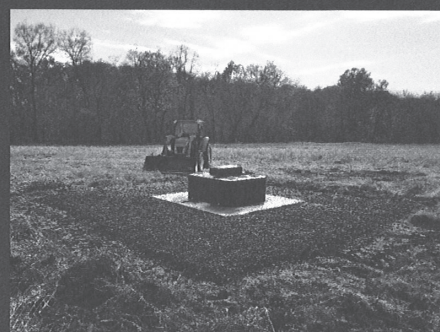
Symphyotrichum novae-angliae
Rusted Patch Bumblebee



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Conservation District Cover Crop Signup

Agriculture program conservation funds are currently available from the Culpeper Soil and Water Conservation District for a variety of conservation practices including cover crops for winter cover on crop fields. Opportunities exist for single species cover crops such as small grains for either harvest or killing and also for multiple species cover crops that incorporate forage or tillage radishes, legumes and other species to provide additional soil benefits such as nitrogen fixation, reducing compaction and increasing organic matter. Payments range from \$15 to \$48 per acre depending on what is planted and when it is planted. Planting by October 10 pays higher and pure stands of some rye cultivars also pay additional amounts. A nutrient management plan is required to be eligible and this further benefits the producer. The agronomic benefits of cover crops are well established: scavenging of soil nutrients especially nitrogen, fixing atmospheric nitrogen into the soil, improving soil tilth and organic matter, protecting the soil from erosion in the off season and improving water infiltration into the soil are a few. Knowing your purpose(s) for growing a cover crop, targeting your species selection and management to achieve your purpose is key to attaining greater benefits. Sign up and approval is required.

Now is the time to contact the District to get more details and enroll acreage for this year's cover crops. The District has set aside part of its annual cost share allocation from the state specifically to address cover crop requests. For more information, contact the District at 540-825-8591 or 540-308-6301. For additional opportunities, contact Natural Resources Conservation Service at 540-317-7724.



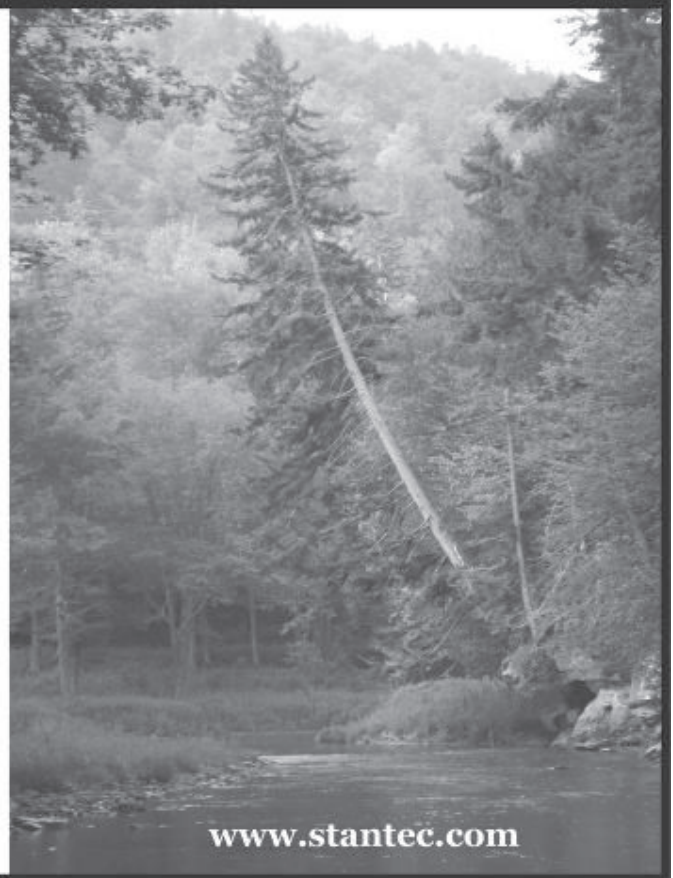
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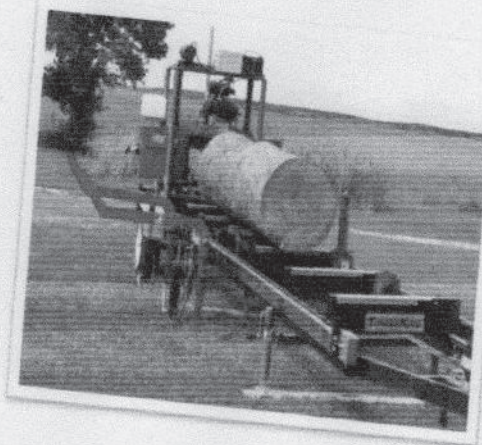
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Free Soil Tests for Lawns

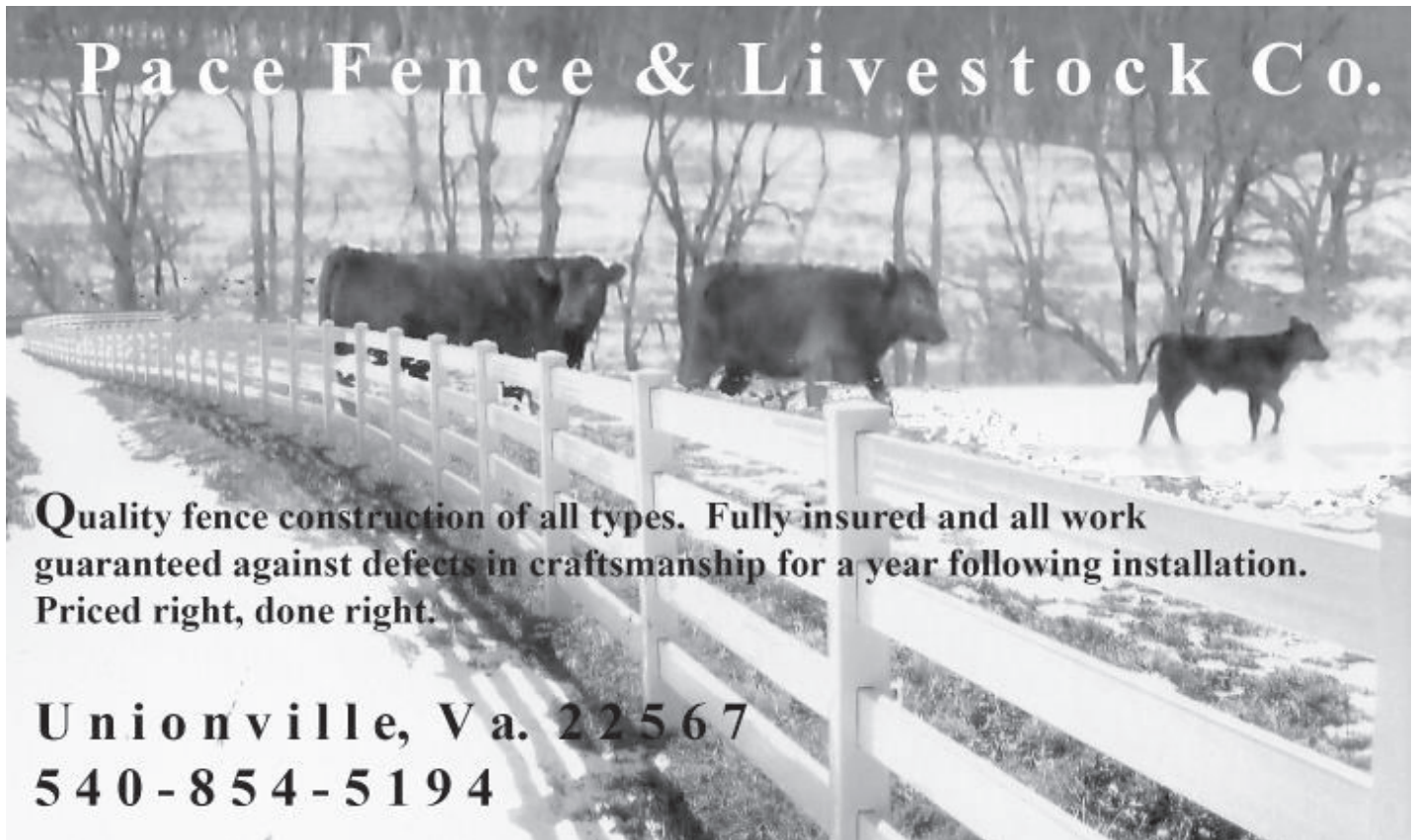
Thanks to a grant from the Chesapeake Bay Restoration Fund, also known as the Bay License Plate Grant Program, Culpeper Soil and Water Conservation District is offering free routine soil tests for lawns. This program is funded by the sale of Chesapeake Bay License Plates. The goal of the lawn testing program is to better inform property owners on the use of fertilizer and other soil amendments for healthier lawn and cleaner water. Your purchase of a Bay plate would contribute towards funding similar grants across the Bay Watershed in Virginia. (<https://www.dmv.virginia.gov/vehicles/#splates/info.asp?idnm=CB>) To participate, visit your local Extension office or any Culpeper SWCD office for the sample box, form and voucher. You simply collect and ship the sample and the Virginia Tech lab will bill CSWCD. **The deadline to mail samples is November 15.**

Road and Driveway Maintenance Guide Reprinted

Over time many roads and driveways deteriorate for a variety of reasons: poor initial design or construction, poor maintenance, extreme weather or heavy traffic. In addition to costly repairs, many roads and roadside ditches drain into local streams delivering both sediment and gravel into stream channels. This is destructive to the stream, resulting in loss of stream bottom habitat and results in loss of channel capacity. Improved maintenance incorporating best management practices (BMPs) can save money and better protect local waterways.

Currently available to property owners is the Dirt and Gravel Road BMP Guide, published with funding from the Chesapeake Bay Restoration Fund. The guide can be found at the Culpeper Soil and Water Conservation District's website (www.culpeperswcd.org) under publications. Hard copies can be picked up from CSWCD as well as your local extension office or building office.

For technical assistance contact Richard Jacobs at 540-825-8591 or RichardJ@culpeperswcd.org.



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