

*Trees Virginia Newsletter  
Second Edition  
December 6, 2022*



*Our Mission: To enhance the quality of life through the Stewardship of our Commonwealth's urban and community trees.*

Welcome to our second quarterly newsletter!

My hope is that you continue to see this newsletter as a window into the world of community forests in Virginia. This fall started with a spectacular showing of maroon and orange foliage which I hope each of you were able to enjoy. After a very festive fall we have moved onto the holiday season shared with family and friends. Here at Trees Virginia our board is also wrapping up the year. We are beginning to plan for next year's Roanoke Workshop and the Southeast Virginia roundtable discussions. You will find in this newsletter recent updates on Virginia's Tree Steward and Urban Wood groups, and a creative article about fall leaf litter. This has certainly been an exciting year and I hope next year turns out to be just as productive! As you are winding down your own year we would be sincerely appreciative if you thought about contributing to our end of the year giving campaign, which will be sent out later this month.

## Ashley Appling

Trees Virginia President

### Featured Virginia Native

*Complied by: Joe Lehnen  
Photo: Arbor Day Foundation*

Each of our newsletters will feature a native Virginia tree or shrub. This issue's shrub is Elderberry. The Elderberry is an often forgotten shrub that when planted in the right place yields many benefits such as attracting pollinators to its large, white flower heads. Elderberry also provides food for wildlife and serves as nesting habitat for many songbird species. This large shrub grows well in urban riparian areas with well-drained soils.

Elderberry has a long and rich history. The following excerpt is from a great website known as "The Present Tree": *"In ancient mythology, the Elder tree is highly sacred with a spirit known as Elder Mother, or "Hyde Mohr" (Danish) living inside of the tree. The spirit guards every Elder tree and has the ability to protect or harm. Legend has it that the magical powers from the Elder Mother are gifted by her to parts of the tree and she transforms the tree's natural gifts – flowers, berries and wood- into wonderful blessings.*



*The leaves of the Elder tree protect a home or person when dried and hung in a doorway or around a neck. It is a particularly good omen if an elder grows near a dwelling, as the tree's proximity to the home protects its inhabitants. In many ancient legends, the Elder tree is magical and symbolizes good health and prosperity. Most famously, Elder has been treasured for its medicinal uses for thousands of years. It is believed to be a curative for more than 70 diseases, ranging from the plague to toothache! In medieval England it was said that summer had not arrived until the Elder was in full bloom and that it ended when the berries were ripe."*



## Featured Invasive Plant

**Compiled by: Meg Turner**

**Photo: Meg Turner**

*Ficaria verna* (common name Fig Buttercup or Lesser Celandine), introduced as an ornamental from Europe in the nineteenth century, is a vigorous growing invasive perennial that threatens native spring wildflowers. "Like all invasive plants, it is highly successful at aggressively reproducing and spreading, wiping out our diverse, indigenous native plants, particularly spring wildflowers," notes Laura Greenleaf, a co-founder of the James River Park System Invasive Plant

Task Force (JRPS Task Force). Fig Buttercup emerges in late winter, before deciduous trees leaf out, rapidly spreading to carpet large swaths of the forest floor. While its early emergence gives it a competitive advantage, it also presents an opportunity to treat it while native spring ephemerals still lay dormant. It is imperative to treat Fig Buttercup during this narrow window in late winter. The JRPS Task Force has adopted the following protocol:

One to two applications of a low concentration of herbicide with surfactant approved for proximity to aquatic environments upon emergence (window is usually from approximately mid-February to early March). If time allows, a second round of treatment is completed. Task Force member Bill Shanabroch notes that "the second treatment during the growing season is probably critical in order to really get on top of a population. Within a couple weeks after the first treatment, there is usually significant regrowth." Best practices are followed to avoid harm to salamander and frog populations and harm to native wildflowers, ideally wrapping up treatment before emergence, and carefully avoiding contact with any natives in proximity.

Fig buttercup is often confused with the native *Caltha palustris* (marsh marigold). While Fig buttercup has 8-12 petals and produces tubers or bulblets, marsh marigold has 5-9 petals and no tubers or bulblets.

For more information about *Ficaria verna*, and how best to treat it, see the following resources:  
**Blue Ridge Prism, Brandywine Conservancy**



## Featured Article- Praise for Fallen Leaves

December is here, and leaves are falling and carpeting the ground. Trees drop their leaves in order to conserve their



## Tree Steward Corner

Tree Stewards are always active in planting and caring for trees in many ways. It has been great to see some indication of this in the applications for the Trees Virginia 2022-2023 Mini-Grants. Eight Tree Steward organizations applied for and received Mini-Grants in this phase of the program. Congratulations to the



resources and prepare for winter. Their descend may seem like a nuisance and a chore, but they actually provide many uses for your own benefit!

Decomposing leaves provide nutrients to soil, habitat for insects, overwintering homes for pollinators, mulching benefits to trees, and more! Read Ellen Powell's post on fallen leaves and their benefits to learn more creative ways to take advantage of this natural process.

How will you use fallen leaves to benefit your space?

**Full article: [Praise For Fallen Leaves](#)**



following Tree Steward organizations: Arlington/Alexandria, Charlottesville Area, Roanoke, Hopewell, Fairfax, Northern Piedmont, Richmond, and Historic Rivers and Peninsula Master Naturalist Tree Stewards. The applications provided a diverse range of projects and Tree Steward activities. The applications included seeking funds to support training classes, tree nursery enhancements, seedlings for planting, seedlings for a gravel bed project, brochures and components for community presentations about tree planting and care, books and training materials, potting materials and supplies, soaker hoses and rain gauges. The Fall season has seen a lot of activity, with Tree Stewards energetically tackling invasive plants and vines and getting busy planting, now that more favorable weather has returned.

Martha Orton  
Trees VA Tree Steward Representative

**Discover more about local Virginia Tree Steward groups**

## Urban Wood Column

The VA Urban Wood program has embarked upon an amazing adventure in which we introduce students in high schools and colleges to the beauty, diversity and value of urban/local wood resources. Working with high schools, community colleges, and universities, we have been able to demonstrate the entire process from wood in log form to wood that they use in their design-build projects. The highlight of this program is giving them the complete sensory experience of seeing, smelling and handling local wood resources as they are transformed in front of their eyes. Some of the students had no idea about the progression from tree-to-lumber. These students are our future and hopefully the seeds that we are planting today will grow and prosper, creating an entirely new generation of sawmillers, land managers, lumber retailers and wood artisans. Check-out some of their urban wood programs at the following links:

**[Virginia Urban Wood Page](#)**

**[JMU Bike Shack](#)**

**[VT Campus Trees](#)**

**[UVA Sawmilling](#)**



**Photos:** Delaney Beattie (top)  
Joe Lehnen (bottom)



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Trees Virginia | 900 Natural Resources Dr, Charlottesville, VA 22903

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