

April 2025



Mark your calendars for the much anticipated Garden Fair at Blandy Experimental Farm, the home of the State Arboretum of Virginia. Garden Fair is the biggest fundraising event of the year of the Foundation of the State Arboretum, the nonprofit that supports Blandy Experimental Farm and the State Arboretum's varied collections and public education programs. In its 35th year, this Mother's Day tradition will feature 60+ vendors (both fan favorites and new) offering the best selection of native plants, annuals, perennials, herbs, trees, shrubs, garden tools, nature inspired gifts and more. We'll have food trucks, music, a scavenger hunt for kids, environmental educators, Arboretum tours and so much fun!

[Learn more](#)

Online tickets \$10 per car / \$20 per car at gate

Your ticket purchase directly supports vital initiatives at Blandy including innovative public programming, enlightening interpretation to our garden collections, thought-provoking scientific inquiry, and eye-opening education.

**PURCHASE YOUR TICKETS
NOW**

Sign-Up Online for our Garden

- Set-Up Crew Opportunities
- Work the Event

Spring is in the Air

By Dave Carr, Director, Blandy Experimental Farm Research Professor, Environmental Sciences, University of Virginia



Cape May Warbler



Common Yellowthroat



Pine Warbler

Whether you are a hard-core birder or somebody who just enjoys the sounds of bird songs in their backyard, the transition from winter to spring is one of the most exciting times of the year. As temperatures warm and daylight lengthens, male birds begin singing to establish territories and attract mates. Northern Cardinals, Carolina Wrens, and American Robins are among the first local birds to strike up their tunes, but throughout the months of April and May, they will be joined by over 100 other species of songbirds that make long journeys from Central and South America. These birds are taking advantage of the huge bounty of insects that explodes in the temperate zone each summer. Their goal is to turn billions of caterpillars, flies, and other tasty six-legged morsels into baby birds.

No matter how you think about it, spring bird migration is a phenomenon that demands amazement. Many of these small birds travel thousands of miles enroute to their breeding grounds, often launching from the Yucatan Peninsula, flying over hundreds of miles of open water to reach the Gulf Coast. With incredible precision, they use a diverse set of navigation clues (including the stars, magnetic fields, and visual landmarks) to find their way. Twenty years ago, my students and I studied Gray Catbirds, one of the most abundant migrants at Blandy, and each spring, birds that we had banded in previous years would show up in the same patch of shrubs where we originally banded them.

Blandy and the State Arboretum is a great place to enjoy spring migration. The variety of tree species and habitats translates into a diversity of birds. Some of these birds, like Cape May Warblers, are passing through on their way further north. Others like the Common Yellowthroat find habitats like those in the Native Plant Trail a perfect match for their needs. The earliest species arrived in March. Tree Swallows are already hunting insects on the wing. Pine Warblers are already singing from the tops of our conifers. Arrivals pick up through April, with Blue-gray Gnatcatchers and Blue-headed Vireos arriving as the first spring leaves appear. Spring migration peaks, both in terms of the number and diversity of birds, by about Mother's Day. I commonly find a dozen or more species of warblers at Blandy during this time of year. I recommend making a few trips to Blandy over the course of the spring to enjoy the parade of species, dressed to impress in their finest feathers as they search for



Blue-headed Vireo

love in the North American summer.

[Visit our website to register for a Spring Bird Walk](#)

CELEBRATE ARBOR DAY WITH A GROUP TREE PLANTING



Join us on **Arbor Day, April 25, 2025** for a special [Community Forest](#) group tree planting. Blandy's community forest project began in 2011 with the planting of 35 trees near the front entrance of the arboretum. The project has grown over the years with community groups and volunteers participating in group tree plantings. This year, we will plant 125 trees on Arbor Day. Bring your gloves, wear clothes for digging in the dirt, and get ready to dig and plant.

[REGISTER ON SIGN-UP GENUIUS NOW TO VOLUNTEER](#)

Must be 18 years of age to participate.

BEHIND THE SCENES

Learn what it's like to be an ecology graduate student at Blandy

What are the Blandy graduate students up to these days? This spring, three intrepid Blandy graduate students gave virtual talks based on their projects. Check out these three recorded talks to learn more!



Willow Lovecky (working with Dr. T'ai Roulston) explores whether crowded



Jemima Elsherbini (working with Dr. Dave Carr) explores how salt from activities like



Stephanie Petrovick (working with Dr. Howie Epstein) investigates how

“bee hotels” leave the bees and wasps nesting inside more vulnerable to parasites. [WATCH NOW](#)

winter road de-icing impacts plant-insect interactions. [WATCH NOW](#)

nutrients like nitrogen and phosphorus move through grassland ecosystems. [WATCH NOW](#)



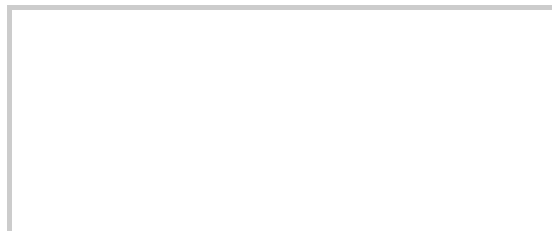
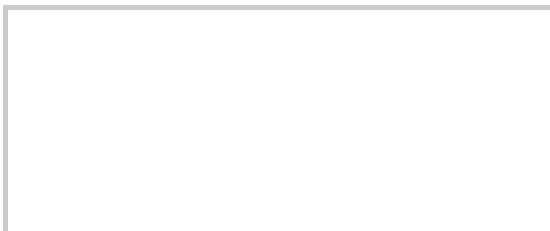
Creating a Pollinator Garden

Spring is the perfect time of year to get your pollinator garden going for beautiful blooms throughout the fall. Carrie Whitacre, Blandy's Assistant Curator, Herbaceous Gardens, offers a few tips.

- Use a variety of native plants that bloom at different times to ensure that nectar and pollen are available from early spring to late fall.
- Grow host and nectar plants that support all stages of pollinator life cycles.
- Cluster plants in groups of three or more making it easier for pollinators to locate and feed on them. Remove invasive plants that outcompete natives plants.
- Leave fallen leaves in the garden providing habitat for overwintering insects and invertebrates.
- Leave bare ground to provide habitat for many of the native bees that nest in the ground.
- Cut back stems in spring leaving stubble of 8 to 24 inches to provide winter nesting cavities for native bees and wasps.
- Avoid pesticides. Most pesticides aren't selective and harm beneficial insects too.

[Read more in our brand new brochure *A Guide to Creating a Pollinator Garden*](#)

New Faces at Blandy





Jake Trusheim is the newest member of our environmental education team! Hailing from Northern California, Jake is excited to learn about the East Coast's natural history and inspire the next generation of environmental stewards.



Meghan Whitlock brings a joyful mix of community spirit, operational know-how, and deep local love to Blandy to her new position as Finance and Administration Manager. "I grew up wandering Blandy's trails—now I get to help keep the lights on, the gears turning, and the wonder alive. It's a full-circle moment," she says.

VIP Garden Fair Preview Night Members and Volunteers ONLY



Good for 1 Charcuterie Box and 1 Drink Voucher Friday May 9, 2025 5:00 - 7:30 p.m.

Members of the Foundation for the State Arboretum (FOSA) receive awesome benefits for their support, including an invitation to our exclusive Garden Fair Preview Night experience! Imagine the fun of being the first to shop Garden Fair's best selection of native plants, annuals, perennials, herbs, trees, shrubs, garden tools, nature inspired crafts and so much more. This year, Preview Night will feature nearly 60 vendors, music by Jason Labrador, a single size Charcuterie box from Burg Charcuterie, and one drink voucher for a locally crafted beer from Dirt Farm Brewing or a glass of wine from Bluemont Vineyards, and of course a chance to catch up with other FOSA friends! Preview Night tickets also serve as Garden Fair admission tickets May 10th & 11th.

You must be a current member or an active volunteer of the Foundation of the State Arboretum to purchase the \$30 Preview Night ticket for yourself and a guest. Current members and active volunteers will receive an email invitation to purchase tickets.

[Become a FOSA Member Today!](#)

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STATE ARBORETUM
of VIRGINIA



BLANDY
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Blandy Experimental Farm | 400 Blandy Farm Lane | Boyce, VA 22620 US

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