



Celebrating Mayberry Farm

An Historic Fort Valley Property Preserved Forever

BY TAYLOR EVANS, DIRECTOR OF LAND PROTECTION



The Shenandoah Valley is blessed with rich history, ecological diversity, productive farmland, and unparalleled beauty. VCC works to preserve all of this across our eleven counties, but it is a special treat when we can help a landowner protect a property that not only exemplifies each of these values, but holds a deep sentimental meaning as well.

Mayberry Farm contains 112 acres located in the southern end of Fort Valley, the “valley within a valley”, in Shenandoah County. Winding up the road, visitors cross Passage Creek, a mountainous tributary of the North Fork of the Shenandoah River fed by several springs which originate on the property flowing off of Massanutten Mountain. Exiting the tree-hemmed driveway, the views open to show a historic home thought to date back to the 18th century, including a hand-dug cellar, original heartwood pine flooring, and a native stone cabin and chimney. From the two hilltops behind the historic residence there are striking, unobstructed views of both the east and west interior flanks of Massanutten mountain, showcasing the natural and agricultural character of the region.

Mayberry Farm was granted to the original owners by Lord Fairfax, who required them to plant 100 apple trees as a condition of ownership, and the farmland has been in continuous production ever since. While none of those trees still live, the remains of that original orchard are tucked in among the rolling open pasture.

The eastern boundary borders the George Washington and Jefferson National Forest, buffering public lands and protecting a mixed hardwood forest home to a diversity of spring wildflowers, and numerous species of wildlife. As you might imagine, the permanent protection of this property was of the utmost importance to the two landowners who grew up there. VCC is honored to be a partner in stewarding the streams, vistas, pastures, and family legacy of Mayberry Farm.

Are you interested in seeing some of these historic properties for yourself? Visit valleyconservation.org/volunteer and sign up to participate in our Shenandoah Stewards Volunteer Program to accompany our land protection specialist on their yearly monitoring visits up and down the Valley.

Healthy Soils: The Foundation of Conservation

BY GENEVIEVE GOSS, UPPER JAMES PROGRAM DIRECTOR



Like you, we at VCC love the land! Conserving the farms, forests, and open spaces of the greater Shenandoah Valley region requires a broad vision of sustainability. Our mission of land conservation encompasses aspects such as riparian buffers to guard water quality, protection of wildlife habitat, and preservation of prime agricultural soils. With much of the world's soil labeled as moderately to highly-degraded, we recognize the inherent value of healthy resilient soil in producing nutritious and abundant crops, filtering and buffering water, and storing vast quantities of carbon and other minerals.

As you work, walk, ride, or watch the warming soil of a Virginia spring, consider that a few grams of healthy topsoil contain billions of bacteria, fungi, and other microbes. How best to protect that living and life-giving entity? Look to the old Hippocratic Oath and "first, do no harm", by avoiding erosion, aggressive tilling, over-fertilizing, monoculture, and the use of harmful pesticides. Then, embrace practices that protect the soil's structure, organic matter, and resilience. Seek guidance from agencies, organizations, and local educational outreach for ways to institute these practices on your own land, knowing that every inch of topsoil took centuries to form. Conserve your land, help others learn about land conservation opportunities, and continue to support VCC in its land conservation efforts.

For more information, reach out to your local soil and water conservation district, or the Natural Resources Conservation Service of the USDA. Their website is full of great videos and articles explaining best practices for soil stewards.

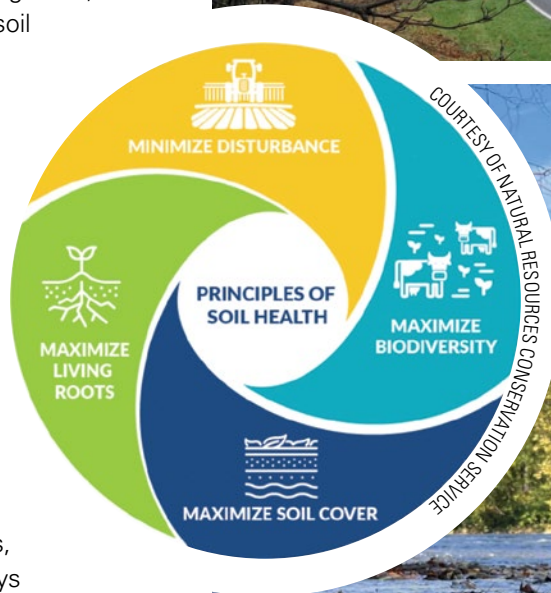
www.nrcs.usda.gov/conservation-basics/natural-resource-concerns/soil



Natural Bridge



Skyline Drive



Rocky beach at Seven Bends State Park



VCC is out and about this Spring!

VCC has quite a few events planned for the upcoming months! As a local land trust, it is important to us to engage with the communities we serve. Conservation doesn't happen without a strong community of support, and we're proud to be a part of one that believes in creating resilient spaces and celebrating our natural systems.

Rain Barrel Workshop

**March 25, 10am to 2pm,
Eagle Rock Library, Botetourt**

VCC is partnering with Mountain Castles Soil and Water Conservation District to talk all things rain barrels! If you'd like to know how to begin collecting rainwater or how to get a rain barrel of your own, stop by Eagle Rock Library!

Blacks Run Cleanup

April 15, all day, beginning at 9am, Harrisonburg

Come see VCC staff in Purcell Park as we put our easement sign up on the riparian easement on Blacks Run, participate in the clean-up, and talk about clean water conservation. Purcell Park is our most accessible easement, so we are thrilled about the visibility this sign will bring.

Earth Day Staunton

**April 22, 11am to 3 pm,
Gypsy Hill Park, Staunton**

This year we're popping up at Earth Day Staunton to make wildflower seed bombs and discuss the importance of

Native Plants. We will also be handing out information about programs that can help you finance your own native plant landscaping project.

Hike Series

Our 2023 Hike Series, The Outdoors is for All, is all about helping everyone feel safe and comfortable getting out to enjoy our gorgeous Valley! Some of these hikes are conducted through our new Partner Hikes program, where hikes are coordinated for specific groups and around specific topics! Want a private hike for your organization? Email info@valleyconservation.org to learn more!

Speaking Engagements

**April 18 and May 11, 4pm,
Staunton Library**

Keep an eye out for VCC staff popping up around the Valley to talk conservation, native plants, clean water, and wildlife habitat protection! We will be at the Staunton Library on April 18 to talk about planting native plants and on May 11 to talk about how to spot and manage invasive species!

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Mark Your Calendars and Get Ready to Give!

VCC is participating in the Harrisonburg/ Rockingham Community Foundation's **Great Community Give Day on April 19!** Great Community Give is a day to uplift local nonprofit organizations in Harrisonburg and Rockingham County. If you're looking for a way to support conservation efforts for Earth Day, this is a great opportunity. We're raising funds to help us complete as many easements as possible this year, and to support our growing community programming. Your support goes further during Great Community Give thanks to Power Hours, Prizes, and Rewards—keep an eye out for emails and social media posts for the most up-to-date information, and thanks!



*If you have a group that would be interested in a talk and Q&A about sustainability, conservation, and resiliency; email our Program Coordinator **WREN FRUEH** at wren@valleyconservation.org.*



And if you haven't already, be sure to check out our beautiful new website at valleyconservation.org!



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Redbuds at Shenandoah