



RIVER HERO HOMES

FALL 2026 NEWSLETTER



Dear River Hero Homes Member:

As summertime comes to an end and fall begins, it's a great time to consider adding native plants to your yard. Fall's mild weather will help native plants take root and thrive during next year's growing season.

The general lack of precipitation across the James River watershed this year has tested the resilience of our gardens and landscapes. These dry conditions remind us of the value of native plants, which are adapted to survive the drought conditions we experience in Virginia. Did you know that fall is also the best time of year to plant trees? Planting trees during the fall gives them more time to establish roots before Virginia's hot, often dry summers take hold. Trees help us by:

- Intercepting thousands of gallons of rainwater each year
- Reducing stormwater runoff that pollutes the James River
- Providing shade that cools our communities
- Sequestering carbon from the atmosphere

With these benefits in mind, we organize community tree planting events this time of year and invite you to consider adding a Virginia native tree to your yard this fall. You'll enjoy beautiful fall foliage while also helping to keep our river healthy.

Thank you for doing your part to improve the health of our beloved river. Please consider inviting neighbors, friends, and family members to join you in implementing river-friendly conservation and stewardship practices at home this fall. Our growing community of River Hero Homes has a collective impact that helps keep the James River healthy for generations to come. Thank you for being a James Changer!

Sincerely,

Justin Doyle
Director of Community Conservation



Katy Riley
Community Conservation Manager



RIVER HERO HOMES APPRECIATION EVENT

Sneed's Nursery has supported the River Hero Homes program since its inception by providing members with discounts on plant purchases.

In celebration of the 50th anniversaries of both the James River Association and Sneed's Nursery, our longtime partnership, and our growing community of River Hero Homes members, please join us at the nursery on Saturday, September 26, 2026 for a River Hero Homes member appreciation event. Members are invited to participate in one or more educational workshops intended to empower participants to take river-friendly conservation and stewardship actions at home.

Rain Barrel Workshop: 9:30 am

Staff members will provide instruction on how to assemble and install rain barrels at home. The registration fee for the workshop is \$50 and each registration comes with a 55-gallon drum and an EarthMinded rain barrel kit. Registration required.

Native Plants Workshop: 10:30 am

Each participant will receive a Plant RVA Natives guide as well as a free native plant provided by Sneed's Nursery, while supplies last. Registration required.

Backyard Buffer Workshop: 11:30 am

Learn about riparian buffers and what resources are available to residents interested in restoring the health of riparian areas in their yards. An optional tour of healthy riparian areas in nearby Larus Park will follow the workshop. Registration required.

Sneed's Nursery is located at 8756 W. Huguenot Road, Richmond, Virginia. To register for any of these workshops, visit JamesRiverHero.org.

CONSERVATION TIPS: TREE PLANTING & CARE

We love trees at the James River Association! Trees intercept rainwater and reduce stormwater runoff, add shade to our built environment that helps cool communities, improve air quality, and sequester carbon from our atmosphere. Planting trees is one way to fight climate change locally, and fall is the best time of year to plant them.

TIPS FOR TREE PLANTING AND CARE:

- **Right tree, right place.** Before planting a tree, identify a suitable location in which to plant it and select a species. Consider soil, light, and moisture conditions and select a species, preferably one that is regionally native, that will grow well in the location. Before finalizing your selection, consider the size the tree will be when it reaches maturity. Will it comfortably fit in the space in a few decades?
- **Proper planting yields healthy trees.** Trees that live long, healthy lives are properly planted. The planting hole should be at least twice the width of the tree's root ball and only deep enough so that the tree's root flare (where the roots meet the trunk) sits at ground level. The root flare should not be below ground level. Before placing the tree in the hole and backfilling the hole with soil, be sure to loosen the root ball and remove circling roots by pruning them. Soil should be firmly but not tightly packed.
- **Planting a tree is the beginning of a long-term relationship.** Selecting a tree and planting it is just the beginning of your relationship with it. Caring for the tree in the years after it is planted will ensure it lives a long, healthy life. Properly mulching around the base of trees after they are planted conserves soil moisture, reduces the growth of weeds, and adds nutrients to the soil. Ensure mulch does not touch the trunk of the tree. Young trees should be watered on a weekly basis and pruned every few years to encourage desired growth.



Roll up your sleeves and learn how to properly plant trees with guidance from James River Association staff members this fall! In an effort to expand tree canopy in the City of Richmond, the James River Association is organizing two community tree planting events. For more information or to register to volunteer, visit TheJamesRiver.org or email Katy Riley at kriley@thejamesriver.org.

Join the James River Association for a tree giveaway on Saturday, November 7 at 11:00 am: East End Branch Library in Richmond. This tree giveaway is part of Richmond Tree Week, which is taking place from Sunday, November 1 through Saturday, November 7, 2026. For more information, visit ReforestRichmond.org.

PLANT NATIVE THIS FALL

As fall approaches, it's time to consider adding plants to your yard. Planting regionally native plants in gardens and landscapes is an easy river-friendly conservation practice that can be implemented at home. To learn more about native plants, join us at an upcoming workshop:

- **September 26: Sneed's Nursery (Richmond)**
- **September 26: Lower James River Center (Williamsburg)**
- **October 13: Upper James River Center (Amherst)**



Our native plant workshops are free to attend. Each registration comes with a native plant guide and regionally native plants. To register for a workshop, visit JamesRiverHero.org.

PLANT THIS, NOT THAT



Butterfly bush (*Buddleia davidii*) is an invasive shrub in Virginia, originally introduced from China for its ornamental value. Although commonly recommended to support native butterflies, it does not serve as a host plant for their larvae. It has an aggressive growth habit, invading natural habitats and displacing native plants. Once established, it forms dense, shrubby thickets.

PLANT THIS INSTEAD!



Consider planting buttonbush (*Cephalanthus occidentalis*), an eye-catching native shrub that supports a wide variety of pollinators. This deciduous, perennial shrub prefers moist to wet soil and is tolerant of heat and soil compaction. Buttonbush features unique, pincushion-like white flowers that bloom from June through September. Buttonbush is the larval host for the titan sphinx moth (*Aellopos titan*) and the hydrangea sphinx moth (*Darapsa versicolor*).

Visit PlantVirginiaNatives.org for more information about native plants or consider attending one of the following events:

Plant Native! Festival

Saturday, October 24, 2026, 9:00 am - 1:00 pm

Dorey Park, 2999 Darbytown Road, Henrico, VA

A celebration of native plants, the ecosystems they support, and local organizations working hard to protect our environment.

Sustainable Landscaping Festival

Saturday, November 7, 2026, 10:00 am - 3:00 pm

Huntington Park, 9285 Warwick Boulevard, Newport News, VA

This community-focused event will showcase the power of sustainable landscape practices.

THIRD ANNUAL JAMES RIVER ECOFEST SATURDAY, SEPTEMBER 12, 2026

Join the James River Association for James River EcoFest on Saturday, September 12, at the James A. Buzzard River Education Center in Richmond, Virginia. James River EcoFest is a free public event featuring a marketplace of eco-conscious artisans and vendors, hands-on activities, and inspiration for sustainable living. This year, the event will feature a series of educational programs intended to empower residents of the James River watershed to take river-friendly conservation and stewardship actions at home.

Tree Giveaway: 11:00 am - 3:00 pm

Members of the River Hero Homes program will have an opportunity to select a regionally native tree for their yard. Participants will also be provided with information about trees, including guidance on how to properly plant and care for them.

Tree Walk: 12:00 pm

Participants will tour the grounds of the James A. Buzzard River Education Center as well as nearby Great Shiplock Park and Chapel Island with a James River Association staff member and learn about the benefits of trees. Registration is required.

Rain Barrel Workshop: 1:00 pm

Participants will learn how to assemble and install their own rain barrel at home. The registration fee for the workshop is \$50 and each registration comes with a plastic 55-gallon drum and an EarthMinded rain barrel kit. Registration is required.

Composting Workshop: 2:00 pm

Participants will learn about the benefits of composting, how to start composting at home, and local composting programs available in the Richmond region. Registration is required.

For more information about James River EcoFest, visit TheJamesRiver.org.



16 SOUTH 17TH STREET
SUITE 100
RICHMOND, VA 23219

NONPROFIT
PRESORT
U.S. POSTAGE
PAID
RICHMOND VA
PERMIT 1353

SPONSOR SHOUTOUT:

**RIVER HERO HOMES WOULD
NOT BE POSSIBLE WITHOUT
SUPPORT FROM ALTRIA
GROUP AND DUPONT CLEAR
INTO THE FUTURE.**

**THEIR SUPPORT ALLOWS US
TO PROMOTE CONSERVATION
AND STEWARDSHIP
PRACTICES THAT SUPPORT
A HEALTHY JAMES RIVER.**

CONSERVE WATER AT HOME WITH A RAIN BARREL

Rain barrels are an easy and economical way to conserve water and reduce stormwater runoff at home. Harvested rainwater can be used to water gardens and landscapes. If you don't have a rain barrel and are interested in installing one at home, join us at an upcoming workshop.

- **September 3: Starr Hill Downtown (Charlottesville)**
- **September 12: James River EcoFest (Richmond)**
- **September 15: East End Branch Library (Richmond)**
- **September 24: North Park Library (Henrico)**
- **September 26: Sneed's Nursery (Richmond)**
- **September 26: Lower James River Center (Williamsburg)**
- **October 8: Cunningham Creek Winery (Fluvanna)**
- **October 13: Upper James River Center (Amherst)**
- **October 14: Belmont Branch Library (Richmond)**
- **October 15: Hull Street Branch Library (Richmond)**
- **October 22: James River Brewery (Scottsville)**

Each registration comes with a plastic 55-gallon drum and a DIY rain barrel installation kit. To register for a workshop, visit **JamesRiverHero.org**.