

Project Dogwood: ***A Hundred Year Journey***

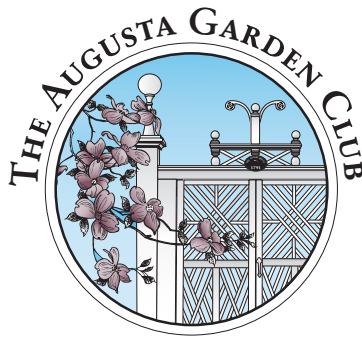
**A Proposal for the
Garden Club of Virginia
Common Wealth Award**

**Presented by The Augusta Garden Club
Staunton, Virginia
March 1, 2018**



Project focus areas: Montgomery Hall Park (above)
and the Stafford Street area of Staunton (below).





PROJECT SUMMARY

Project Dogwood: A Hundred Year Journey

Since its founding in 1919, Augusta Garden Club has planted dogwoods in Staunton along byways, city streets, in parks, and public spaces. In the last five years, we have invested over \$20,000 through grants and club funds to plant over 100 dogwood trees and developed a teaching arboretum focused on seven disease-resistant cultivars. As our centennial approaches in 2019, the Club wishes to continue this project and celebrate Staunton's heritage and diversity by bringing healthy dogwoods to two significant areas of the City.

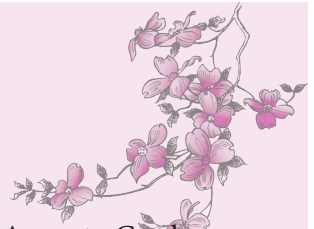
Habitat for Humanity is initiating a "whole neighborhood" approach as it buys homes and lots in a five-block area. Dogwoods will be donated for yards and planned common spaces to beautify and build equity in this formerly blighted area. Habitat will oversee green spaces and work with homeowners on successful care of the trees.

Montgomery Hall Park, one of Virginia's first African-American parks, is experiencing renewed recognition and improvements in facilities. The Club will provide additional dogwoods to enhance the park's manor house and 150 acres of nature trails.

The Common Wealth Award will allow the Club to increase the presence of our state tree by planting over 40 dogwoods in once neglected areas of Staunton.

Project Description:

Project Dogwood – A Hundred Year Journey



Dogwood trees have been a continuing theme throughout the 99-year history of The Augusta Garden Club (AGC). The year after its founding, club minutes record the club's commitment to planting trees along the streets and highways. In 1928, nine years after the club's founding, 228 dogwood trees were planted leading from the Woodrow Wilson Birthplace to Staunton Military Academy.

Seven years later in 1935, City Manager Mr. James Ruff had a vision. He wanted to make Staunton the dogwood capital of Virginia, rivaling Washington, D.C.'s cherry blossom reputation. Mr. Ruff encouraged Stauntonians to plant two dogwoods in their yards, solicited donations from garden and civic clubs, started a municipal nursery, and used jail work crews to provide the labor. By the end of that year, 1,800 dogwood trees had been planted. In 1952, the club contributed 150 additional trees in Woodrow Park, 225 along Coalter Street, and 100 in Gypsy Hill Park totaling 475 dogwood trees. This certainly was progress toward the vision.

Sadly, in the 1980s, the anthracnose infestation devastated dogwoods in Virginia. In the succeeding years, disease resistant cultivars were bred.

Fast forward to 2013-2014 when the AGC developed a three-year partnership with the City of Staunton and the City Horticulturist to plant dogwoods on public land. The club contributed \$7,500 to plant 67 trees in Gypsy Hill Park. With the city securing, planting, and maintaining the trees, this was a win-win collaboration. Without adequate internal funding in 2016, AGC sought local grant opportunities and was funded by the Community Foundation of Central Blue Ridge and Staunton Rotary Club to plant trees in Montgomery Hall Park. Building on this clear indication of local support and added momentum, the AGC applied for the Garden Club of America's Founder's Fund Award and was named a \$10,000 finalist. With a proposed budget of \$30,000, we dreamed big; while thrilled to receive \$10,000, we have unmet goals and want to continue Staunton's dogwood journey.

Presently, the AGC is demonstrating additional internal commitment with Project Dogwood's designation as the club's Signature Project and with the initiation of a 2017-2018 club "member challenge" to plant dogwoods on private land in yards and businesses. In anticipation of its 2019 centennial and goal of including Project Dogwood related initiatives, the Augusta Garden Club is seeking support through the Garden Club of Virginia's Common Wealth Award.

The dogwood was designated Virginia's state flower in 1918 and state tree in 1956. It must regain its high visibility in our state. The Augusta Garden Club is mindful that it should be enjoyed by all citizens.

Our current focus is to celebrate Staunton's heritage as well as diversity, and Project Dogwood accomplishes this in several ways. We recently learned that our local Habitat for Humanity is moving away from building individual homes to restoring whole neighborhoods. Habitat has a four-year strategic plan through 2021 to restore five city blocks in Staunton. The Stafford Street neighborhood is sandwiched between Newtown, the city's oldest residential historic district, and another neighborhood that is experiencing visible private investment in property updating. This Stafford Street area is an older neighborhood prime for historic rehabilitation.

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Rather than erecting additional unadorned “cracker box” houses, Habitat is now committed to restoring the architectural fabric of existing homes or designing new homes to complement those historic homes across the street. Preserving details including porches, roof brackets, flooring, and doors assures that homes relate to the character of the neighborhood and owners can enjoy the richness of Staunton’s heritage. Habitat will work with owners over time to make sure they manage their resources successfully and retain ownership of their homes. In addition, the organization will contribute a lawn package of tools and guidance on watering to enable homeowners to meet maintenance expectations. Common Wealth Award dogwoods in their yards would enhance the landscape, add to their pride of ownership, and increase equity value. The AGC is excited about this potential new partnership and the possibility of seeing this redeveloped neighborhood enhanced with dogwood trees on individual properties, along sidewalks, and in communal green spaces.

Another part of our heritage and diversity effort is the 150-acre Montgomery Hall Park, initially a plantation and then one of the first African-American parks in Virginia. The original manor house is now home to the Staunton Augusta County African-American Research Society. We hope to continue planting dogwoods there to enhance the park’s beautiful natural setting.

Culminating this project is our plan for an illustrated children’s book capturing the enchanting story of Mr. Ruff’s vision for dogwoods in Staunton and the 250 years of dogwood history in Virginia.

The Augusta Garden Club has almost a hundred years of hands-on experience with dogwoods. As we contemplate our centennial in 2019, we hope to cap off our celebration with more dogwoods. We enthusiastically share this compelling story and seek Common Wealth Award funding to continue the vision into our second century. The Common Wealth Award highlights the “wealth” that is “common” to all Virginians; we believe the state flower and tree, the dogwood, rises to the occasion.



Project Dogwood
PROPOSED BUDGET



SECTION 1: <i>This reflects contributions received from the Augusta Garden Club, city & grants to fund planting in 2014-18.</i>		
Income Disbursed 2014 through 2018	Source	Amount
Purchase of 67 dogwood trees (2014-2016)	Augusta Garden Club	7,500.00
Trees purchased with donated funds (2014-16)	Local citizens & Staunton Parks & Rec Dept.	1,615.00
In-kind contribution for research, selection & ordering of trees plus labor & materials for pick-up & delivery of 67 trees, planting, mulching, stem guards, extended watering (2014-16)	Staunton Horticulturist & Parks & Rec Dept.	19,280.00
Grant received for purchase of trees (2017)	Community Foundation	2,000.00
Grant received for purchase of trees (2017)	Rotary Club	500.00
In-kind contribution for research, selection & ordering of trees plus labor & materials for pick-up & delivery of 16 trees, planting, mulching, stem guards, extended watering (2017)	Staunton Parks & Rec Dept.	3,856.00
Founders Fund finalist award (2017) disbursed on trees, education & signage (Requested \$30,000; budget partially funded)	Garden Club of America	10,000.00
TOTAL		\$44,751.00
SECTION 2: <i>This details implementation of Project Dogwood in spring 2019 if enabled by a Common Wealth Award.</i>		
Proposal	Common Wealth Award	
Purchase of 33 dogwoods - 2" caliper trunks	Habitat for Humanity	6,500.00
Purchase of 10 dogwoods - 2" caliper trunks	Montgomery Hall Park	2,000.00
Staking & tree guards, labor to plant & mulch, watering plus on-going maintenance of trees	In-kind contribution from City of Staunton, Habitat for Humanity	0.00
Seed money for design of book about dogwoods		1,750.00
TOTAL		\$10,250.00

APPLICATION DETAILS

Project Name: Project Dogwood – A Hundred Year Journey

Project Address: Staunton, VA

Proposing Club: Augusta Garden Club

Address/Contact: Karen Santos, 45 Edgewood Road, Staunton, VA 24401



Geographical Location

Public city park land in Montgomery Hall Park and Stafford Street neighborhood. Both areas are in the west end of Staunton.

Approximate Acreage or Size

150 acres in Montgomery Hall Park and five city blocks in Stafford Street neighborhood

Approximate Number of Annual Visitors

Staunton is a city of 24,000 and based on Office of Tourism estimates the city has over 500,000 annual visitors. It has become a destination for visitors who want to enjoy a bucolic, history-rich experience. Residents and visitors actively use the eight parks; thus restoring dogwoods in Staunton will be appreciated by many people.

How would additional funds be secured if needed?

Project Dogwood is now in its fifth year. For the first three years, the Augusta Garden Club's contributions averaged \$2,500 per year. Reaching outside the Club for project funds, grants from the Community Foundation of the Blue Ridge and The Staunton Rotary Club provided \$2,500. In the fifth year, a \$10,000 Founders Fund Award from the Garden Club of America carried the project forward. This year the club has challenged each of its members to plant at least one dogwood tree and we hope to expand this to a community-wide challenge in the near future. The club is committed to fundraising and seeking additional future grants to make Staunton the Dogwood Capital of Virginia.

How will project be maintained?

As noted in Mayor Dull's letter of support, the city is strongly committed to the public-private partnership to continue Project Dogwood. City horticulturist Matt Sensabaugh has been an integral part of our effort and will continue to be involved in planting and nurturing dogwoods on public property. Habitat for Humanity will educate and oversee home-owner's stewardship of the trees. The AGC's annual report for 1928-29 noted that, "We replaced 32 dogwood trees in our avenue of dogwoods." The club was ten years old at the time. Now as we approach our centennial in 2019, we have officially designated Project Dogwood as our "signature project." We are committed to planting dogwoods into the future.

How will the community be affected by the project?

Dogwoods will charm people with their beauty, filter air pollution and produce oxygen to promote good health, improve property values and soften the stresses of everyday life. An educational book about dogwoods will capture the vision and expand the horizons of children and adults. Virginia's state tree and flower will flourish into the future.

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APPLICATION DETAILS

continued

How will the project relate to the focus of The GCV: Horticulture, Education, Conservation, Historic Preservation, Civic Contribution, Research and/or Beautification?

The Augusta Garden Club *Project Dogwood* relates to all areas of focus of the Garden Club of Virginia as noted below:

Horticulture: Planting dogwood trees in Habitat's designated Stafford Street neighborhood and working with new homeowners on their cultivation is the very definition of horticulture as the art of growing plants and restoring landscapes. Trees will be chosen based on proven hearty varieties from our successful living laboratory of disease resistant dogwood cultivars. Habitat's inclusion of common green space will enhance the neighborhood.

Education: We will explore creating an illustrated children's book that addresses the Mr. Ruff story of his vision to create a city full of dogwoods. This book will be a combination of the compelling story of Mr. Ruff (city manager in 1935) with beautiful images along with a section featuring factual information related to the dogwood. This will address Virginia Standard of Learning curriculum objectives across multiple grade levels and subject areas including science and history. Children and adults alike will find this an informative story.

Conservation: 80% of Virginia's dogwoods have been wiped out by disease. Project Dogwood is dedicated to restoring, protecting and caring for our iconic state tree.

Civic Contribution: Non-profit and private funding are responsible for Project Dogwood and the placement of these beautiful trees on public lands including local schools and parks. The Augusta Garden Club proposes to increase the number of dogwoods in Montgomery Hall Park. The AGC's landscaping investment in Habitat's Stafford Street neighborhood will improve property values, homeowners' equity and the neighborhood aesthetic.

Historic Preservation: Montgomery Hall Park was recently listed on the Virginia Landmarks Register and is recognized for its significant connection to African-American history. Project Dogwood trees on the grounds will further enhance the grounds of this historic African-American park for all citizens. In the Stafford Street area, Habitat for Humanity's rehabilitation of the historic homes and improving surrounding property landscape and public green spaces will preserve the character and help to hasten the renaissance of this older Staunton neighborhood.

Research: Early in our Project Dogwood development, the AGC worked closely with the City horticulturist to determine which dogwood cultivars would be disease and fungus resistant in the Staunton area. The seven chosen cultivars are showcased in two living laboratories, one in each large city park, and are all flourishing after several years of growth. This research is critical to the viability of expanding Project Dogwood to new areas.

Beautification: The dogwood trees proposed for Montgomery Hall Park and Habitat's Stafford Street neighborhood bring year-round beauty and improve physical and psychological health through recreation and social interaction. With striking spring blooms, dark foliage in the summer, colorful leaves in the fall, and silhouetted buds in winter, dogwoods provide visual enjoyment all year.

PHOTOGRAPHS:

Habitat for Humanity Stafford Street Neighborhood Improvement Site



HABITAT BEFORE...17 year old houses representing former Habitat for Humanity concept of “house on a lot.” These do not architecturally match the neighborhood nor do they have landscaping.



Examples of houses in the Stafford Street neighborhood have architectural details that can and will be preserved with this new approach.

PHOTOGRAPHS:

Habitat for Humanity Stafford Street Neighborhood Improvement Site



HABITAT NOW...Older homes can be carefully preserved and lots enhanced with dogwood trees.



A critical component will be carefully designed green space within the five-block Stafford Street neighborhood. New houses in keeping with neighborhood will be constructed on empty lots or on lots of buildings that cannot be saved.

PHOTOGRAPHS:
Montgomery Hall Park



The 1947 Montgomery Hall Park was one of the first African-American parks in the Virginia. Dogwoods would enhance the original manor house which is now home to Parks and Recreation as well as the Staunton Augusta County African-American Research Society.

