

# Rivanna Master Naturalists Go Native

*Creating Habitat, Protecting Water Quality and Enhancing Appreciation of Native Plants*

***RMN Volunteers are actively involved in the design, planting and maintenance of many native plant gardens and buffers in our area.***

The inventory of these gardens and natural areas is expanding significantly every year.

***The native plant gardens have a number of goals.*** They include creating habitat, protecting water quality and developing broader understanding of the role of native plants in the health of our natural environment, not to mention the beauty these areas bring to our landscapes!

***RMN volunteers work with schools, local governments, state agencies and a host of non-profit partners to create and maintain these natural areas.*** Generally, partner organizations take the lead and ask for RMN help in installing and maintaining the gardens and buffers, but our members often play a major role in helping partners design the gardens and select the plants as well.

***Many of our local schools are creating native plant gardens.*** This, along with creating kitchen gardens, is helping children learn about what it takes to sustain wildlife and grow our own food. Attracting butterflies is always exciting too!

***Local governments in our area are becoming increasingly focused on the value of natural plants in protecting our streams, managing storm-water and sustaining wildlife.*** Albemarle County has created a Piedmont Virginia Native Plant Web Database to support public and private efforts to use native plants: <http://www.albemarle.org/nativeplants>. Check it out.

***Volunteer efforts have reached beyond our immediate area.*** They include native tree planting and seed collection in Shenandoah National Park and helping launch the Mid-Atlantic Regional Seed Bank for native seed collection (<http://www.marsb.org>) with other east coast partners. These are part of larger regional and national efforts to preserve and plant native species.



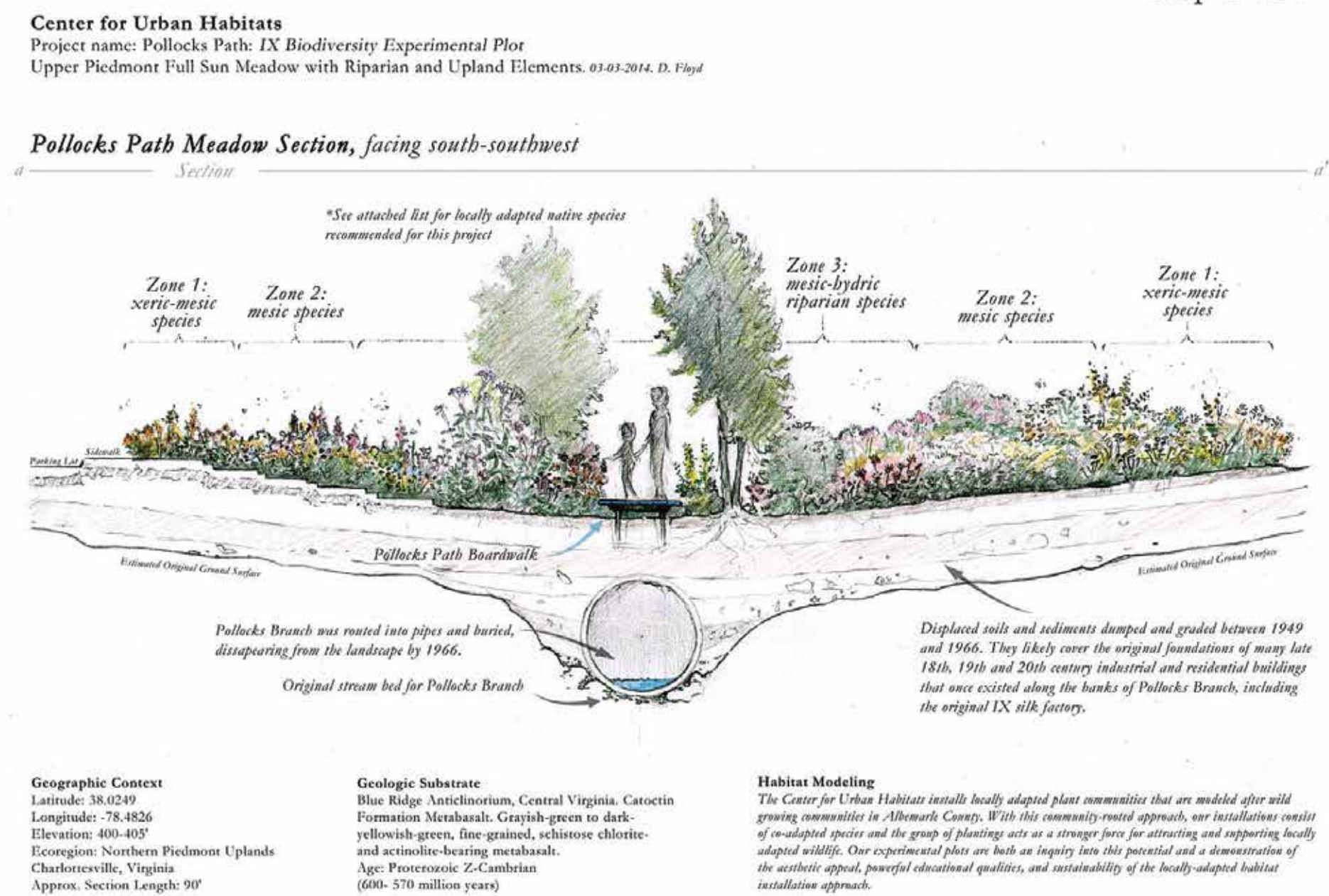
# Ix Park Ecosystem Installation: Center for Urban Habitats

Rivanna Master Naturalist graduate Devin Floyd has founded the Center for Urban Habitats (CUH) in Charlottesville. The Center's mission is to advance understanding of biodiversity and natural history in the Charlottesville area by installing and monitoring experimental plots that exemplify local native plant and animal ecosystems. CUH is currently installing a large native plant community on a former industrial site in the heart of downtown Charlottesville. RMN and other volunteers are helping the Center with this effort.

The installation at the IX Park is happening at the site of a buried stream that was once the heart of a vibrant ecosystem. A meandering walking path was designed using stream flow geometry and it courses through the native ecosystem and traces the long lost footprint of Pollock's Branch, which now runs through an underground pipe.

When the meadow is completed it will contain more than 5,000 locally adapted native plants of more than 100 species. The site will convert roughly 12,000 square feet of neglected urban industrial space (surrounded by businesses, a parking lot and residences) to a vibrant ecosystem teeming with wildlife.

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The plants were chosen as a community of interrelated species, rather than as a collection of specimens. This project involves more than just putting native plants in the ground. It replicates plant and wildlife communities for a broader ecosystem approach. A variety of wildlife is already being drawn to the site. Pollinating insects, birds, reptiles, amphibians and mammals are benefiting from the diversity of local milkweeds, mountain mints, asters, goldenrods, eupatoriums, and other plants that have been installed.



Native plants have replaced a non-productive urban site awaiting redevelopment. Shrubs and trees like swamp dogwood, serviceberry, persimmon, sumac and dwarf hackberry serve to provide additional habitat diversity where remnants of the industrial past of the site were once the dominant feature. The IX Park has been designated a Certified Habitat by the Virginia Department of Game and Inland Fisheries.



To learn more about the Center for Urban Habitats' approach to the design and installation of native plant communities, visit: <http://www.facebook.com/CenterForUrbanHabitats> or email Devin at [devin.floyd@gmail.com](mailto:devin.floyd@gmail.com)

The Center was featured during PBS's Virginia Home Grown program on August 26, 2014. The show is available at: <http://video.ideastations.org/video/2365315871>

# Master Naturalists and Partners at Work

*New native gardens and landscapes are being created all the time — is there one near you?*

## **Some of the Native Planting Projects Rivanna Master Naturalists Have Helped Create and Maintain.....**

### **Bog Garden at Washington Park**

partners: Albemarle Garden Club, Piedmont Master Gardeners, and Charlottesville Department of Parks and Recreation



### **Butterfly Garden at Ivy Creek Natural Area**

partners: Piedmont Garden Club, Piedmont Master Gardeners and Ivy Creek Foundation



### **Clark School Native Plant Garden**

partners: Clark School, Charlottesville City School Yard Garden Program, Center for Urban Habitats and Thomas Jefferson Soil and Water Conservation District



### **Crozet Elementary School Rain and Streamside Gardens**

partners: Crozet Elementary School, Albemarle County Schools



### **Ix Property Ecosystem Installation**

lead partner: Center for Urban Habitats



### **Loft Mountain Native Planting and Seed Collecting**

partner: Shenandoah National Park



### **Monarch Garden at Burnley Moran School**

partner: Charlottesville City Schools



### **Mid-Atlantic Regional Seed Bank (MARSB)**

partners: New York City Department of Parks and Recreation, National Fish and Wildlife Foundation, and others



### **Piedmont Virginia Community College Native Plant Garden**

partners: PVCC and Albemarle County



### **Quarry Park Native Plant Buffer**

partners: Rivanna Conservation Society, Charlottesville Department of Parks and Recreation, U. VA Batten School, Peace Lutheran Church

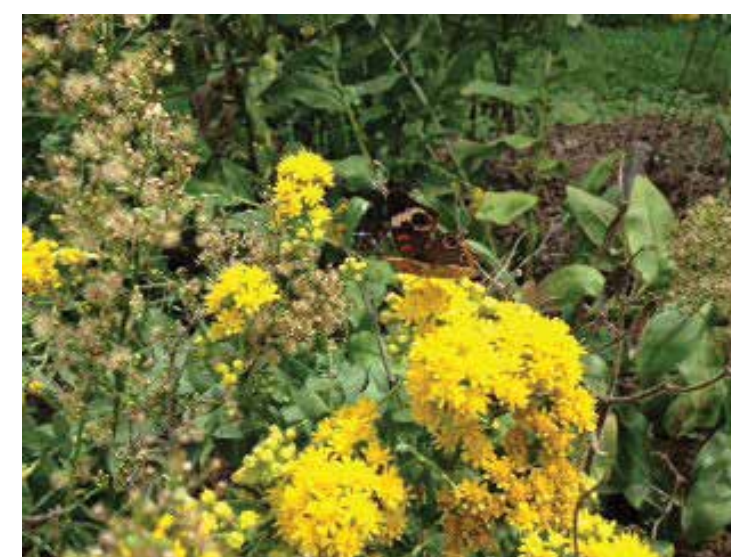


### **Virginia Cooperative Extension (VCE) Native Plant Garden at Albemarle County Office Building**

partners: VCE and Albemarle County

### **Visitors to Ivy Creek Natural Area Learn About Butterfly Habitat.**

The Ivy Creek Natural Area is a 215 acre preserve adjacent to the Rivanna Reservoir in Albemarle County Virginia. Managed by the Ivy Creek Foundation, the preserve includes a mix of upland woods, pine stands, and open fields and streams that make it an ideal location to learn about the natural history and wildlife in Central Virginia. The Piedmont Garden Club, in partnership with the Piedmont Master Gardeners, Rivanna Master Naturalists and the Ivy Creek Foundation, has established and maintains a butterfly garden at Ivy Creek. The garden is located next to Ivy Creek's Education Building and is an easy stop for people attending seasonal butterfly identification walks offered by Ivy Creek and those just out for a nature walk. A sign installed at the edge of the garden talks about "What Butterflies Need," adding an extra educational component to the garden.



### **Clark School Garden Introduces Children to the Value of Native Plants.**

Clark Elementary School in Charlottesville has installed a native plant garden adjacent to their school vegetable garden. The gardens are used to help children learn about how native plants can serve as food for a variety of kinds of birds, insects and other wildlife in the midst of an urban neighborhood and where our food comes from. Master Naturalist members worked with school volunteers and the Center for Urban Habitats to create the native plant garden.



### **Moore's Creek Native Buffer Helps Keep Our Water Clean.**

In Quarry Park in Charlottesville, Rivanna Conservation Society (RCS), the City of Charlottesville's Department of Parks and Recreation, Rivanna Master Naturalists and other volunteers have planted native trees and grasses in a buffer area adjacent to Moore's Creek, a tributary of the Rivanna River.

Over 100 native trees and an assortment of native grasses were used to create the Moore's Creek buffer. Tree species included river birch and oak. Native plants included: Virginia wild rye, switchgrass, indian woodoats, and mountain mint. The planting was done in a quarter acre, 40 foot buffer area to slow run-off and absorb nutrients, sediment and other pollutants that would otherwise flow into the creek.

An ongoing plan is in place to support the growth of the native trees and preserve the integrity of the site. RCS, Rivanna Master Naturalists and the City of Charlottesville have worked with volunteers from the University of Virginia Batten School of Leadership and Public Policy and Peace Lutheran Church to cull fast growing invasives threatening to overtake the newly planted trees.

