

Brief: Preserving Trees in McLean

McLean Trees Foundation plants, maintains trees at Lewinsville Park.

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Volunteers for the McLean Trees Foundation, from left, Alan Denko, Merrily Pierce and Margo Dunn.

Volunteers for the McLean Trees Foundation (MTF) honored Mother's Day and Mother Earth by edging, mulching and pruning 30 trees along Chain Bridge Road in Lewinsville Park in McLean. Three native Fringe Trees were also planted. The

trees mark the entrance to Lewinsville Park and provide an important natural gateway to the business and residential community of McLean.

“The average life span of a tree in an urban environment is less than 10 years due to stress factors; long-term tree care is critical to the health of trees,” said Joyce Harris, chairman of the McLean Trees Foundation (MTF). “Trees can't escape when they are weak or stressed. We have the responsibility—as a community—to keep an eye on them, to help protect them, and to keep them healthy.”



Photo by Joyce Harris

New and established Fringe Trees at Lewinsville Park in McLean.

Ed Busenlehner, manager of Area I for the Fairfax County Park Authority, agrees. “Many groups approach us to plant trees in our parks, but it is rare for them to follow up with continued maintenance. I'm glad that the McLean Trees Foundation plants trees and provides long-term care,” said Busenlehner. “It

helps the Park Authority and is a good thing for McLean as well.”

“Simply mulching trees helps to keep them healthy,” said Alan Denko, a tree steward, master naturalist and new member of the MTF board. “Mulching will conserve moisture, improve soil conditions, and help prevent damage from lawn mowers and weed trimmers.”

THROUGHOUT THE YEAR, MTF identifies tree-planting projects in McLean and recruits volunteers of all ages to participate in these projects, which are held in the spring and fall. Businesses, civic

groups, homeowner associations, churches, schools, Scouts and other volunteer organizations are encouraged to participate.

“We could not provide any follow-up maintenance for trees if it were not for our volunteers,” said Eric Simpson, a McLean businessman, MTF board member and project organizer. “We really appreciate the folks who came out today to help us care for trees, but we need more groups and businesses to step forward and lend a hand.”

In the last year, several trees along Chain Bridge Road in Lewinsville Park were damaged by storms. “We have replaced these trees with three native Fringe Trees (*Chionanthus virginicus*), which seem to do quite well at this site,” said Simpson.

Considered to be one of Thomas Jefferson’s favorites, the Fringe Tree is 12 to 20 feet high at maturity and has an open habit. It adapts to many types of soil and is pollution-tolerant. In the wild, Fringe Trees occur along stream banks, borders of swamps, or as an understory tree in the woods.

FRINGE TREE FLOWERS are slightly fragrant and hang on the tree like fringe.



Photo by Joyce Harris

Fringe Tree flowers

The tree is also known as “Old Man’s Beard” because some observers believe the long, white, fleecy flowers resemble a beard of an old man. “Fringe Trees flowered just in time for McLean Day, so residents could see them in all their glory,” said Janet Gale, a new board member for MTF and another volunteer helping to care for the Lewinsville Park trees. “It is easy to plant a tree, but keeping it alive takes close monitoring, dedication and hard work. Trees need our help,” said Gale.

Merrily Pierce, co-chair of the Environment, Parks, and Recreation Committee of the McLean Citizens Association and a MTF volunteer, added, “It’s nice that people are thinking about trees again.”