

Unison Preservation Society

NEWSLETTER

Working to Protect and Preserve our Historic Village and Countryside

Lazy Dog Farm
wildflower meadow.

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•Tenth Anniversary Issue.

UNISON, VIRGINIA

Ten years ago in the spring of 2013, the first issue of the Unison Preservation Society's newsletter was released and has appeared in neighborhood mailboxes three to four times every year since then. The newsletters have covered everything from the history of the Unison area, to important local developments affecting our community, and the work of some of our talented neighbors. UPS hopes that you have found the newsletters over these years useful, and maybe even enjoyable, in keeping track of what is going on in our community.

DIY Meadow Making in Unison

By Sandy Wilson

You have to hand it to Mother Nature: there are few things more sublime than a wildflower meadow. Having fully embraced the trend toward a more naturalistic style of gardening, I'm one of many gardeners in recent years who has tried to create her own slice of meadow heaven.

It all sounds so easy. The instructions are right there on the side of the can: Mark off an area in your garden, get rid of the weeds, sow some seeds and voila—a beautiful meadow is sure to follow. If only it were that simple.

Our good friends Howard and Flip Lewis, who garden at Lazy Dog Farm in Bloomfield, have tried their hand at creating wildflower meadows from seed in two locations on their property. My husband Bob and I have also tried several different approaches to meadow making at our farmhouse just outside Unison. Here are some important lessons we've collectively learned along the way.

1. Understand what you're getting into.

One thing we've all underestimated is the ongoing commitment required to successfully establish a wildflower meadow. Meadow making in the Virginia Piedmont

is NOT like that old denture cream commercial, "Just Fixadent and forget it." Our consistently moist climate and often fertile soils make a natural wildflower meadow a rare occurrence in these parts. Left to its own devices, open space will revert to woodlands over time.

And while Nature is waiting for all those trees to grow up, the weeds will go wild. I can step away from a well-tended garden for just a few weeks in the middle of a hot, wet summer and return to weeds that tower over my head. It turns out that the same environmental conditions that



Summertime at Sandy Wilson's garden attracts butterflies and feeds essential pollinators.



Spring—Summer—Fall, our most successful effort so far. We used landscape plugs and plants to start, with lots of self-seeding after initial installation.

support the growth of majestic trees also support the growth of majestic weeds.

This means that any meadow planting you undertake will require consistent intervention to be successful. Although it ultimately will require less maintenance (on a per square foot basis) than a traditional perennial bed, don't buy the hype that installing a wildflower meadow is a "no maintenance" form of landscaping. Meadow making is a form of gardening, plain and simple.

2. Select your site carefully and don't skimp on site preparation. Howard and Flip stress that meadow gardening requires the patience of Job. It's critical to be thorough when clearing your site of existing vegetation before planting. You also must anticipate all the weeds that are just waiting to sprout from the many seeds in your soil. And let's not forget the weeds that are constantly being blown (or dropped) in by the wind or little critters.

This is a process that takes many months

at best, or maybe several years (especially if you don't want to use herbicides to move things along). For this reason alone, we all agree that picking a location in your yard where you won't mind seeing bare earth or black plastic for a while makes sense. And don't over-extend yourself by clearing an area that is larger than you can reasonably manage.

3. Pick the right plants. Creating the right mix of plants for a wildflower garden is a science unto itself. There are plenty of companies that sell seed mixes and plants for meadows, but it's important to pick a mix that is suited to the Virginia Piedmont and not, say, upper Wisconsin.

I'd add that using Virginia natives does not automatically guarantee success. You have to be mindful of the cultural conditions of your particular site. A dry shade lover isn't going to make it in a wet, sunny spot, native or not.

4. Consider the blend. While we're all visually drawn to the flowers in a meadow planting, don't overlook another critical building block: grasses and sedges. Make sure you include enough of these unsung heroes, which will help anchor the planting and smother weeds.

The same goes for using short-lived annual/biennial wildflowers vs. long-lived perennials. The annuals and biennials will give you quick visual firepower but tend to die out after a few years. Perennials take a while to mature but will help ensure the longevity of your planting.

You'll also want to consider the natural competitiveness of your plant selections,

Music on the Porch Starts Thursday, May 25

Mark your calendars! Our 2023 Music on the Porch series kicks off Thursday, May 25 at 6:30 pm featuring music from local favorites Amy and Jamie Potter of the Crooked Angels! From May through September, these concerts will be held on the third Thursday of the month, weather permitting. Please make sure we have your current email address, by sending it to events@unisonpreservation.org, so that we can keep you informed of event dates and any last minute cancellations or rescheduling. And please join us on May 25 for the first of this year's Music on the Porch. Bring a picnic, visit with your friends and neighbors and listen to some great music!



particularly if there are lots of invasives in your area. I've found the old adage "the best defense is a strong offense" helpful when choosing meadow garden plants. You might not plant a native with aggressive tendencies in a traditional perennial bed, but it might be just the ticket for battling invasives in your meadow.

5. Use some landscape plugs in addition to seeds. As Howard and Flip can attest, you can do a great job of site prep and still face challenges growing your meadow completely from seed. Plugs of perennials establish faster than perennials grown from seed, and they're more readily identifiable. Indeed, one of the hardest things about growing everything from seed is that you must be able to tell the difference between a desired seedling and an undesired seedling (i.e., a weed). Identifying a plug that you've planted is a much easier task.

6. Think about the planting's surroundings. One easy oversight when planning a meadow garden is focusing so much on the planting itself that you forget to check out what's going on nearby. For one meadow style planting, I thought it would be neat to have it transition to a truly wild, unmanaged area. Bad idea: in no time, I was overwhelmed by weed seedlings that had blown in from the adjacent wild patch. Howard and Flip wisely cleared a "moat" around their meadow planting which has helped cut down on unwanted intruders.

7. Have a strategy for cutting it all down. I really love to keep my naturalistic plantings standing over the winter, both for visual interest and to serve as habitat for over-wintering wildlife. Unfortunately, heavy rainfall in one summer can lead to super-lush vegetation, which can lead to a bumper crop of voles, which can lead to major devastation of your planting. I now do some editing throughout the winter to make sure that I'm not unintentionally creating a vole haven. This approach is more time consuming than simply attacking everything with a weed-whacker come spring. But, once again, a little well-timed intervention on my part helps nudge the planting in the right direction.

Of the seven preceding "rules", the second one is the most important—site preparation. Without doing a good job on that, you will be fighting an uphill battle. ■

Unison Village Receiving Life Saving Equipment

By John Woulfe



Thanks to the Philomont Volunteer Fire Department, an automated external defibrillator (AED) will be located outside the Unison Store for use by our community and visitors. The Philomont Volunteer Fire Department has donated the AED to the Unison Preservation Society (UPS).

The AED is a life-saving device used for individuals experiencing sudden cardiac arrest. It can analyze the heart's rhythm and, if necessary, deliver an electrical shock, or defibrillation, to help the heart re-establish an effective rhythm.

Sudden cardiac arrest is among the leading causes of death in the United States. More than 350,000 people will suffer a cardiac arrest this year. Currently, the only way to restore a regular heart rhythm during cardiac arrest is to use an AED.

On average, it can take as much as 10-12 minutes for Fire/EMS equipment and personnel from the Philomont station to arrive in the Unison area for an emergency. To improve the chances of survival, bystander CPR and earlier access to an AED are essential. By having an AED available at the Unison Store, any resident or visitor can access and assist in starting rapid defibrillation before Fire/EMS personnel arrive. For each minute defibrillation is delayed, the odds of survival are reduced by approximately 10%, and having access to an AED and knowing how to use one, is critical.

In past years, our area experienced a few cardiac emergencies that prompted a response from the Philomont Fire Station.

One incident ended up being a sudden cardiac arrest with the resident not surviving. With the intervention of CPR and access to an AED from the store, the chances of survival rate from these types of incidents could improve.

Also, the village is an attraction for visitors learning about the historical battlefields and riding their bikes throughout the area. At least two formal bike events bring cyclists into the area annually. The Unison Store is a central stopping point for these events and could be promoted as an AED site.

Residents within the village can access the store on foot within three minutes while driving about six minutes from the outskirts—plenty of time to start early defibrillation and increase the chance of survival.

As part of the AED donation, the Philomont Volunteer Fire Department is offering several free community training sessions that will cover the basics of CPR and the use of the AED (schedule TBD). This will be a 1-1/2 hour class that will be held at the Store. An announcement for the training will be coming shortly.

This endeavor would be the first of its kind for Loudoun County and is supported by the Loudoun County Fire Rescue Department. It will serve as a great opportunity to promote the community and fire department working together to improve the quality of life for this section of Loudoun County. ■

John Woulfe lives in the village, is a member of the Ashburn Fire Station, and was instrumental in getting the Unison Store's AED. He is also an EMT and knows how to use it.



What a Ride!

A unique auction item in Heritage Day last fall was a ride for two lucky school children from their home to their school in a Philomont Volunteer Fire Department (PVFD) fire truck. Henry and Tommy Corr and their grandfather Rick Thomas, took the ride on May 1. The ride also included a guided tour of the fire engine for Henry's classmates by PVFD Chief Rick Pearsall.





Unison Preservation Society Newsletter

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How to Support the Unison Preservation Society (UPS):

UPS depends upon contributions from people living in our community who want to preserve our historic village and the countryside surrounding it. Since the UPS is a not-for-profit 501(c)(3) corporation registered in Virginia, all contributions are tax deductible. Contributions should be made to the Unison Preservation Society and sent to the post office box listed above.

Ideas for Newsletter Articles:

We are particularly interested in gathering material about Unison for future UPS newsletters. If you have ideas for newsletter stories, please e-mail us at unisonnewsletter22@gmail.com



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Conservation Easement in Loudoun County—2023 vs. 2013

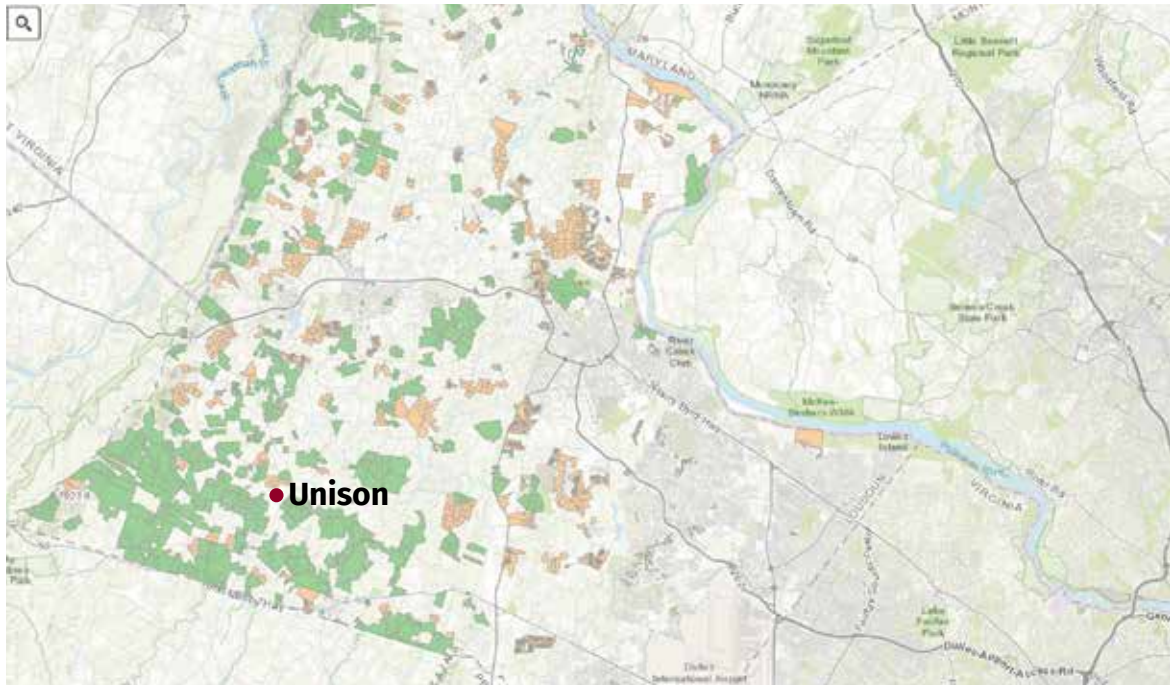
By Howard Lewis

The first UPS newsletter ten years ago included an article on conservation easement. In subsequent newsletters, there have been around half a dozen additional articles on this subject so we won't go into a detailed discussion of conservation easement here, but we thought it would be interesting to have a quick update on where things stand in 2023 versus 2013.

Ten years ago, 51,000 acres, or slightly over 15 percent, of the 520 square miles of land that make up Loudoun County were in conservation easement. Today, according to the County, almost 68,000 acres are in private conservation easements, with another 7,000 set aside in development easements

given to builders as part of zoning applications, which brings the total to 75,000 acres. So, 22 percent of the land in Loudoun County is now in conservation easement compared to 15 percent ten years ago.

But what does this mean for people living around Unison? The green areas on the map show the location of private conservation easements throughout the County while the tan represent development easements. The southwestern corner of Loudoun is covered in green. This is one of the highest concentrations of easements in the entire United States and Unison sits in the middle of it. ■



Permanent Conservation Easements of Loudoun County as of January 2023. Map courtesy of Loudoun County Office of Mapping and Geographic Information.

Would You Like to Stay Informed?

If you would like to learn more about what the Unison Preservation Society is doing for you, please make sure you are on our mail and email lists so you don't miss any important announcements and special events in and around Unison. Contact us at events@unisonpreservation.org. We would love to hear from you!