

## HMC Announcements: Tree Project Update

On April 15, Harrisonburg Mennonite Church congregation planted over four hundred trees on the church grounds as a project to create a Garden of Trees on the hilltop campus. The workday brought together congregation members, including youth, community members, and community children, of the Wednesday evening 'Kids Club.'

HMC responded to the MCUSA Mennonite Men's JoinTrees initiative and received a grant to launch the project. MCUSA JoinTrees Initiative aspires to plant 1 million trees in this decade. More information on the initiative can be found at this link: [JoinTrees \(mennonitemen.org\)](http://JoinTrees(mennonitemen.org))

The HMC tree planting goals are to create a bio-diverse campus of native plants, reduce fossil fuel consumption from lawn mowing, create a place for prayer, meditation, fellowship, and land recreation, sequester carbon and mitigate surface water runoff, trap and increase soil moisture retention for the benefit of the community environment.

Despite a dry summer, a high percentage of the trees are thriving and beginning to grow out of the tree protectors. The non-survivors will be replaced in the fall. Though it may appear to be close spacings, the trees are placed in clusters of tree varieties including understory trees and bushes to create a wide variety of color, pollinators, and wildlife food. The varieties include yellow poplar, red maple, red, white and chestnut oaks, shortleaf and Virginia pines, black gum, sweet gum, paw-paw, persimmon, locust, American plum, hazelnut, dogwood, redbud, buttonbush, indigo bush, serviceberry and bald cypress.

The project received strong interest from the city of Harrisonburg's Conservation Assistance Program (HCAP) and the Shenandoah Valley Pure Water Forum (SVPWF) to enhance the city and the region's environmental quality goals. HMC received its second grant award, \$1000 from the SVPWF to be a model project in Harrisonburg. A third grant from HCAP is expected for the next phase to also include a native meadow.

The HMC Creation Care Group assists the congregation in meeting its stewardship goals, including care for God's Creation and hopes to collaborate with local businesses and residents to enhance the community environment. The CCG will be preparing for phase II, a second planting day in the fall. This is who we are!!

