

Turning a New Leaf

“Chart the Course, Shape the Future: Together for a Greener Good”

Chesapeake Conservation Landscaping Council

December 3, 2025 | Richmond, VA

9:30- 10:30

Keynote Ethan Tapper, Forester, Author, and founder of Bear Island Forestry and Bear Island Consulting.

Join renowned forester and author Ethan Tapper for an inspiring keynote exploring our changing relationship with forests and the landscapes we call home. Drawing from his personal journey and his bestselling book *How to Love a Forest*, Ethan reflects on what it means to care for the natural world in a time of ecological uncertainty. Through storytelling and insight, he invites us to reconsider how we understand forests, our role within them, and the hopeful possibilities that emerge when we choose to engage with the land in thoughtful, sometimes challenging ways.

10:40 – 11: 40

Virginia Grassland Bird Initiative, October Greenfield, The Piedmont Environmental

Council, Wildlife Habitat Program Manager

Native grasslands and their associated avifauna have experienced dramatic declines over the past century, and remaining grassland birds have adapted to using hayfields and pasturelands as surrogate habitat. Recognizing the unique position that agricultural lands have to protect these vulnerable birds, the Virginia Grassland Bird Initiative—a partnership between Smithsonian’s Virginia Working Landscapes, The Piedmont Environmental Council, American Farmland Trust, and Quail Forever—was developed to provide landowners and producers the knowledge and tools needed to manage their landscapes in ways that are mutually beneficial for both their needs and grassland bird conservation.

James River Riparian Consortium Model , Amber Ellis, James River Association, Restoration Director and

Christine Gyovai, Dialogue + Design Associates, Principal

Amber Ellis and Christine Gyovai will share how the James River Riparian Consortium brings together more than 500 partners to restore and sustain riparian forested buffers across the Upper and Middle James watersheds. With a mission to raise awareness, build workforce capacity, and expand buffer implementation through collaboration, the Consortium models how collective action can strengthen stewardship, improve water quality, and create healthier streamside ecosystems.

Performance-Based Plant Selection , Ann English, FASLA, Happy Hollow Farm, PA, Landscape Architect/Owner and Jim Cooper, Biohabitats, Principal

Ann English and Jim Cooper will share findings from a recent Green Infrastructure Leadership Exchange Challenge Grant project focused on improving bioretention plant selection for performance. The research identifies key knowledge gaps and lays the groundwork for a regionally adapted tool to help designers choose plants that not only meet design goals but also thrive over time in bioretention systems.

1:20 – 2:20

Invasive Species Management: Planting for the Next 125 Years , Fran Chismar, Pinelands Nursery,
Sultan of Sales

Planting design brings the opportunity to create beautiful, inspiring spaces, but also the responsibility to consider the impact of plant selection on long-term maintenance, climate change, and ecosystem health. This session highlights strategies available to professionals facing issues of climate adaptation, shifting cultural values, and complex species interactions.

Stormwater Maintenance Hacks, Pannel Discussion with guests: Vincent Bowhens

Lynnhaven River NOW, Restoration Coordinator, Nicola McGoff, Wild Ginger Field Services, Director and
Nick Myers, LandStudies, Maintenance Supervisor with Moderator: Tom Schueler

This panel offers practical strategies for maintaining and improving stormwater practices and restored landscapes. Nicola McGoff (Wild Ginger Field Services) will discuss replanting established BMPs with native plants and streamlining ongoing maintenance. Vince Bowers (Lynnhaven River NOW) will share how volunteers and interns can support small nonprofits in maintenance and monitoring efforts. Nick Myers, with nearly 20 years of experience as a Maintenance Supervisor, will highlight best practices for ensuring long-term success of green infrastructure and environmental restoration projects.

The Future of Horticulture, Jazmin Albarran, Seed Your Future, Executive Director

Integration of career conversations with students. The horticulture industry is full of exciting and diverse career paths – but many students and educators aren’t aware of the opportunities that plants provide. Seed Your Future is closing that gap by creating innovative tools, programs, and partnerships that inspire curiosity and connect students to meaningful green careers. From interactive resources to immersive teacher training, we’re cultivating a pipeline of future leaders who will shape a greener, healthier world.

2:50- 3:50

The Future of Green Stormwater Infrastructure, Pannel Discussion with guests: Ann English, Happy Hollow Farm, PA , Landscape Architect/Owner, James Hunter, Morgan State University, Interim Chair and Associate Professor and David Wood. Chesapeake Stormwater Network, Executive Director with Moderator: David Hirschman

This panel explores emerging tools, research, and strategies shaping the next generation of green stormwater infrastructure. David Wood will highlight innovative tools that support a more resilient stormwater future, while Dr. James Hunter of Morgan State University brings insights from engineering and academic perspectives. Ann English will share lessons from her 17 years leading Montgomery County’s RainScapes program, including approaches to

green stormwater retrofits, native plant integration, and education initiatives that support habitat restoration, watershed health, and MS4 compliance. Together, the speakers will discuss how training, technology, and community engagement can advance more effective and resilient green infrastructure practices.

Trees: Conflict, Communication, Compromise, Pannel Discussion with guests: Billy Almond

WPL Site Design, Principal Landscape Architect and Oscar Richardson, Colonial Tree Care, President with Moderator: Laurie Fox

This session explores a 35-year professional relationship between an ISA Certified Arborist and a Landscape Architect, highlighting the challenges, communication, and collaboration required to preserve trees through design and construction. Billy Almond and Oscar Richardson will share lessons learned, strategies for navigating conflict, and insights into how shared commitment can lead to long-term success in protecting trees in built environments.

Going Deeper: Green Infrastructure Education, Pannel Discussion with guests: Terryl Acker-Carter, Anne Arundel Watershed Stewards Academy, Community Engagement Manager, Jordan Gochenaur, Alliance for the Chesapeake Bay, Green Infrastructure Projects Manager and Kristen Parsons, Alliance for the Chesapeake Bay, Green Infrastructure Projects Coordinator with Moderator: Jamie Alberti

This panel explores innovative approaches to green infrastructure education and workforce development across the Chesapeake Bay watershed. Speakers will highlight three programs: the Anacostia Maintenance Program, which supports residents in caring for stormwater practices; the DC Public Green Infrastructure Maintenance Grant, which pairs workforce training with maintaining public installations; and the Anne Arundel Watershed Stewards Academy, which empowers community leaders to design and install pollution-reducing projects. Together, these initiatives demonstrate how education and engagement build lasting capacity for cleaner, healthier watersheds.

4:00 -5:00

Closing Plenary, Rooted and Resilient: Practices for Staying Grounded in Uncertain Times , Amber Ellis ,Find Your Nature

In times of uncertainty and overwhelm, practices that connect us with our center allow us to stay rooted and more effective in our work. In this interactive session you'll learn grounding practices that integrate nature, art, and mindfulness.