

Planting a Shady Garden Pilot Project

As you walk around Fairlington Villages, you'll see many areas where majestic trees provide lovely dappled light and cool shade during the hot summer. When you look closely, you'll also notice that's the downside of all the glorious shade: compacted soil, large exposed tree roots, soil erosion on sloped areas, and the general absence of vegetation.

In recent months, the FVCA Grounds Committee decided to seek solutions for these harsh conditions. A Shade Garden Pilot Working Group was formed to create criteria for the project and identify some of the most problematic shaded areas as prime examples of conditions found elsewhere in Fairlington. Working with Management, the committee sought a meticulous analysis by an outside professional. With the committee's modest budget (\$9,000 for analysis, plans, *and* execution), a landscape architect was chosen to examine three potential pilot gardens. Their plans incorporate many native shade-tolerant plants that *have a chance* of blossoming in such formidable conditions.

The goal of the Grounds Committee is to adopt the plans in at least one of the three potential areas identified, depending on the costs of plant material and labor identified by several competing landscape service firms. The long-range goal is to replicate, and adapt the plan as needed, in similarly challenged areas throughout the community. Over time, this short-term investment is expected to reap long-term benefits, improving the appearance of the grounds and enhancing the value of the property.

The Shade Garden Pilot Project will take shape during the fall planting season. Stay tuned for upcoming details and watch the garden grow!

Cheryl Hollins, Member, Grounds & Communications Committees