



Take Notice. Take Action. Take Care.

When we think about today's urgent topic of environmental stewardship, what do we envision as our legacy for Albemarle County's future generations? Our citizens consistently have named clean, plentiful drinking water, healthy rivers and streams, productive agricultural lands and working family farms, thriving wildlife, and protected natural areas as their highest priorities.

Whether you are a rural landowner with many acres of property or an urban area resident with limited or no outdoor space, you can be an active partner in preserving and protecting the County's natural resources and environmental heritage by becoming a part of *Tend Albemarle*.

According to the dictionary, tend means "*to apply oneself to the care of or to watch over*" which we think is a pretty good way to describe our community's spirit of environmental stewardship. We encourage you to take a few minutes to think about some possibilities for applying yourself to the care, or tending, of the environmental assets of the County regardless of your living situation.

We all have a role to play, and we hope you will start (or continue!) today with a few active ways that you and your family can contribute to a healthy and sustainable future for Albemarle County.

Here are a few quick tips to get you thinking . . . please keep reading and thank you for being an active part of *Tend Albemarle*.

- Support the Piedmont Environment Council's *Buy Fresh Buy Local* campaign
- Use turf management techniques that are gentle on our community water supply
- Plant native plants and shrubs that provide bird and butterfly habitat
- Donate to the tax-deductible ACE (Acquisition of Conservation Easements) Contribution Fund to help permanently protect Albemarle's rural areas
- Learn to capture, reuse or redirect rainwater
- Plant riparian buffers
- Keep your grass mowed at 4 - 6 inches to slow down, filter and absorb rainwater

Interested in more ways that you and your family can support *Tend Albemarle*? Please contact the County's Community Relations Office at (434)296-5841 or visit the website at www.albemarle.org/tend.

Let's start with a few things that everyone can do to provide some loving care to our community's valuable natural resources:

- ◆ Make a **compost pile** of your leftover kitchen and household materials, including grass clippings, vegetable and fruit scraps, leaves, coffee grounds, sawdust, and shredded paper. The final product looks and feels like fertile garden soil.
- ◆ **Even if you don't have a backyard of your own**, you can practice good conservation strategies in a schoolyard, apartment courtyard, community garden, or park. Please contact the owner of the property before you begin conservation strategy
- ◆ **Volunteer** for the Rivanna Chapter of the Master Naturalist or other conservation organizations.
- ◆ Consider starting a **backyard conservation project** in your community in any vacant lot or unused space.
- ◆ More specifically, build a **rain garden**. Areas designed with native plants can provide natural places for rainwater to collect and soak into the ground. Rain from rooftop areas or paved areas can be diverted into these areas rather than into storm drains.
- ◆ **Calculate your carbon footprint** at <http://www.nature.org/initiatives/climatechange/calculator> and use this information to improve your daily habits
- ◆ **Recycle** everything you can and encourage others (including your office) to do the same. Make recycling a routine.
- ◆ **Pick up after your pet**. Pet waste is often carried into stream by storm runoff and can be a major source of bacteria and excess nutrients.
- ◆ **Wash your car** at a carwash that recycles water or on a pervious surface, such as your lawn, using biodegradable cleaning products. Repair leaks and dispose of used auto fluids and batteries at designated drop-off or recycling locations.
- ◆ **Donate** to the tax deductible ACE contribution fund to help purchase additional conservation easements to permanently protect rural areas in the County.

How about if you own or live on a small lot in the County, or are a more urban resident of our community, what can you do to Tend Albemarle?

- ◆ Keep your grass mowed at **4 - 6 inches**. This slows down, filters and absorbs stormwater. This can be done by raising your blade (deck) height or by mowing less frequently.
- ◆ **Install** self mulching blades on your lawn mower so there is no need to mulch grass.
- ◆ **Mulch**: place a layer of organic material such as grass clippings and leaves, or compost, around your plants.
- ◆ To **prevent pests**, select hardy plant species and space them properly. Change the location of annuals every year to prevent buildup of certain pests.
- ◆ **Minimize chemical use**. If you use pesticides in a garden, follow label instructions carefully. Never use chemicals before it is going rain.
- ◆ Plant a **variety of native plants** and shrubs in your backyard that bloom or bear fruit at different times of the year. Look for **food sources** that produce fruits and berries. Most nurseries can tell you what varieties of plants attract and support wildlife.
- ◆ Water plants in the **early morning or late evening**, when temperatures are lower and less water is lost to evaporation.
- ◆ Consider installing a **rain barrel** on one or more of your downspouts to collect rainwater for watering your garden.
- ◆ Put a **bird feeder** in your backyard to provide shelter for birds.
- ◆ Landscape with **conserving energy** in mind. Create windbreaks for winter savings and shade for summer savings.
- ◆ **Disconnect the downspouts** of your roof to any underground pipe system and direct the rainwater into either a rain tank or rain garden - or simply onto a vegetated portion of your yard.

People who live near a water resource such as a stream, lake or river have lots of ways to practice good environmental stewardship.

- ◆ Locate water pollution hazards such as septic tanks, landfills, and above or below ground tanks, at a designated distance away from the body of water.
- ◆ Manage vegetation
- ◆ **Avoid removing vegetation that shades streams**, because doing so increases the water temperature and has a negative effect on fish and other aquatic life.
- ◆ **Avoid soil erosion**, which deposits pollutants into streams and causes a lack of water clarity.
- ◆ Create a **plant buffer** between fields and bodies of water to block sediment from running off into the water.
- ◆ Allow the edges of ponds to grow **native wetland vegetation** rather than allowing grazing or planting them with lawn grass.
- ◆ **Avoid using pesticides** whenever possible.

Albemarle is fortunate to have rural landowners have always been strong and mindful stewards of the county's resources. Here are some ways to put that stewardship into action:

- ◆ Consider putting your property in a voluntary agricultural/forestral district.
- ◆ Develop a **stewardship plan** that outlines the long-term conservation objectives for your forest or farmland. This written document describes the resources present on the property, the landowner's management goals and objectives, and the recommended practices or activities to be carried out over time on the land.
- ◆ **Rotate crops** and compost a variety of plant materials to build healthy, balanced, living soils rich in a diversity of microbes and micronutrients
- ◆ Do some **research before you plant**: select trees that are **native** to your area, rather than exotic trees, so they will live longer, be more tolerant of local weather and soil conditions, and enhance natural biodiversity.
- ◆ Let a portion of your property **grow wild** - allowing the growth of long grasses and forbs to be followed by a succession of natural shrubs and trees.
- ◆ Plant a **variety of tree species** to help prevent total losses to disease and severe weather.
- ◆ **Leave undisturbed stream buffers along perennial and intermittent streams** where they help to control floodwaters, improve water quality by filtering groundwater and sediment/nutrient laden runoff, provide important wildlife travel corridors, and provide shade to reduce water temperatures.
- ◆ **Practice conservation tillage**: Conservation tillage (leaving the previous year's crop stubble on the soil surface) and no-till leave much more waste grain available as food for birds. Research also shows that leaving crop residues helps hold carbon in the soil and aids in reducing greenhouse gases.
- ◆ **Maintain soil cover**
 - Plant a cover of 3-5 species of native grasses, sedges, or forbs (wildflower/ broad leafed ground cover) in unused fields. According to grassland restoration techniques, no till is needed over seed with commercially available seed mixes designed for local conditions.
 - In larger fields, plant alternating strips of grass or close-growing crops to provide valuable nesting area for birds.
 - Create **buffer areas** by leaving field and waterway edges unmowed and ungrazed to prevent runoff and erosion, and provide areas where birds can raise young.

If you are interested in permanently protecting your property through our Conservation Easement Program

- ◆ Conservation easements have successfully protected over 70,000 acres of the County's agricultural lands, water supply, wildlife habitat and open space, keeping land in private hands and generating significant public benefits.
- ◆ A conservation easement is a voluntary, legally binding agreement that limits certain types of uses or prevents development from taking place on a piece of property now and in the future, while protecting the property's ecological or open-space values.
- ◆ Conservation easements protect land for future generations while allowing owners to retain many private property rights and to live on and use their land, at the same time potentially providing them with tax benefits.
- ◆ The landowner continues to privately own and manage the land and may receive significant state and federal tax advantages for having donated the conservation easement. Perhaps more importantly, the landowner has contributed to the public good by preserving the conservation values associated with their land for future generations.
- ◆ Albemarle's Acquisition of Conservation Easements (ACE) Program is a financially attractive way for lower income landowners to protect family farms in the County.
- ◆ Find out more about the different conservation easement organizations in our community and how they might work for you by calling the Albemarle County Community Development Department at (434) 296-5832.

How the County can help

- ◆ Visit the County Office Building at McIntire Road or download a brochure from our website to view our resource protection demonstration projects:
 - Green roof
 - Rain tank
 - Rain garden
 - Rain barrel
 - Pervious pavers
 - Storm vault
- ◆ Apply for funds to help with planting riparian buffers in selected watersheds in the County through our cost share program that reimburses qualifying property owners for 50% of the cost of new riparian plantings.
- ◆ View presentations on a variety of water protection issues developed by county staff, including:
 - Stream buffers and water quality
 - Basics of groundwater
 - Maintaining stormwater management facilities
 - Rain, runoff, and your backyard
- ◆ Check out new brochures that will help your understanding of water resource topics:
 - Stormwater Matters – helps owners maintain their stormwater management facilities like detention ponds
 - Groundwater Matters – helps county homeowners understand and protect their well water
 - Stream Buffers and Water Quality – a property owner's guide to managing riparian buffers and adjacent water resources
- ◆ Get in touch with county staff for neighborhood or other presentations or for individual questions and concerns. Contact by phone at 434-296-5832 or by e-mail:
 - Tamara Ambler (Natural Resources Manager): tambler@albemarle.org
 - Josh Rubenstein (Groundwater Manager): jrubenstein@albemarle.org
 - Greg Harper (Water Resources Manager): gharper@albemarle.org
 - Gregor Patsch (Water Resources Engineer): gpatsch@albemarle.org
 - Repp Glaetti (Stormwater Inspector): rglaetti@albemarle.org
 - Joan McDowell (Principal Planner): jmcdowell@albemarle.org
 - Scott Clark (Senior Planner): sclark@albemarle.org
 - Ches Goodall (ACE Coordinator): cgoodall@albemarle.org

