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**DATE:** *August 23, 2019*

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### **CHESAPEAKE'S 2019 NOTABLE YARDS CONTEST WINNERS**

The Chesapeake Environmental Improvement Council (CEIC), in partnership with the Chesapeake Department of Parks, Recreation and Tourism, is pleased to announce the winners in the 2019 "Chesapeake Notable Yards" contest this week.

Marking its 24<sup>th</sup> year, this annual contest celebrates yards that "look good and are good for nature." One winner is chosen from each of the seven school districts: Deep Creek, Grassfield, Great Bridge, Hickory, Indian River, Oscar Smith and Western Branch. Notable Yard home nominations are accepted March 1 through May 31 and can be made by friends, neighbors and even homeowners themselves. Please note there were no homes nominated in the Deep Creek school district this year.

This year, teams of judges were comprised of CEIC members Vikki Barnette, Rogard Ross, Jean Pfaehler, Carol Praissman, Lauren Ragsac, and Amy Weber. In total there were 28 nominated properties all across Chesapeake.

Judges looked for yards that "look good and are good for nature." Criteria considered include overall visual appeal and garden design, having healthy lawn practices to minimize fertilizer, pesticide, and water usage, including native trees, shrubs and flowers, wildlife habitat and/or food gardens, and installing solutions for rainwater harvesting and storm water runoff control.

Each winner received a \$50 gift certificate from White's Nursery Garden Center, a certificate from the CEIC, and signage in the yard for one month proclaiming it the best of those nominated within their school district.

The competition was fierce, but in the end, only six were able to claim the top district spots:

**Grassfield - 516 Las Gaviotas Boulevard  
John and Heather Babashanian**

As you walk up to the home of John and Heather Babashanian in the Las Gaviotas neighborhood of Grassfield, you are greeted by a neat and attractive front yard. The front of the house is screened by a nice selection of greenery. The owners recently replaced their fescue lawn with lower maintenance St. Augustine grass, requiring significantly less water in the summer. When they do fertilize the lawn, it is with organic fertilizer. The backyard is their true retreat and provides a nicely balanced landscape. Towering oaks enclose the yard in addition to understory trees like dogwoods and maples. There is a nice selection of shrubs including various hydrangeas, a Virginia Sweetspire, ferns and various ground cover. The yard has lots of cover for wildlife and is frequented by rabbits, squirrels, turtles, and many birds, many of which enjoy the bird bath. The homeowners have also put in a pervious walkway to reduce runoff. A pleasant sitting area surrounded by trees and shrubs completes this beautiful oasis.



**Hickory - 716 Donnington Drive**  
**Kevin Parker**

The Parkers have put a lot of work into their yard in Hickory. The home has great curb appeal with flowers, plantings, and whimsical garden art. The centerpiece of the front yard is a Japanese Red Maple, lovingly grown from a seedling, an offspring from a maple tree in his father's yard. Several other large oaks shade the property, providing wonderful stormwater and climate moderation. The Parkers follow good lawn care practices, mowing high and leaving clippings. The backyard includes a variety of bird feeders, and a vegetable garden is tucked away in one corner making this a delightful property for the owners.



**Great Bridge – 525 Foxgate Quarter  
Christine Anderson**

Ms. Anderson's yard and her gardens are a place she can see the beauty of God's creation and be thankful for all of her blessings. She has a job that has a lot of long days in the fall and winter. When springtime rolls around she enjoys being outside working in her yard and gardens.



**Indian River - 809 Laurel Avenue**  
**Deborah Davis**

Ms. Davis' large corner lot has a neat and attractive appearance. She created flower beds and filled these with Japanese Maples, a pleasing assortment of perennials and Black Diamond Crepe Myrtles which she brought from her previous home in the Outer Banks. Employing healthy lawn practices, Ms. Davis leaves grass clippings and minimizes the use of herbicides on the lawn. In a side flower bed, there is Milkweed and Parsley intentionally planted to attract the Monarch caterpillar. A native Tulip Poplar tree, a large Camellia bush, and a native American Holly tree grace the backyard. Beds around the garden shed grow tomatoes, peppers, pineapple lilies and pimento peppers.

Ms. Davis said she has always loved to garden and considers it relaxing and rewarding to work in her yard.



**Oscar Smith – 1220 Dewberry Drive**  
**Debra Swartz**

The winning yard for the Oscar Smith district was noteworthy for its overall visual appeal, emphasis on providing for wildlife needs, and creative use of space and materials. The yard features a diverse selection of plant materials, including trees, tropicals, vegetables, and flowering shrubs and perennials, with well-defined stone pathways and borders. Ms. Swartz has provided for birds, turtles, and squirrels with numerous feeding stations, birdhouses and water containers, and accented the well-mulched beds with interesting statuary and pots. Attention to detail is evident in the intimate backyard theme gardens (enchanted forest, Italian garden) which invite rest and reflection. Ms. Swartz’s creativity and hard work definitely show in this yard.



**Western Branch – 3070 Falmouth Drive  
John and Cynthia Tuttle**

This stately River Star Home, built in 1942, sits on the Western Branch of the Elizabeth River. The expansive property features bald cypress, dogwood, Japanese maple, live oak, magnolia, pecan, redbud, and white cedar. Having lost twenty-three mature trees to a hurricane just a couple of years ago, the homeowners, John and Cynthia Tuttle, have worked to replace those with native species. The lawn is low maintenance, using river-friendly practices. They have reduced the lawn size by incorporating more shrub and perennial beds. The diverse plant choices and nesting boxes support wildlife habitat, featuring bay laurel, bee balm, beautyberry, ferns, hosta, lantana, roses, and yews. The well-designed landscape; diverse plantings, new and old; and the river breeze and views, create an inviting landscape and tranquil setting.

