



CU Maurice River Volunteers Honored

At the recent Annual Meeting of Citizens United To Protect the Maurice River, the group honored volunteers who have devoted from 40 to 3,000 hours over the last 12 months. Many, many more volunteers donated from one 1 to 39 hours. This year, a total of 9,500 hours was tracked from 208 different volunteers. Clearly, volunteerism is a hallmark of the organization's success, and a true priority among its members. Involving others in stewardship for our area is a basic principle in the CU Maurice River mission.

Trustee Susan Leopold vacated her seat because she and her husband John are moving full-time to their home in Colorado. She will be missed as a valuable board member and a friend. We all wish her safe travels and great new adventures.

Thanks also to Newfield National Bank who recognizes the importance of people's devotion to community. Their support of CU provides critical funding for celebrating volunteers.

Front row, from left: Cheryl Howell, Sue Fenili, Meghan Thompson, Sue Leopold, Wendy Walker, Leslie Ficcaglia, Jody Carrara, Barbara Aronoff, Mike Golla, and Karen Williams.

Back row: Dave Fenili, Allen Jackson, Tony Klock, Jane Morton Galetto, Suzanne Olah, Doreen and Carl Homan (hidden), Susan McKenna, Christine Brown, Sharry Mazarek, Mary Ann Russell. Absent: Tim Russell, Tricia Dufford, Suzanne Merighi, Mary Watkins, Kathy Michel.

Meet CU's Newest Trustee, Vicky Tomlin

When Sue Leopold vacated her seat on the board, we were past the proxy/voting process. Under such circumstances, the board appoints a worthy group member to fill the unexpired term. The Board is proud to announce the selection that was memorialized at the Annual Meeting. I hope you will join us in welcoming Vicky Tomlin to the CU Maurice River Board of Trustees.

Vicky has been an active member for a number of years and was selected as an Ah Why Knot recipient for her contributions to our organization. She is a mental health therapist who received her undergraduate and graduate degrees from Rowan University. Having worked for 20 years in human services and the prison system, Vicki is now a part-time consultant and therapist.

Vicky and her husband Rob live along the Manumuskin River in Port Elizabeth, next to Rob's childhood home. Vicky's interests include gardening and other homesteading activities, such as making soap, canning, and raising goats and chickens. Living along the river has

motivated her to learn more about protecting the natural habitat surrounding their home. Since joining Citizens United Vicky has opened up their home to Pat Sutton's garden tour and to CU campfires. She is one of our first members to have her property designated as Wildlife Friendly. Vicky has participated in cooking for the shorebird scientists, food prep for the Chili Bowl event, community clean-ups, bluebird banding, and community plantings.

Vicky Tomlin, pictured as she received a 2018 Ah Why Knot Award.

Ferns on the Sill

In the fall, I really like to encourage people to have plants in the house. It is therapeutic to water, trim and even shower plants. Studies have shown that shut-ins really benefit by caring for a few plants.

You can bring outdoor plants in as well as buy a few blooming plants. Now that the days are having fewer hours of daylight, ferns may fit the bill for a woodland garden of greens in or near a

window. You may even want to make a terrarium of ferns.

Ferns are peaceful looking plants. Bring in a box of pansies to grow with them for a few weeks. This is a charming combination and tending it will make you feel good.

Ferns are great houseplants and ones that have been enjoyed inside for centuries. They are magical looking and often make folks think of the woods. Being plants that grow on the forest floor, they can flourish with the low light found in many homes. But keep in mind they need to be in or near an east or north window or near a good light source. They do not need sunlight, but they need daylight and can grow with supplementary artificial light.

I find that my ferns do really well back a little from sunny windows or close to northern windows. Ferns do well when a saucer under them can be kept moist. Be sure the water can run through the plant when you water and allow a little bit of moisture to remain in the dish.

Although the word fern often brings to mind a lacy, delicate foliage or frond (as fern “leaves” are called), ferns can also have leathery, shiny fronds or broad, heavy dense foliage. Bird’s nest ferns are a good example of a leathery looking plant with glossy foliage that forms a tall arching rosette.

Another less common fern, holly fern also has leathery, dark green foliage. It’s a very low light plant that does well in most homes. A rabbit’s foot fern has delicate looking foliage but has furry feet—really brown woolly rhizomes that creep over the edge of the pot. They are fun to grow, but they cannot dry out and love bright light although they need to be out of direct sun.

A popular and familiar fern that will grow huge indoors is the Boston fern. It can grow in moderate to bright light, but tends to dry out and will brown if allowed to dry or get too hot. They look wonderful as hanging plants and also in a fern stand. They do well in plant rooms where humidity is high. You often see them in the conservatory at Longwood Gardens. Some growers say that the Dallas fern, which looks a lot

like the Boston fern, is easier to grow and has a lot less browning.

One of the cutest of ferns is the button fern. Called cliff brakes, these small ferns can be found in rocky areas where they get some moisture. They look pretty in terrariums, as do delicate maidenhair ferns. Maidenhair ferns are very soft and beautiful. Like most ferns they cannot dry out. I really love them and usually try to have one somewhere indoors. The one I have now looks weak and frail. Later on, I hope the spring and a summer out doors will perk it up.

Some homeowners like to cluster many ferns together, creating an indoor fernery. A closed porch or room with good light and low nighttime temperatures and moisture works well. Dry air heat or a woodstove produce poor conditions for ferns (better to grow cacti).

I have had a large pot of maidenhair fern that manages to die back more than half when it's indoors each winter. It comes back and flourishes out on my shady, rather damp front porch each summer. It does well inside until

January, but then the heat and my forgetfulness about watering take its toll. Ferns do come back better than some plants when the brown is cut out and they are watered well and often. A shady spot under the trees in summer works well to rejuvenate ferns.

A mild feeding of any plant food is good during the growing season (February to October). I use a time-release fertilizer that feeds each time the plant is watered. If the plant has not been fed in a long time, a mild dose of blue water or liquid fertilizer on top of Osmocote will get the process started.

If your fern becomes pot bound here's how to repot: Shake or knock the plant from the tight pot, very gently rub or break only a few roots if they are tightly matted. If they are not don't bother. Move the plant up a size pot. Use moistened potting soil such as pro mix and fill in around the root ball. Soak the plant well and add a sprinkle of Osmocote that you water in with some mild blue water or liquid food. Wash leaves and shower the plant well to remove any dust or insects. Shower ferns often, they love it. A larger pot

will insure that the plant won't dry out so fast.

Enjoy ferns; they will add some springtime to your life year round. Add in some holiday plants, bulb plants or even African violets to add color. Ferns work well with other plants when grouped near a window. When I was a kid there were often ferns in with poinsettia at Christmas. I liked them best.

Small ferns are great for terrariums or fairy gardens. I will discuss this next time.

— Lorraine Grochowski-Kiefer,
tripleoaks.com