

Chinquapin Organic Garden Board Meeting -- April 21, 2026

The April 21, 2026, board meeting was held via Zoom. Present: Richard Dorrier-Chair, Anne Saul-Vice Chair, Lori Hartmann-Secretary/Treasurer and other board members, Stacey Potosnak, Elizabeth Charles, Kathryn Long and Julie Le. Board member absent: Brad Kukuk. Other gardeners attending: Siena Loprinzi, Zion Abebe, Sharon Vannucci, Naima Kearney, Patty Enneking, Tina O'Hara, Chelsea Redman, Jennifer Penoso, Caroline Kersey, Margie Heins, Dona Lee, Jean McKean, Sarah Pak and Anny Lin. Also attending: the City of Alexandria Recreation, Parks and Cultural Activities liaison: Natural Resources Manager Katrina Napora.

The meeting started at 7:00 p.m. Anne moved to approve the February 17 Board meeting minutes. The motion was seconded by Elizabeth, and the minutes were approved.

City Report: RPCA liaison Katrina Napora reported that in the next few weeks she will be monitoring the gardens for invasive plants, such as daylilies, that might spread into the surrounding parkland and will suggest native alternatives to the gardeners. She said gardeners won't be required to remove invasives until 2027 when they are included in the city's community garden regulations, but she hopes they will remove them this season. Katrina also announced a new city initiative: Native plant seeds (flowers and vegetables) from the Brandywine Conservancy and the Alliance of Native Seed Keepers are being offered at city libraries and the Buddie Ford Nature Center in honor of Earth Day and again in July for the 250 America birthday celebration. Katrina recommended a limit of three packs per visit.

Maintenance: Richard reported that the first delivery of LeafGro Pro compost was depleted, but that he has requested another load. He also said he ordered leaf mulch for the lower bin, which should be delivered this week, and that he will contact Davey Tree for more wood chips.

Monitoring Report: Fourteen gardeners conducted the first monitoring review of the season on April 18. Of the 172 rented plots (one is vacant), 120 had no violations, which is an improvement over the 114 during the first session of the 2025 season. Fifteen showed no sign of activity and were very weedy, which also is an improvement over the 21 cited in April 2025. Another 21 plots were cited for weeds, although only 5 were significantly overgrown. Nevertheless, it is an increase over the 15 that were cited in April 2025. Twenty-five were cited for path maintenance and five were cited for having fences leaning into the paths. The next monitoring session is scheduled for June 13.

Volunteer Projects:

Plot markers: Kathryn reported that Joy Cameron (N5) will be taking over the plot marker project, and that team will be surveying the plots to see which markers need to be replaced or renumbered. Anne said there were a lot of faded markers, which made it challenging to identify plots during the April monitoring session. Kathryn said they were looking for enamel paint pens that might be less prone to fading. She also said that Joy will reach out to last year's volunteers about helping this season.

Perennial grove, orchard and terraced beds: Richard reported that Brightview has mulched the Dale May Memorial Grove perennial beds, and that volunteers have signed up for weeding and watering duties. He said the fruit trees were pruned in early March, but that one peach tree by the shed is diseased and that he has asked Brian Cohen (R1), who heads the orchard maintenance team, to remove it. Richard said more help was needed with the orchard and terraced beds. (Miriam Hacker in Q7 is in charge of the terraced beds.) He said that one terraced bed level will have annual wildflowers to support the bees and one will have herbs.

Food Bank: Stacey reported she has seen a small uptick in Food Bank plot maintenance volunteers and that they have had a few small harvests from overwintered greens. She said there will be a plot preparation day on Sunday and planting day in early May. Dona added that the cover crops in the Food Bank plots need to be cut down.

Compost bins: Dona reported that a few gardeners are using the new compost bins. She reminded gardeners not to add weeds in and that large veggie material should be cut up so that it breaks down and composts faster. She also said the green “compostable” bags should be emptied and not added to the bins as the bins don’t get “hot” enough to compost the bags. She said the large sign above the bins explains what can/cannot be included. She said she will notify contributors when the compost is ready to be used.

Finances: Lori reported there is \$837.53 in the bank account. Richard reported he has one receipt for around \$60 to submit for reimbursement.

Fundraising: Richard said the Bingo night fundraiser at Beeliner Diner, which was cancelled due to snow, will be rescheduled next winter. He also said this was ok since our financial situation is good and this fundraising event was not essential.

Social Activities: Elizabeth reported that the March Garden Kickoff session was well attended, and Anne added that it included a large number of new gardeners. Elizabeth said the session lasted for 1½ hours, and that we should plan for that length in the future. She also reported that there would be a brief informational session at the Spring Social on Saturday. (Richard said that he will be out of town and unable to attend.) Julie said she has eight raffle prizes.

New Business: A gardener asked if water spinach was allowed, and Katrina said she would check. (She reported after the meeting that it was invasive, which was conveyed to the gardener.) Caroline reported from the gardens that bees were swarming in the orchard. Anne said she would contact one of the hive owners who lives nearby to come and retrieve them. (This was taken care of that night.)

The meeting adjourned at 7:50 p.m.

Upcoming 2026 events:

April 25 - Spring Social

May 19 - Board meeting

June 13 - monitoring

August 8 - Summer Picnic