



# Ashton Heights News

The Newsletter of the Ashton Heights Civic Association

[www.AshtonHeights.org](http://www.AshtonHeights.org)

## The Future of Ashton Heights

Scott Sklar, President, AHCA

In our March AHCA meeting we heard Arlington County Board member Libby Garvey present on Missing Middle Housing, discussing a multi-year process where the Board has started to look at affordability, housing equity, and options in Arlington County. She stated quite rightly that "change is inevitable." In fact, housing has changed quite a bit since Arlington's founding. As we celebrate Ashton Heights' 100<sup>th</sup> anniversary this year, we will learn about that in more detail.

I have lived in Arlington since 1980 and moved into the house I live in now on N. Ivy Street in 1984. Arlington has changed pretty radically from a sleepy suburb into an urban suburb. In my last column, I acknowledged much of what has been done right has been due to leaders in our civic association along with our sister associations on the planning and guidelines that have been formalized and enshrined in the County planning process. The reason we have open spaces, tree canopy, pedestrian friendly walkways & bikeways, and preservation of residential neighborhoods has been in large part to this effort. These features are really what make Arlington and our area, an especially wonderful place to live.

And as we all know, these decisions impact traffic, crime and safety, affordability, schools, taxes, parks and open space, etc. At the same time, as we urbanize, land prices and housing prices rocket upward, and so we face a future of being a neighborhood of the richest rather than as being more eclectic and diverse.

Before we all take sides and move into our respective positions, I ask everyone to take a deep breath. This process started by the Arlington County Board and brought ably before us by our new AHCA Housing Committee chairs Matt Hall and Christina Schultz, is to envision and balance how Arlington evolves. There are lots of trade-off as we all know. For instance, we may form a consensus that multi-family and duplexes along thoroughfares rather than cement buildings (like CVS) may be an appropriate buffer and address housing affordability issues. And frankly, more commercial space that may stay partially vacant in the post-COVID world, may shift more tax burden to residential owners. I am not taking a position here, just offering that there are many sides to these issues.

## AHCA Monthly Meeting

### ON ZOOM

**Wed., April 21, 2021, 7:30 – 9 PM**

**Join the Zoom Meeting** (Click the link below)

**Or call:** +1 301 715 8592 US (Washington DC)

Meeting ID: 814 5057 5490

### 7:30 Committee Reports & Community Updates

#### Speakers:

- **National Capital Treatment and Recovery (formerly, Phoenix House)** - Deborah Taylor, R.N., C.D.  
Discussion of Arlington's drug and alcohol problems and solutions by the director of the facility located on our boundary.
- **AHCA History II**
  - Social History - Ann Felker, Christa Abbott, Miriam Penn, Cassandra Penn Lucas

### 9:00 Adjournment

The Ashton Heights Civic Association (AHCA) is going to continue what we have always done with development, traffic, schools, open spaces, tree canopy and safety - build some common knowledge as our AHCA Housing Committee started, and slowly build a united consensus that we can articulate clearly to Arlington County. To do this correctly, our Housing Committee needs some volunteer time, and also needs some listserv and monthly meeting time to keep this dialogue going.

We have been able to forge a consensus and articulate our positions over many issues, which has made the Ashton Heights Civic Association well respected, and in most cases "listened to". So as always, let's work together to forge consensus and a vision. We are lucky to live in such a great community and have so many people willing to offer their thoughts and time, and put in some elbow grease to make this an even better place to live.

So thanks and welcome Spring 2021 to a hopefully safer and more joyful year.

# Ashton Heights Civic Association Volunteers

## CIVIC ASSOCIATION MISSION

AHCA's mission is to promote the welfare and interaction of Ashton Heights and Arlington. Meetings, usually held the third Wednesday from September to May, are open to all residents, although only paid members can vote. Active participation is welcome. AHCA keeps you informed through meetings, this newsletter, and the website: [www.ashtonheights.org](http://www.ashtonheights.org). You can volunteer by contacting the Executive Committee.

### Executive Committee

President: Scott Sklar <a href="mailto:solarsklar@aol.com">solarsklar@aol.com</a> 703-522-3049	VP Programs: Jim Richardson <a href="mailto:jabrighardson@verizon.net">jabrighardson@verizon.net</a>	VP Membership: Jim O'Brien <a href="mailto:jimob1@verizon.net">jimob1@verizon.net</a> 703-528-0376	Treasurer: Doug Williams <a href="mailto:treasurer@ashtonheights.org">treasurer@ashtonheights.org</a>	Secretary: Jodie Flakowicz <a href="mailto:jodie.flakowicz@gmail.com">jodie.flakowicz@gmail.com</a>
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### Members-at-Large

Cole Deines <a href="mailto:coledines@gmail.com">coledines@gmail.com</a>	Jim Feaster <a href="mailto:jimfeaster1@gmail.com">jimfeaster1@gmail.com</a>	Patrick Lueb <a href="mailto:jiffy64@me.com">jiffy64@me.com</a>	Ken Matzkin <a href="mailto:kenmatz1@gmail.com">kenmatz1@gmail.com</a>
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### Committees

<b>Safety &amp; Security</b>	Christina Schultz <a href="mailto:cmschultz@yahoo.com">cmschultz@yahoo.com</a>	<b>Transportation</b>	Patrick Lueb <a href="mailto:jiffy64@me.com">jiffy64@me.com</a>
<b>Development/Zoning</b>	David Phillips <a href="mailto:davidphillips1@msn.com">davidphillips1@msn.com</a>	<b>Playgrounds &amp; Parks Subcommittee</b>	Brent Burris <a href="mailto:brburris@gmail.com">brburris@gmail.com</a>
<b>Housing</b>	Matthew Hall <a href="mailto:mhall@goldsteinhall.com">mhall@goldsteinhall.com</a>	<b>Tree Canopy and Native Plants Subcommittee</b>	Brooke Alexander <a href="mailto:brooke.alexander52@gmail.com">brooke.alexander52@gmail.com</a>
<b>Schools</b>	Gregory Morse <a href="mailto:gregm748@gmail.com">gregm748@gmail.com</a>		
<b>Neighborhood Conservation Rep</b>	Brent Burris <a href="mailto:brburris@gmail.com">brburris@gmail.com</a>		

### Newsletter

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**Tune in to the AHCA meeting this April 21<sup>st</sup> for a fascinating talk about Ashton Heights history! Details from presenter Ann Felker below:**

100 years of existence is surely something to celebrate, but perhaps even more, something to examine. In the rush to recover from the pandemic of 1918-19 and to indulge one last gasp of Confederacy nostalgia, the culture was immersed in the good old days and, at the same time, bent on building a brighter world. Ashton Heights grew on the strength of both sets of energy. Confederate hero's names were scattered everywhere. White women got the right to vote. Former farms were sold and houses built in new "developments" but the story is that the arrangement included one very strong admonition - these good-deal, close-to-DC homes were to be sold only to Caucasians because there was no way to build a compatible community with incompatible people. Such ideas were written into laws and local covenants. Ashton Heights carries that legacy.

After a seven minute video "Race and Housing in Arlington, VA", Christa Abbott, will present some of her research on the racial covenants of our communities in the beginning. Miriam Penn and her daughter, Cassandra Penn Lucas, will then share their

uplifting story of integrating 1st Place North in 1970, just after covenants were outlawed. Our roots are history and our wings are still stretching. This historic presentation will distract from struggles about building heights and parking rights, but its message is crucial as we recover from our immediate past and imagine our future.

### Advertise with us!

The Ashton Heights newsletter is distributed to 1,200 households September - May. Our readers enjoy supporting local businesses. Do you know of a local business that would benefit from advertising in the AH newsletter?

Email: [newsletterads@ashtonheights.org](mailto:newsletterads@ashtonheights.org)

### 2021 Ad Rates:

Business Card	\$60	Full Page	\$245
1/4 Page	\$85	Full Back Page	\$295
1/2 Page	\$145	One Page Insert	\$325

## Data on Aging in Arlington

Excerpted from the [Community Engagement Forum on Aging Issues](#)

Helen King, the Acting Director of Arlington's Agency on Aging (AAA) presented via Zoom on March 15, 2021, a set of statistics and information that might be of interest to our neighborhood. We've pulled out some excerpts below.

The Arlington Area Agency on Aging's mission is to maintain maximum independence and dignity of older persons with appropriate supportive services; remove individual and social barriers to economic and personal independence and provide a continuum of care.

### Some facts:

- 36,030 adults 60+ call Arlington home
- 69.3% own their own home
- 53% 65+ live alone; 28,645 are Medicare beneficiaries
- 21% of Arlingtonians without internet access at home are 65+
- ~895 households benefit from Real Estate Tax Relief

### Who are we serving?

	Arlington County 60+	AAA Program Participants
Average Age	68.6	75
Female	54%	58%
Federal Poverty	13%	56%
Live Alone	51%	58%
Language other than English (30 languages in FY2020)	24%	24%
White non-Hispanic	62%	30%
Asian	10%	16%
Black, African American	9%	29%
Ethnicity, Hispanic	16%	18%

### Older Adults in Arlington

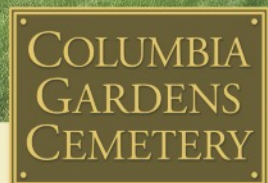
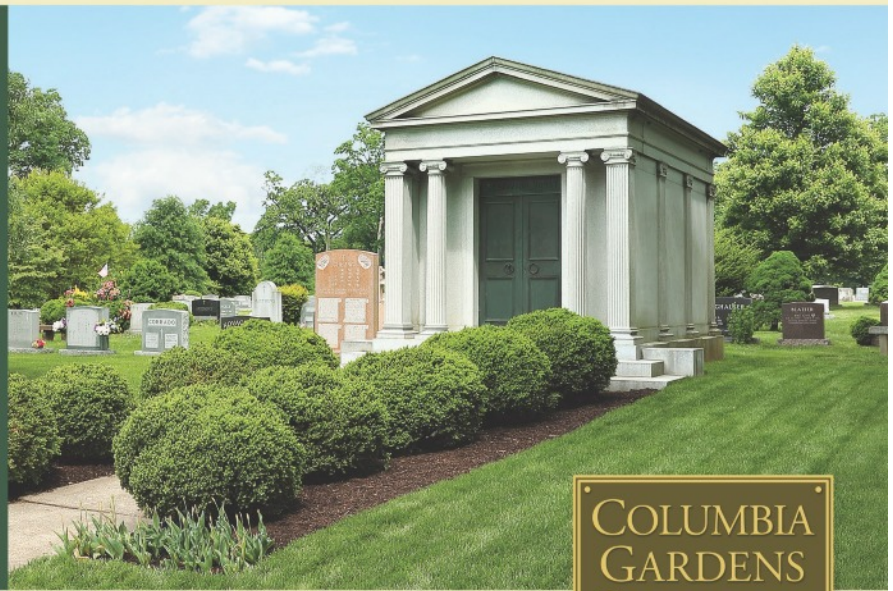
	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018	Change
Adults 60+	31,065	32,212	33,059	35,088	36,030	<b>+ 14%</b>
Total Population	225,187	227,897	230,050	234,985	237,521	<b>+ 5%</b>

## Pre-Planning Gives You and Your Family Peace of Mind



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of having to make decisions at a stressful time. Pre-planning is a true gift of love for your family—both emotionally and financially. Columbia Gardens Cemetery is approved by the State of Virginia to accept pre-payment for funeral and burial services. If you have not yet decided what arrangements you would like, we are here to guide and support you. We will explain burial, cremation, memorialization, options for funeral services and more.



**For More Information, Please Contact Us at 703.527.1235**

3411 Arlington Blvd. | Arlington, VA 22201 | [columbiagardenscemetery.org](http://columbiagardenscemetery.org)

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## Community Safety & Security Corner

### Virginia Lawmakers Busy with Gun Sense Legislation



In light of the nearly 1,000 annual gun deaths in the Commonwealth (Giffords Law Center) and following the tragic May 2019 mass shooting in Virginia Beach, greater attention has been placed on violence prevention measures in the state legislature. With Democrats controlling both chambers of the Virginia General Assembly for a second year in a row, several gun sense laws were passed in both the 2020 and 2021 sessions.

In 2020, ten new laws were passed ranging from background checks, to reporting lost and stolen guns, to preventing children from accessing firearms. A few notable laws include:

- [Senate Bill 70](#) and [House Bill 2](#) require universal background checks on all firearm sales, including at gun shows and private sales.
- [Senate Bill 240](#) and [House Bill 674](#) establish an Extreme Risk Protective Order (also known as a red flag law), which creates a legal mechanism for law enforcement to temporarily separate a person from their firearms when they represent a danger to themselves or others. Virginia is among 19 other states and the District of Columbia that have enacted this type of law.
- [Senate Bill 69](#) and [House Bill 812](#) reinstate Virginia's one-handgun-a-month rule during a 30-day period to help curtail stockpiling of firearms and trafficking. There are exceptions for law enforcement officers, correctional officers, antique firearms dealers, private security companies and concealed handgun permit holders.
- [House Bill 9](#) requires gun owners to report lost or stolen firearms to law enforcement within 48 hours or face a civil penalty. This information is entered into the FBI's National Crime Information Center, and anyone who files a report will not be held liable for any harm caused by the gun.
- [House Bill 1083](#) prevents children from accessing firearms by increasing the penalty for leaving firearms in their presence.

In September 2020, the Arlington County Board unanimously voted to ban firearms and ammunition in county government buildings, parks, recreation facilities, and community centers. This followed Governor Northam's signing of [Senate Bill 35](#) and [House Bill 421](#) that allow city councils and boards of supervisors to set their own rules on the presence of firearms in public spaces. There are exceptions to the Arlington County ordinance for law enforcement, military, and private security personnel.

Virginia's General Assembly again passed several sweeping policy changes in its 2021 session. Three major gun sense laws include:

- [House Bill 2128](#) increases from three to five business days the time provided to complete a background check before a firearm may be transferred. This is an attempt to address the Charleston loophole, named after the incident in which the shooter of nine worshipers at the Emanuel AME Church in South Carolina was able to purchase a gun because the background check system was not completed within three days even though he was legally prohibited from owning a firearm.
- [House Bill 1992](#) prohibits a person who has been convicted of assault and battery of a family or household member from purchasing, possessing, or transporting a firearm.
- [Senate Bill 1381](#) and [House Bill 2295](#) ban individuals from bringing firearms on the grounds of the state Capitol and buildings owned by the Commonwealth. There are exemptions for law enforcement and security.

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## AHCA MEMBERSHIP SIGN-UP AND DUES PAYMENT FORM

Ashton Heights Civic Association annual dues are \$15/household or \$10/individual member or \$25/household for two years. Anyone residing or owning property in Ashton Heights who is at least 18 may join and then vote at AHCA meetings. Send this form and a check payable to AHCA to Jim O'Brien, 643 N. Kenmore St. 22201.

Name(s): \_\_\_\_\_

Children (and ages) (optional): \_\_\_\_\_

Street address: \_\_\_\_\_

Phone: \_\_\_\_\_ Resident since: \_\_\_\_\_

E-mail: \_\_\_\_\_

Neighborhood interests: \_\_\_\_\_

### PAY DUES ONLINE

[www.ashtonheights.org/join-ahca](http://www.ashtonheights.org/join-ahca)

## Drive Through Food & Toiletry Collection for Arlington Homeless Shelters - April 10<sup>th</sup> and May 8<sup>th</sup> - 9am to noon

The Food Drive will support family residents of **Bridges to Independence in Clarendon**. Top priority needs: Rice, boxed cereal, applesauce, juice, and packaged healthy kids' snacks (no prepared or opened food please) and other dry food items.



The Toiletry Drive will support individuals living at **Residential Program Center (RPC) on Columbia Pike** and a day program providing showers, laundry and meals for drop-in visitors. They need: Razors (men's and women's), toothbrushes, toothpaste, shower curtains, queen size bed sheets, deodorant (regular and travel size), new men's underwear (XL, 2XL, 3XL), new women's underwear, new socks, combs and brushes, flip flops for showers, and bar soaps.

Clarendon Presbyterian Church is located at 1305 North Jackson Street, Arlington, VA 22201. No physical interaction. Masks required. Drop-off at curbside location outside church. Please send questions to [clarendonmission@gmail.com](mailto:clarendonmission@gmail.com) or (703) 527-9513.

In Northern VA, a total of 1,497 homes sold in February 2021, a 25.5% increase above February 2020 home sales of 1,193. Arlington had 247 home sales, up 68%. The number of active listings decreased last month compared with 2020. Listings were 6.84% below last year, with 1,579 active listings in February 2021, compared with 1,695 homes available in February 2020.

From the city, to the suburbs and out to the traditionally second-home markets in the country in Virginia, **every area is hot**. Single family homes and townhouses under \$1 million in all parts of NOVA had less than one month of inventory at the end of February 2021. Competition for well-priced, desirable detached homes was fierce in that price point with many buyers waiving contingencies to get offers considered. Mortgage rates moved up from the historic lows we experienced at the end of last year, but they still remain very attractive.

As a buyer in today's real estate market, your offer to purchase will likely be up against offers from other motivated buyers. Based on my experience and perspective as a buyer's agent and seller's agent in multiple offer scenarios, I've written a guide called **"13 Ways to Write a Winning Offer"**, to make your offer stand out from the competition and be the one that gets accepted. Of course, the strategies you use will depend a lot on the type and condition of the property, your level of motivation and how much competition you have from other parties. You can download a FREE copy of the guide on our website.

***Are you living in your ideal home now?*** If you're thinking of a new lifestyle, I'm glad to help with some strategic planning.

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## Meet Your Neighbor(hood) Flashback: Metro

By Betsey Lyon

As we recognize Ashton Heights' first century as a named community, we're looking back at what made us the neighborhood we know and love. Metrorail complemented our location and clearly made us the success we are today. The Rosslyn-Ballston corridor underwent a messy, but ultimately terrific transformation in the 1970's thanks to Metro.

Our October 1979 civic association newsletter was produced by typewriter and splotchy mimeograph, with a few end lines missing from copy. The lead article heralded, "SPECIAL ASHTON HEIGHTS PRE-OPENING TOUR OF THE VIRGINIA SQUARE METRO STATION - Officials of the Metro Rail System will be there to answer any questions you might have about this new neighbor of Ashton Heights."

The next month's news said: "December 1 is the day for the opening of the Orange Line of Metro nearest to us in Arlington. Ashton Heights has been asked to help distribute orange tickets for free rides on Metro from the Virginia Square Station. . . . Festivities have been planned at each of the four new stations.

*The Washington Post* report of the Arlington Metro station openings said, after citing big construction cost overruns: "One of the things Metro was supposed to do was bring life back to Arlington County's long-depressed Wilson Boulevard-Fairfax Drive corridor, and it certainly did that yesterday. People were able to ride free between the four new stations until late in the afternoon, and they happily poured onto trains, rode to the next station, then looked around the neighborhood before pressing on up the line."

In December, our civic association President celebrated with caution about traffic: "The impetus behind the development of the Ashton Heights Neighborhood Conservation Plan was the future construction of the Metrorail system. Now that future has become the present. Three of the four new Metro stations - will be within one mile of our homes. No longer will we be able to complacently sit and speculate about what, if any, impact of having the terminus of Metro [Ballston] adjacent to our neighborhood will be. We will soon see."

Referencing our Neighborhood Conservation Plan, which "was accepted in general principle by the County Board on April 24, 1976," our then-President said: "One of the most immediate problems will undoubtedly be the increase in cross-neighborhood traffic, followed by on-street parking. Undoubtedly proposals for temporary parking lots and possible requests for commercial rezoning of residential properties will probably occur. . . . Our Neighborhood Conservation Plan provides a means to, if not eliminate these undesirable conditions, at least minimize their effect. An intricate part of this plan is a greenway system. . . once conceived as a means whereby the boundaries of Ashton Heights would be defined visibly by walkways, open spaces, and a neighborhood park. The Greenway is to serve as a buffer from commercial and projected high-density development."

Nearly 42 years later, the struggle of neighborhood conservation in urban Arlington continues, as our location and Metrorail have made us flourish and evolve.



## Upcoming Dates:

- Contribute to the next Ashton Heights Newsletter – content for the May 2021 issue is due **Saturday, April 24<sup>th</sup>**. Note: this is the last issue until the fall as we take a summer hiatus.
- The final Ashton Heights Civic Association meetings prior to the summer hiatus, will be held over Zoom on **April 21<sup>st</sup> and May 19<sup>th</sup>**. Be sure to subscribe to the Ashton Heights listserv to stay up to date!



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### Taco Bamba

4000 Wilson Blvd  
Arlington, VA 22203  
571-777-1477  
[www.tacobamba.com](http://www.tacobamba.com)

By Vinh and Susan Nguyen

Locos por los tacos! Taco Bamba brings serious, chef-driven chops to the local taco competition and is now our new go-to place!

What stands out? First, genuine corn tortillas – handmade and doubled up (flour tortillas only make a tiny appearance). Second, very large portions – fillings are almost twice than found anywhere else. Third, the menu is extensive, with both traditional and funky choices. And fourth, pretty much everything is delicious!

There are 10 traditional tacos to choose from. Among our favorites: *al pastor*, the quintessential Mexico City taco evolved from Lebanese roots, with pork layered and carved from a revolving spit, served with pineapple, onion, and cilantro; *carnitas*, made with pork slow-cooked, pulled, then roasted at high heat for a crispy exterior; *pescado* and *camarón* are fried fish and shrimp, respectively, on lightly dressed slaw topped with pickled onion, cream, and cilantro; *chicharrón*, pork belly braised then crisped with a quick fry, with pickled jalapeno, onions and red sauce; and *barbacoa*, roasted and shredded beef.



Taco Bamba also offers special tacos ("tacos nuestros") inspired by Arlington's cultural diversity. You can choose from 12 diverse offerings, named tongue-in-cheek and mostly recognizable. *One night in Bangkok* comes with seared shrimp, chorizo larb, thai chiles and crispy onion. *Slumdog millionaire* features pork vindaloo from India (heat level is moderate). *El rico pollo* pays tribute to the local chicken rotisserie. *Salim Abu Azi el Khoury* features burned eggplant, zucchini and other vegetarian ingredients on a pita bread (a rare exception to the corn tortilla rule); try a Google search of the name. Another vegetarian option is the *Spicy 'Shroom*, with grilled portobello and corn, cotija cheese and pickled onion. *Fun's Over* is a fried cod taco, with shishito peppers adding that little extra. If you're not sure what to get, the house taco bamba has a whole bunch of different ingredients! [Note that these special choices will differ from one

location to the next.]

Of the admittedly few non-taco items we tried, the Bamba fries and Wu-fries were very good if richly loaded. We found the queso and guacamole dips unremarkable and do not approve of the red sauce (!) on the chilaquiles.

A must-have dessert is the churros. This version is crunchier and less cake-y than most, and you get 5 mini-sticks in a cup, in a bed of caramel sauce. We did not try all the margaritas but they sure sound good!

*Photos courtesy of the Taco Bamba Instagram page.*

## COVID-19 Vaccine Update

By Martha Casey

Here's the most current information as the newsletter goes to print. Things change rapidly so check the Ashton Heights listserv for regular updates as they become available.



### Vaccine Availability

First, as always, be sure to pre-register to get vaccinated, at [vaccinate.virginia.gov](https://vaccinate.virginia.gov) or by calling 1-877-VAX-IN-VA. All predictions are that by the time this newsletter is distributed, there will be a much greater supply of Covid vaccines and that, as a result, by May 1 all adults will be eligible to get vaccinated. How will there be enough vaccine?

### Rapid Production Increase

The trend is sure impressive. In February, the three companies authorized to produce vaccines delivered 48 million doses. In March, they expect to deliver 132 million doses. In January, 500,000 people were vaccinated daily; today that number is 2.5 million.

Projections are that, barring disruptions, there will be 76 million doses produced in March, 75 million in April, and 89 million in May.

### Production Details

How is production accelerating so rapidly? The Wall Street Journal recently reported on how the manufacturing process has improved and adapted. It's mostly the old rule: the more you do something, the better you are at it. There have also been some ingenious adaptations. Some highlights:

- Moderna, amazingly, has never before brought a product to market. It took them three months to produce the first 20 million doses, but they now produce 40 million per month and expect to do 50 million by summer. They have had to purchase new equipment, learn new processes, hire and train workers, and source replacement parts. They are finalizing plans to produce vials that contain 15 doses, rather than the current 10.
- Pfizer, in the business much longer, has similarly had to adapt on the fly. At the beginning of February, they were producing 5 million doses weekly; today they are producing 13 million doses a week. They are now sterilizing and re-using filters, and due to supply shortages, producing in-house the lipids used to encapsulate the vaccine. Pfizer has added more vial-

filling lines in both Kalamazoo, MI and Groton, CT. The new lines fill 575 vials a minute.

- Johnson & Johnson says they are on track to deliver 20 million doses by the end of March and 200 million by the end of the year. A large portion of these doses will be produced by Merck, at their facilities in Durham, North Carolina and West Point, PA, and they expect to be up and running by May. The J&J/Merck collaboration was facilitated by the Administration's use of the Defense Production Act to pay Merck \$105 million to make these additional doses.

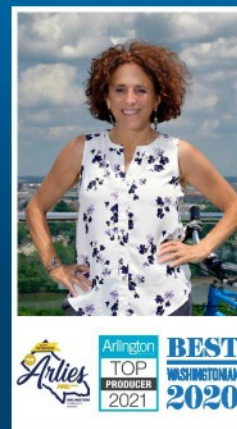
At this point, all three have learned what works, how to improve, how to be more efficient. The journey from the lab to our arms is getting faster and faster. Let's hope we all benefit from this and get vaccinated very soon.

## Recycling Reminder

Plastic bags - either alone or with recyclable items in them are **NOT** recyclable in our blue recycling bins. All of it is treated as trash. Please take a few moments to put all recycling loose into your blue trash bin. For a full list of how and what to recycle, visit:

<https://recycling.arlingtonva.us/residential/trash-recycling/>

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### ASHTON HEIGHTS PET OF THE MONTH

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Shannon's dog.

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Heights. His  
favorite hobbies  
are chasing  
squirrels, barking  
at people walking  
along Pershing  
(he is saying  
hello!), and  
running up and  
down Jackson  
Street. He just  
learned to hand  
shake, and  
aspires to learn to roll over. If you see him out on a walk, he  
loves head pats and belly rubs.



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## Cicadas are Coming - Cicadas are Coming!

By Brooke Alexander, Ashton Heights Tree Canopy and Native Plant Coordinator, Arlington Regional Master Naturalist

\*\* The information in this article is drawn from presentations by Kirsten Conrad, Extension Agent, Arlington County and Alexandria, and Alonso Abugattas, Arlington County Natural Resources Manager. For more detailed information: see Kirsten's presentation on the Master Gardener website ([www.mgnv.org](http://www.mgnv.org)), which includes activity ideas for kids or visit Alonso's blog at <https://capitalnaturalist.blogspot.com/2021/02/periodical-cicadas.html>

**Are we worried? No! Are we excited? Yes!** The 17-year cicadas are coming out of the ground to mate, and lay eggs. They have been living underground on our tree roots for 17 years and will emerge from the ground when the soil reaches 64 degrees. Although emergence can vary from late April onward, current estimates for this year are between May 1 -15. If you had cicadas 17 years ago, you will have them again, unless the ground/trees have been disrupted.

We are privileged to be at ground zero for this amazing phenomenon. The only place in the world that periodical cicadas exist is within the eastern United States. Brood X (ten, they use roman numerals) of these periodical cicadas has one of the highest densities here in the DC area. There can be as many as 1.5M+ cicadas per acre! This synchronized emergence of these defenseless, slow flying insects creates predator satiation (there are so many, predators cannot eat them all) and is their survival mechanism.

**Here is their drill:** nymphs emerge at night (you'll see their dime sized holes in the ground), and crawl up vertical surfaces to molt. The adults, about 1.5 inches long, are white upon molting; they darken (and harden their exoskeleton) within an hour to black with red/orange eyes and markings. They leave these cast skins behind, and fly to start chorusing centers at the tops of trees. Males emerge first, and start singing. Their singing is loud, as loud as a chain saw. Both males and females are attracted to the singing. (Note that cicadas may be attracted to the sound of a lawn mower or chain saw, mistaking these for chorusing males. Alonso recommends doing these activities in early morning or late afternoon in order to avoid being a cicada magnet!)

**Where do Cicadas lay their eggs?** Cicadas mate, and then the females look for places to lay their eggs. Females target pencil diameter branches of certain trees to lay their eggs. The female makes a series of slits along these branches with her ovipositor and deposits about 20 rice-sized eggs in each slit for a total of 600 eggs per female. Upon hatching, the nymphs drop, or scurry, to the ground and dig in for 17 years.

**How do Cicadas affect our trees?** Healthy trees don't show long term ill effects. The egg laying inside these pencil width twigs cause many twigs to die off. The wilted and hanging branches are referred to as flagging. Alonso describes this as natural pruning that has been going on for millennia. Trees with a large percentage of twigs of the targeted size are most affected. Trees generally resprout these branches/leaves after this 'haircut' with proper support. Support your trees during drought periods this growing season.

**Are Cicadas dangerous to people or pets?** No. They do not sting, or bite (although they can pierce the skin, if handled). They don't spread disease, or eat our crops. Cicadas are not poisonous. In fact, they are eaten by many animals including ants, spiders, centipedes, 20 species of birds, squirrels, opossums, raccoons, turtles, snakes, and people. These animals gorge on this ready source of protein. If dogs/cats overindulge they may throw up, but they are not harmed by eating cicadas. Moderation is the key!

**How long will we be able to see Cicadas?** Adults will be above ground for about 6 weeks. Eggs hatch 6-10 weeks after oviposition.

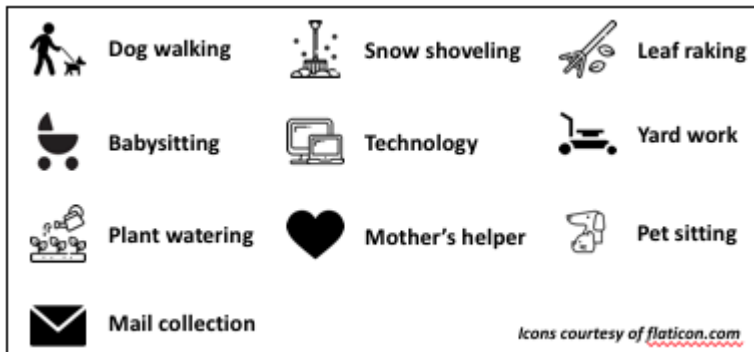
If you are concerned about your trees with a predominance of pencil sized branches: (1) Delay planting trees and shrubs of this size until the fall, or (2) cover trees of concern with netting (1/2" holes) for 6 weeks from cicada emergence. Keep in mind that nets create a larger sail against the wind, so stake the netting and tree. ((3) Insecticides are ineffective against egg laying, and contribute to environmental degradation.)

Remember that our cicadas and trees have co-existed in this natural phenomenon for millennia. And if you're lucky enough to have them in your yard, adult cicadas will be aerating your soil on the way up, and the nymphs on the way back down.



*Your AH newsletter editors kids enjoying Brood X back in 2004. Hours of outdoor fun to be had!*

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