

President's Message

As we enter the fall season, I want to take a moment to reflect on the accomplishments and progress our association has made this year. Our membership has grown, and



Bobby Gompers
WVNLA President

our educational programs have been well-attended and highly praised.

I'm particularly proud of our efforts to bring awareness to the careers available in green industry, as well as the scholarships we have given to the future leaders in our industry.

Looking ahead, I anticipate that WVNLA will focus on several key areas.

1. Expanding our certification programs to better serve our members and the industry.
2. Strengthening partnerships with state agencies and organizations to advance our mission.
3. Enhancing our online presence to improve communication and resource sharing.

I want to thank each of you for your dedication to our industry and association. Your hard work and commitment are what make WVNLA a valuable resource for our members and the community.

Some key dates to keep in mind:

MANTS, January 8-10,
Baltimore

Winter Symposium and Annual Members Meeting/ Breakfast, February 11,
Charleston

Please see *PRESIDENT'S COLUMN* on page 2.

GWL Memorial Scholarship Launches

Two West Virginia University (WVU) freshman started their first semester in August, secure in the knowledge that their tuition was covered by WVNLA's George W. Longenecker scholarship.

Sarah Gompers is a WVU landscape architecture student from Buckhannon who graduated from Buckhannon Upshur High School. Sarah is the daughter of Bobby and Susanne Gompers of Buckhannon. Kiersten Smith of Oak Hill is a graduate of Oak Hill High School and is a WVU horticulture freshman. Kiersten is the daughter of Candi Smith of Oak Hill.

Both students will receive tuition reimbursement for four semesters (a two-year scholarship). They must maintain a 3.0 or above grade point average to continue receiving tuition assistance each semester.

Sarah and Kiersten are the first recipients of the newly named scholarship targeting high school seniors accepted into WVU's Davis College of Agriculture, Natural Resources and Design's landscape architecture and horticulture programs.



"As a future landscape architect, I am passionate about creating sustainable and visually appealing environments that reflect the natural beauty of West Virginia," Sarah said. "As a resident of one of West Virginia's many small towns, I feel it is vital that we work to maintain and improve the appeal for potential residents and businesses. Our state is often known for its natural beauty, and I feel it is important to extend that beyond our yards and throughout our cities."

Kiersten's interest in horticulture started at an early age, inspired both by time in the garden with her mother and also an appreciation of West Virginia's natural beauty. She hopes to put her horticulture degree to use in the state.



Kiersten Smith

"Horticulture is significant to me and to West Virginia. It strengthens West Virginia's tourism and recreation industry by promoting our natural wonders and our national park. It promotes our state's economy by attracting tourists," Kiersten said. "It also significantly impacts West Virginia's food security, supplying accessible and

Please see *SCHOLARSHIP* on page 2.

Members in the News

Congratulations to **Jason Testman, PLA**, LEED AP BD+C, who has been appointed to Charleston's Municipal Beautification Commission (MBC). Jason is a landscape architect, currently



Jason Testman

working for Valley Gardens in Charleston. He is a graduate of West Virginia University's landscape architecture program, as well as a former WVNLA scholarship winner. He currently serves as WVNLA's vice president.

The statutory mission of the MBC is "to advise and recommend to the mayor or the city council

such programs or projects as would, in the opinion of the commission, improve the beauty and general welfare of the city in a manner consistent with the development and conservation goals contained in the city's comprehensive plan," said Anna Forbes, MBC president. She added that she was pleased to welcome Jason to the commission and noted his background and expertise would be especially beneficial to group.

It is with sadness that we note the passing of **Donald Glen Merritt**, founder of G&G Nursery in Lesage, WV. He passed away peacefully at home on July 8. Many WVNLA members know his son **Brett Merritt**, who has run the nursery for many years. Among many other accomplishments, Glen is remembered as a hard-working man of integrity and selflessness who loved his family and friends.

PRESIDENT'S COLUMN

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Pesticide Applicator's Recertification Course, February 12, Charleston

You can be part of any of these initiatives by volunteering for a committee, be it workforce development, education, certification, legislative or event planning. There is something for everyone at WVNLA and I personally invite you to get involved.

Please don't hesitate to reach out to me, our board members (*listed on the final page*) or executive director Julie Robinson at any time.

Thank you. I look forward to seeing you at our upcoming events!

Bobby Gompers is WVNLA's president and the owner of Highland Landscaping and Highland Nurseries in Buckhannon.

SCHOLARSHIP

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nutritious food for all West Virginians."

WVNLA created the George W. Longenecker Memorial Scholarship earlier this year to encourage incoming West Virginia freshmen to consider careers in the green industry in West Virginia. The scholarship will be offered every two years and honors the memory of longtime WVU landscape architecture professor George Longenecker.

WVNLA also offers the Marcus W. Rennix Memorial Scholarship for West Virginia students at who have completed half the required courses in horticulture, landscape architecture, nursery and greenhouse management and other green industry majors in an accredited program and have maintained at least a 2.5 grade point average. This year, five students were awarded scholarships. (*See related article on summer jobs on page 5.*)

The Marcus W. Rennix Memorial Scholarship offers \$5,000 per eligible student, and the deadline

for this year's entries is September 30.

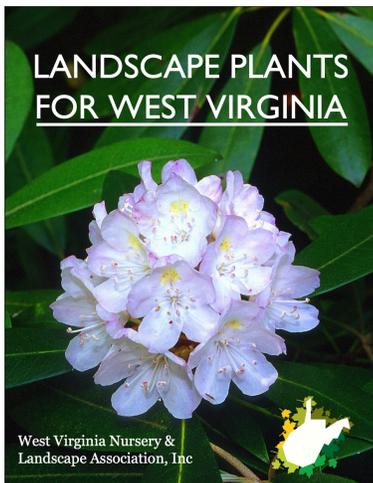
"The scholarships are valuable investments in the future of our industry's professionals, and the students we have awarded scholarships to thus far will be well prepared and will represent us well," said Julie Robinson, WVNLA executive director.

George Longenecker dedicated a lifetime to the study and mentorship of landscape architecture. He was instrumental in developing the landscape architecture program at West Virginia University, where he was beloved by his students and fellow faculty members for his personality and knowledge of plant materials.

He founded and led the effort to organize and establish the West Virginia Botanic Garden in Morgantown. For 35 years, Longenecker served as an advisor for the Pennsylvania Conservancy-sponsored summer landscape architecture internship program for the Frank Lloyd Wright-designed Fallingwater in Mill Run, PA.

Coming Soon: Comprehensive Landscape Plant Guide for WV

In final production now, our “Landscape Plants for West Virginia” guidebook will be unveiled and distributed at WVNLA’s Winter Symposium on February 11 in Charleston. The 80-page, full-color publication contains photos, descriptions, growing requirements and mature sizes of more than 500 plants commonly used in or recommended for West Virginia.



The guides will be free to WVNLA members and are intended for use by landscapers during client presentations, as an educational tool, for distribution in garden centers and in public green spaces, and at industry events.

“I am excited for WVNLA to offer this high-quality informational publication to our members and the public. The photos and descriptions will be

an invaluable tool for us when meeting with clients to discuss a design,” said WVNLA president Bobby Gompers and owner of Highland Landscaping and Highland Nursery in Buckhannon.

After distribution to Winter Symposium attendees, a copy of the guide will be mailed to WVNLA members. Members may request additional copies, after the Winter Symposium.



Mark Your Calendars for 2025 Winter Symposium

Save February 11, 2025 as a date you’ll want to be in Charleston for our Winter Symposium and Annual Members Breakfast Meeting at the Embassy Suites in Charleston. The dual-track format assures something for everyone, with one track focusing on landscape design and the other on business issues.

Design side topics include the evolution of landscape design from a historic perspective, the latest in landscape lighting, soil amendment and bio char, and emerging trends in landscape design.

In the **Business Track**, design build guru Jody Shilan returns to share from his extensive expertise, while other industry experts tackle the many licenses, legalities and regulations business owners must consider as they grow their businesses.

Before the education sessions begin at 9:30 a.m., WVNLA will sponsor an **Annual Members Breakfast Meeting** at 8:30 a.m, also at Embassy Suites. In addition to updating members of opportunities and activities within WVNLA, the

meeting is a great chance to catch up with old friends, welcome new members and exchange ideas.

We’ll introduce our scholarship winners at lunch and draw names for valuable door prizes.

Vendors tables will be set up in the exhibition/registration for attendees to visit. If you would like to reserve a vendor’s table at \$20, please contact Julie Robinson, or register online.

Registration for all events and vendor tables will open in December. Cost to attend is \$50 for WVNLA members and \$100 for non-members and includes lunch. Breakfast at the Annual Members Meeting is also included, but registration is required. You should receive email notifications when registration opens. Contact Julie Robinson at wvnlassoc@gmail.com or 304-553-1234 with questions.



What Every Small Business Needs to Know About the Corporate Transparency Act

The Corporate Transparency Act, which went into effect in January 2024, may require your small business to report information about ownership to the government. Under the act, many U.S. small business owners are required to file corporate transparency reports with beneficial ownership information.

For most eligible businesses, the filing deadline is January 1, 2025. Those who fail to file by this deadline — or fail to update this information if needed — could face up to two years imprisonment and fines up to \$10,000, in addition to civil penalties of up to \$591 per day.

What is the Corporate Transparency Act?

The CTA was enacted in 2021 to combat illicit activity including tax fraud, money laundering, and financing for terrorism by capturing more ownership information for specific U.S. businesses operating in or accessing the country's market. Under the new legislation, businesses that meet certain criteria must submit a Beneficial Ownership Information (BOI) Report to the U.S. Department of Treasury's Financial Crimes Enforcement Network (FinCEN). This report provides details identifying individuals who are associated with the reporting company.

The CTA was established to prevent individuals with malicious intent from hiding or benefitting from the ownership of their U.S. entities to facilitate illegal operations which, according to Congress, is a widely-used tactic that affects national security and economic integrity.

Who is considered a beneficial owner of a company?

According to the CTA, an individual qualifies as a beneficial owner if they directly or indirectly have a significant ownership stake in a company. This person either has a major influence on the reporting company's decisions or operations, owns at least 25% of the company's shares, or has a similar level of control over the company's equity.

What information must be reported about a

company's beneficial owners?

All reporting companies must provide their legal name and trademarks, as well as their current U.S. address, which could be either the address of its main business site or, for foreign-based companies, their U.S. operational location. They'll also need to provide a taxpayer identification number and specify the jurisdiction where they were formed or registered.

Businesses registered or established post-January 1, 2024, must provide information regarding the business, its beneficial owners, and its company applicants — including owners' and applicants' names, addresses, birthdays, and identification numbers (such as a license or passport number), and the jurisdiction of the documents. Businesses established before that date

can omit information

regarding company applicants, and must only submit information on the business and beneficial owners.

While the CTA does not require businesses to submit annual reports, the initial filing period may not be the only time you'll be required to submit information.

"In addition to the required initial filing, there are requirements to update the original filing when

things change," explained Roger Harris, President of Padgett Business Services. "Some of the things that require an updated filing are not things a business owner has ever thought were important to track, and the timeline to report these changes can be as short as 30 days."

Harris noted that business owners may be surprised by some requirements for updated filings. For instance, if a beneficial owner changes their address, legally changes their name due to marriage or divorce, or obtains a new driver's license, it may necessitate an update to a company's BOI report. Operational changes or a new delegation of authority could also qualify.

"If you make changes in the operation and delegation of duties within your business that could

Continued on next page.



John and Edie Jett Commemorate Anniversary with Gift of Moon Gate at WV Botanic Garden

In 2021, John and Edie Jett celebrated their 50th wedding anniversary and sought to mark the occasion with a gift to the West Virginia Botanic Garden (WVBG) in Morgantown, which they have both supported since its inception.

John and Edie are both WVU Agriculture graduates, and John is a long-serving WVNLA board member. Edie was a charter member of the WVBG board of directors formed in 1983 and both she and John served on the board during the garden's early years when there was neither land nor money for the project. They believed in George Longenecker's vision of creating a botanic garden on the site of a former reservoir.



Edie and John Jett

They continued to support the work of George and the many volunteers who helped bring his dream to reality.

The Jetts approached WVBG Executive Director Philip Smith with their offer of a commemorative gift, and he provided some suggestions from his wish list for the gardens. John and Edie were most inspired by the stone moon gate.

They enlisted the creative and skillful talents of stone mason Wes Boddy of New Creek, WV, who worked the project into his 2023 summer schedule. Collaborating with Garden leaders and the Jetts, Wes brought the creative vision of many to fruition.

Located in the Secret Garden, the moon gate features a carved heart and Celtic Awen (inspiration) symbol creating a unique energy signature. The three rays of the Awen may be interpreted as the creative, divine, and spiritual forces that inspire and guide us as we connect with nature.

John and Edie hope the Secret Garden will be the site of many special ceremonies and events long into the future and that the moon gate will continue to stand as a testament to their love for West Virginia, WVBG, the spiritual forces of nature – and each other.



Photo courtesy of the West Virginia Botanic Garden

FILING

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be considered to give a new person substantial control of your business, you could be required to update your filings, even if the person performing those duties did not own any of the business," said Harris.

What is the beneficial ownership information reporting process?

Reporting companies have a limited time to file their initial BOI reports:

- For qualifying reporting companies established before the above date, the filing deadline is January 1, 2025.
- Those created between January 1, 2024,

and January 1, 2025, will have 90 days from either the actual notice of formation or public announcement, whichever comes first, to file.

- Businesses established on or after January 1, 2025, will have 30 days from notification or public announcement of their formation to submit their first report to FinCEN.
- Businesses must submit any corrections or updates to previously filed information within 30 days.

Businesses will not incur a fee for submitting their reports, and electronic forms are available on FinCEN's website: <https://www.fincen.gov/boi>.

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Please Welcome our Newest Members

Garrett Balog

Individual Professional Member

Nature Works

84 Mason St. Apt. 16, Morgantown, WV 26505

704-792-6814.

Gbalog98@gmail.com

Little Blue Garden

Active member

Nate Smith

P.O. Box 655, North Fork, WV 24868

grayhoundyouthsports@gmail.com

304-862-3415

Wholesale nursery, garden center and nursery supplies.

Little Plants, LLC

Active Member

Melissa Cole

P.O. Box 532, Athens, WV 24712

304-920-6385

thecoles1@suddenlink.net

Littleplantsllc.com

Wholesale nursery.

Mon Valley Greenspace Coalition

Associate Member

Rick Landenberger

P.O. Box 498, Morgantown, WV 26505

rlandenski@gmail.com

Public space landscape administrator/maintenance.

Brent Szarka

Individual Professional Member

University of Charleston

122 Arlington Avenue A, Charleston, WV 25302

216-288-3290

brentszarka@gmail.com

Thornsley Tree & Landscape LLC

Active member

Logan Thornsley

210 Everly St., P.O. Box 339

Granville, WV 26534

681-212-7778

thornsleytreeandlandscape@gmail.com

Landscape architect or designer, landscape

construction, landscape and lawn maintenance,

fertilization and weed control, arborist, hardscape

design and installation, and irrigation.

Three B Farm

Active member

Mark Stewart

7695 Barbour County Hwy., Belington, WV 26250

mark22152002@yahoo.com

540-287-2347

Wholesale nursery, retail garden center.

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Scholars Stayed Busy on the Job this Summer

They are now back on campus, or even in a first job, but the 2024 Marcus W. Rennix scholarship winners had busy and productive summers. Read on for a look at what three of them did.

Garrett Oursler, an environmental soils and water sciences major with a minor in horticulture at WVU, worked at three on-campus jobs this summer, all chosen with an eye toward gaining relevant experience.

At the Davis College Store, he learned skills critical to someday managing a retail business.



Garrett Oursler

“From interacting with customers, to promoting West Virginia-made products, to growing plants from seed and plugs, I gained a holistic perspective on running a greenhouse or retail business,” Garrett said.

Garrett also managed the plant collection at the WVU Herbarium.

“In this position, I helped take care of hundreds of

plants from all across the globe. I focused a lot on plant care, pest identification and control, propagation, and other general plant maintenance. My work allows for these plants to thrive and be used in research and classes here at WVU,” he said.



Hailey Lane

As the Sustainability Development Coordinator for WVU Dining Services, he honed projects and programs to cut down on food waste and source more food locally. “This upcoming semester we hope to test run composting in all of our dining halls,” he said of the fall semester. “We will be growing hydroponic herbs and salad greens in dishes in the

dining halls.”

Hailey Lane, a WVU horticulture major, worked as a paid intern at the WVU organic farm in Morgantown, where she gained a wide range of knowledge. On the job, she transplanted and harvested plants in the market garden, assisted with and maintained research plots and even worked with sheep and donkeys.

“I do believe this experience is preparing me for what I’d love to do as a long-term goal, which is to have a little market garden and greenhouse business myself,” Hailey said.

In addition to the hands-on experience, Hailey relished the opportunity to attend lectures given by Davis College professors on topics such as nematode research and environmental studies. She also enjoyed field trips to other farms and agriculture-related facilities.

Hayden Swain graduated from WVU this spring with a bachelor’s degree in landscape architecture. He accepted a position at Biafore Landscape Development in Morgantown, where he interned.

“I was considering two other offers in Pennsylvania and Virginia, but I knew deep down, staying here would be the right decision for me. Since I started my internship here, I have learned so much more about the field from Mike (Biafore) than school could ever have taught me,” Hayden said.

Hayden said that studying landscape architecture at WVU was one of the best decisions he’s made. He’s pleased to be putting that education to use. “So far, I’ve worked alongside Mike on numerous projects and have gained significant insight and knowledge about landscape architecture and business practices since graduation. The most fulfilling thing I have enjoyed so far is seeing our design ideas and plans actually being brought to life,” Hayden said.



Hayden Swain

WVNLA NEWS

P. O. Box 20284

Charleston, WV 25362

Dates to Note

Sept. 30	Marcus W Rennix scholarship application deadline
Oct. 25	WVNLA Board Meeting, West Virginia Botanic Garden, Morgantown, 10 a.m.
Jan. 8-10	Mid-Atlantic Nursery Trade Show, Baltimore
Feb. 11	WVNLA Winter Symposium, Charleston
Feb. 12	Pesticide Applicator's Recertification session, Charleston
Feb. 12	Certified Professional Horticulturist Exam, Charleston



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John Jett – drjohnjett@gmail.com

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