

CHARLIE MARTINO



ON WILLIAMSBURG BOTANICAL GARDEN



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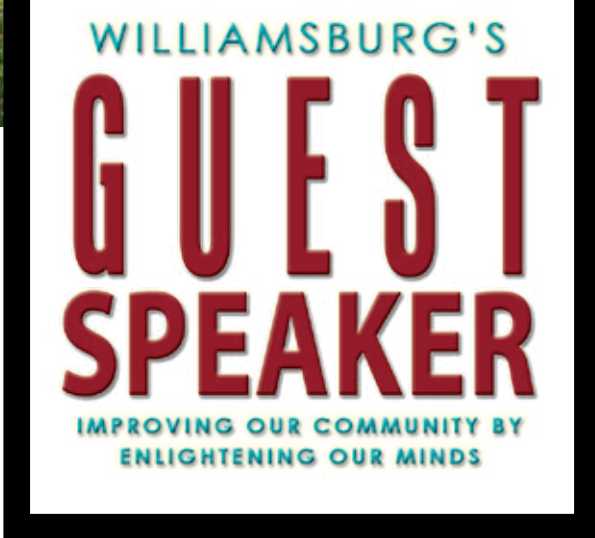
JACK JOHNSTON



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Charlie Martino is the operations manager for Cooke's Gardens on Jamestown Road. He moved here from Long Island, NY in 1980 after receiving his Degree in Architecture. He was stationed at The US Coast Guard Base in Yorktown.

After 20 years in architecture, Charlie decided to change careers and focus his attention on the green industry.

Charlie has been very involved within

our community serving on several boards including the Williamsburg Chamber and

Tourism Alliance, Williamsburg Housing Partnerships, Williamsburg Botanical Garden, United Way and the Lafayette High School PTSA.

"Get involved with something in the community. Don't just sit back and complain about what's happening around you," says Charlie. *"Volunteer a little of your time and see how good it feels."*

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• What is your role with Williamsburg Botanical Garden?

Vice Chairman.

• How did you first become involved?

I was invited to attend a meeting to discuss the formation of a botanical garden in the Williamsburg area and share my knowledge and views as a resident since 1980.

• What is the mission of Williamsburg Botanical Garden?

The Williamsburg Botanical Garden is dedicated to increasing knowledge, awareness and appreciation of nature.

• Where is the garden located?

In Freedom Park off Centerville Road.

• How long has it been there?

The existing two acre botanical garden opened to the public in 2005.

• How did it get its start?

Early in 2000, a small group of residents discussed the need and initiated the garden concept. As one of the original members of that group, I recall how exciting and challenging the concept of starting a botanical garden was. It was exciting to be creating something that would be enjoyed and become a part of Williamsburg for years to come.

• Who maintains the garden?

The Williamsburg Botanical Garden is all about the community. Awesome dedicated volunteers within our community provide the weekly care for the garden. Annually, the United Way of Greater Williamsburg coordinates volunteers during the Day of Caring that help with weeding, watering and mulching. Anyone can volunteer to help, just check the web site for details www.williamsburgbotanicalgarden.org

• Describe what people will see if they visit the garden.

The garden is a place of beauty, solitude and enjoyment. It is designed to allow visitors to meander along paths and explore the many treasures like the butterfly garden, wildflower meadow, native plants, wetlands, herb garden, perennial border garden, pine woodland area and an example of a calcareous ravine. A children's garden is also under construction to provide educational programs.

• What types of plants and flowers are growing there?

This is a great question that I can only answer by saying you have to see it to believe it. Each month brings a new variety to bloom and surprise our visitors. Even during the cold months you will see birds foraging for seeds from the flowers earlier in the year.

• **Is there a diverse population of wildlife there as well – such as butterflies, hummingbirds, etc?**

You will be thrilled to see the wide variety of butterflies and birds during your visit to the garden. Fortunately, we were able to construct a deer fence to help protect the many plants which our volunteers have carefully planted and nurtured over the years.

• **How is the garden funded?**

Memberships and in-kind donations provide the basis of our funding. We do not receive any dollars from the surrounding jurisdictions.

• **How can someone volunteer? Donate?**

We welcome individuals, families and businesses to volunteer and hopefully become a member. Check out our website for details. This is a 501(c) non profit organization and we welcome donations to help us maintain our existing garden and fund our plan to grow.

• **Are any special events held at the gardens?**

Our programs committee has several educational and fun programs on a variety of topics from plants to bird watching and even a 'build a bird house' competition.

• **When is the best time for people to visit?**

The two acres of paths and plants in our garden is open year round from 7 a.m. to dusk and is FREE to the public. This is a great place to find a bench and watch the butterflies or sit under the outdoor pavilion which features a green roof.

• **What are plans for the future of the garden?**

Our vision is to grow and acquire a site of 50 to 80 acres for display gardens, pathways, courtyards, a conservatory, maintenance buildings and parking. The existing garden at Freedom Park will remain as our foundation stone in Williamsburg to remind us that we started small, established a following of great volunteers and demonstrated that our community believes how important it is to have a world renowned botanical garden in the Williamsburg area.

• **What other things would you like for the public to know about Williamsburg Botanical Garden?**

Williamsburg is known for its history that was made possible by the people that lived here. The future growth of the Williamsburg Botanical Garden can be achieved if each reader of this article will believe in our mission and join as a member to help us grow.

For more information on Williamsburg Botanical Garden visit:

www.williamsburgbotanicalgarden.org



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