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Buzzing Around Burnside- Bees go to work at Burnside Plantation

BETHLEHEM, PA, April 2020 – The sun is shining, the trees are in bloom – it must be spring! While COVID-19 has slowed or impacted work for many, at Historic Bethlehem Museums & Sites (HBMS) the Burnside Plantation Garden Volunteers have been working hard to prepare their plots while responsibly social distancing. But they’re not the only volunteers out in the colonial garden these days. On Tuesday, April 14 HBMS added tens of new members to our team at Burnside. You won’t see them wearing masks and gloves though – they’re bees!

The new tenants are Mason Bees and they have a very important job. They will help pollinate the beds in the colonial garden and the trees in the apple orchard. Unlike honeybees who pollinate only 5% of the flowers they land on, Mason Bees pollinate 95% of the flowers they land on! That’s because Mason Bees belly flop onto the flower, getting pollen all over their little bodies that they carry along. They can visit up to 2,000 flowers a day.

Over the next few weeks, the bees will begin to emerge from the nesting block installed on the Summer Kitchen to begin collecting pollen and nectar. The grounds of Burnside Plantation are open daily from dusk to dawn for social distancing walks to explore the grounds and developing garden. While you should remain mindful of your surroundings, the Mason Bees are not aggressive should you run into them while they carry out their important job.

With this year being the 50th anniversary of Earth Day, HBMS considers the bees as an early Earth Day present to Mother Nature, that will ensure the health and beauty of the historic Burnside Plantation for generations to come.

For more information, please contact Lindsey Jancay, Director of Programming and Collections, at ljancay@historicbethlehem.org.

Historic Bethlehem Museums & Sites is a not-for-profit institution that brings to life three centuries of American history. Historic Bethlehem tells the story of a small town of great influence, home to some of our nation’s early settlers, to the first pumped municipal water system in the American colonies, and to one of the world’s greatest industrial companies. Historic Bethlehem is located in eastern Pennsylvania, only an hour drive north from Philadelphia and 2 hours west of New York City. Historic Bethlehem is an Affiliate of the Smithsonian Institution, part of a National Historic Landmark District, and a designated site on the US Tentative List.

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