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Opinion

A healthy planet and nation take tending



Virginia Bluebells, shown here in Carderock, are native throughout the eastern United States. (Dayna Smith/For The Washington Post)

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A walk in D.C.'s Brookland neighborhood can be an uplifting experience. For several months, I've found shelter with relatives while undergoing treatment at Sibley Memorial Hospital. Doctors recommend exercise for most medical conditions, so, twice a day, I walk Brookland's sidewalks. As a lifelong member of the Audubon Society, I look for yards with native plants

because they are essential in providing food for birds or attracting insects on which birds feed. It is heartening to see the number of yards where people have planted native grasses, perennials, shrubs and trees. Also comforting are the many encouraging yard signs announcing respect for all humans, for science, the desire for social justice and the belief in kindness to all.

The effort made to plant natives signals an awareness of the need to reverse the damage we have done to Earth's life support systems. But the yard signs people have "planted" are equally inspiring because they signal awareness of the urgent need for social justice.

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Someone can create a garden in a moment of enthusiasm. Then, when it is discovered that the plants require tending, the garden falls into disrepair. Likewise, a well-intentioned yard sign must be followed by concrete action if the sign's sentiments are to grow and contribute to a better America. We can only hope that the understanding and compassion expressed in these placards are more than fleeting passions. Tending our environment and ensuring justice are linked. We cannot have a healthy environment without social justice.

Jack Stewart, *Jasper, Ark.*