Northern Virginia’s rural beauty is matched only by its rich history, and this combination—sites worthy of historical preservation tucked within a protected and preserved landscape—make the region a desirable place to live, work and visit. Indeed the Virginia economy gets a $7.7 billion boost each year thanks to cultural heritage tourists seeking to experience exactly the type of historic landscape Fauquier County offers.

Blackthorne Inn and its 68 acres is an example of what makes the county the unique place it is. The property’s primary value and attraction lies in its historical and rural character, and thus preserving these aspects as integral to Fauquier County’s ethos is paramount for Easton Porter Group, the property owners.

“We are excited to return this circa 1760s building back to its original glory,” says Dean Andrews of Easton Porter Group. Currently, the property is in disrepair, and the historic integrity of the original two-story stone dwelling has been compromised with various 20th century ad-hoc additions over the years. Design plans include complete restoration of stone dwelling originally known as Greystone House, including removing modern additions not in-keeping with its period architecture. The dwelling is situated on property that was the site of considerable fighting during the Civil War, territory that Colonel John S. Mosby would have traversed while making his famous raids. At one point, Union soldiers stored horses behind the property until Confederate troops drove them off the property.

When the former owners purchased the property in 1970, the front door still bore scars where Yankee soldiers had kicked it in.
Since 1986, the property has served as a bed and breakfast known as the 1763 Inn and Restaurant. The O’Connor family purchased the 1763 Inn in April 2007 and renamed it The Blackthorne Inn, which included a popular tavern and restaurant in one of the 20th century additions to the structure.

Easton Porter Group’s track record in historic preservation is well known in the city that set the benchmark for historic preservation—Charleston, South Carolina. There they have created, Zero George, a small boutique hotel comprised of five former residences in the heart of Charleston’s historic district. The buildings are all more than 150 years old, with the oldest dating from 180, and two of the buildings were moved to the site as part of a preservation effort when their original site was slated to become a parking lot. Easton Porter Group invested heavily in meticulously restoring these historic properties, returning them to their original splendor and significantly improving their grounds and environs. Similarly, Cannon Green, another Easton Porter Group property in Charleston, was designed around salvaging an 1840’s single house façade. Both projects have received accolades from design and preservation groups.
We look forward to cultivating a lush chef’s garden on the site of an old black-top tennis court behind Blackthorne Inn, and growing herbs, vegetables and cut flowers for use in Blackthorne’s restaurant. This direct connection to the land is something that Easton Porter Group celebrates, and thus care for the health and sustainability of the land is a top priority. When guests savor goodness produced from this rich Virginia soil, they are tasting history, they better understand and honor place. This has been our principle and our practice at Pippin Hill, and as our horticulturalist Diane Burns can attest, nothing tastes better than produce from a well-loved and gently tended garden. See her gardening tips in the sidebar, and follow along as we continue plans to re-energize Blackthorne Inn into a place of similar bounty and goodness.

Featured Images: The gardens at Pippin Hill Farm & Vineyards in North Garden, Virginia and Certified Horticulturist and Head Gardener, Diane Burns

3 SEASON GARDENING
Tips From Certified Horticulturist Diane Burns

Order seeds in January and start cool season plants inside in late February/early March in cell packs (6-8 weeks of before last frost date).

Set up a shelving unit or a tabletop with a grow light and a heating mat to help germination.

Cool season plants to start inside: Leeks, head lettuce, spinach, kale & greens.

Harden off plants outside during the day for 3-5 days and then plant in your garden.

Start warm season plants in cell packs in late March/early April.
Warm season plants to start inside: tomatoes, basil, peppers, eggplant, cucumbers & melons.

Acclimate plants outside during the day for 3 – 5 days and then plant in your garden after last frost date.

Repeat step 1 of cool season plants in August to plant in your garden in September. Plant “starts” in your garden 6 weeks before the first frost date.

You can extend these late fall plants with row covers to harvest all the way through Christmas.