



George Landis Arboretum NEWSLETTER

Published Quarterly by the Friends of the Arboretum

Volume 7, Number 2

April, May, June 1988

We have had a very difficult spring. It seemed as though the rain would never stop. Chilly days and cold nights continued. The grass grew and grew and the ground was spongy with water that had no place to go. If one area could be mowed, the plot next to it looked shaggier than ever. This was happening at the Arboretum as well as on our home lawns. Finally the sun emerged, the cool days turned to hot ones, drying breezes blew and blew and many seedling plants withered and perished. Ninety-plus degree days discourage happy gardening. But real gardeners are always optimistic: their philosophy being that next season will be more benign or that next spring there will be the proper mixture of sun and rain and the border will develop exactly as planned.

The Friends of the Arboretum recently elected officers for 1988-89

Chairman:	Chuck Weed
Vice Chairman:	Jack Middleton
Recording Secretary:	Janet Riley
Corresponding Secretary:	Kathie Lippitt
Treasurer:	Don Rexford

We all want to thank Nancy Rexford for the many hours in the past years she has spent serving as Recording/Corresponding Secretary, a job that kept growing as the Friends' membership increased. (For new readers, the Friends of the Arboretum is a group that meets monthly to plan ways to help at the Arboretum. The members raise money through food sales and are currently conducting a raffle of a handmade quilt. Any member of the Arboretum is welcome to become a Friend. To learn more about it, call Kathie Lippitt at 399-4544. Dinner meetings are held usually on the first Tuesday on the month. In warm weather, they are pot luck style held at the Meeting House at 6 p.m.)

Since there is so much renewed interest in fragrant, low maintenance, old fashion roses, we would like to develop a collection at the Arboretum. Before spending the Arboretum's money, we thought we could ask the membership to help us out. If you would like to donate an shrub rose that has suckered or can be propagated by a cutting, please contact Margaret Law at 463-5256.

Don't forget our annual Photo Contest. We have had excellent photos each year and look forward to this year's entries. Send by September 1st your favorite photo of the Arboretum from any season to Mrs. Erastus Corning II, P.O. Box 431, Albany, N.Y., 12201. Photos will become the property of the Arboretum. Winners will be announced and 1st, 2nd, and 3rd prizes awarded later in the month.

We take pride in announcing the winners of our Favorite (Most Disliked) Tree Contest. We were very pleased to have a large number of entries, especially in the Junior Category. We would like to thank the teachers and other people who helped generate interest in this contest.

In the Junior Category: First Prize - Jonathan Getnick
Second Prize - Dorothy Linda
Second Prize - Helen Bell
Second Prize - Carrie Brown

In the Adult Category: Favorite Tree - Kathie Lippitt
Most Disliked - Joanne Lender

All prize winners were able to accept their prizes at our Arbor Day celebration and joined in commemorating the occasion by helping to plant the beautiful Japanese Umbrella Pine (*Sciadopitys verticillata*).

We will print winning essays in the newsletter as space permits.

Concolor Fir
by Kathie Lippitt

As I pushed the heavily loaded wheelbarrow which alternately threatened to spill its load to the right, then to the left, as I pushed it, half running to keep it going up that hill to our house, as I dumped this little bit of living, new found knowledge into its predug and fertilized hole, the least item on my agenda was what the little conifer would look like in fifteen years. I had done a man-sized job and I wasn't sure from my heart beat whether or not I would even live through it.

I can't remember its being close to the house the next two winters, it must have been covered by snow. The following fall I noticed that the lower set of branches on the garden side had missed sun most of the year, being draped by some perennial or other.

Then came the beautiful Christmas Eve, we put lights on the fir tree outside the dining room and sat the night almost through watching the tree, the lights, the snow as they blended with each other with our dreams, romance, and wine. Our tree had structure, now, filling up with snow, where once it had been completely covered with it. Its bright lights of early evening softened as the clock passed midnight and the snow continued to fall, steadily.

A greenhouse -- alpine house -- was put in place a year or two after, way across on the other side of the path from our concolor fir. At the time they had seemed a nice balance to each other. Long last the fir blocked my view of the apartments behind us. That was the reason for it being moved up the hill to begin with.

To help drain the garage from winter through spring my husband dug out the path between the fir and the greenhouse putting in concrete blocks, edged with more concrete blocks, flower pot side up. I planted the concrete pots, cared for them, transferred many plants to them and spent time, energy, money planning them.

Then one year recently I found myself stepping way off the walk to go around my concolor fir -- stepping on my block garden to avoid being brushed by the growing-out-of-its-bounds concolor fir.

"We have to move the walk," I told my husband quietly that night, "It interferes with the fir tree."

To my surprise he answered "O.K. Just not this week-end, maybe next."

The next day I looked at the magnificent branches of the tree building up, up to a glorious height. I had no idea how much taller it would get. Consulting with TAYLOR'S ENCYCLOPEDIA OF GARDENING, I was shocked to realize that this was the tree my mother has encouraged to grow outside our cabin in the mountains of Colorado when I had been a little girl, this was the tree coming up all over that tiny bit of the Rocky Mountains I thought of as childhood home. And the first word Taylor uses to describe the tree is the one I chose "magnificent". He continues, "Abies concolor. White or Colorado fir. One of the most satisfactory of the cultivated firs and widely planted. It is a grayish barked tree up to 125 feet. Leaves nearly 2 inches long, unnotched. Cones 3-5 inches long greenish-purple.... It is the best fir for city planting." The word concolor means colored the same throughout.

I had been told to plant it a distance from the house, not right next to it. Now I could see it from the window a floor above the dining room, it was so tall.

"That tree has to come down," I remarked to my friend, Betty Bloom. "It has quite outgrown the space I allotted to it."

Betty said, "You can't cut that down; that was my inspiration to plant my concolor firs. It's a beautiful tree."

I cut a little bit of it away so we could use the walk, but the next winter it blocked the sunshine that once streamed through the window.

It grew toward the house, as well as toward the walk. A new little screen porch we had added would be in trouble in a couple of years if we didn't cut it down.

But, last fall we could look right through it to see the bright colored sweaters on our granddaughters who were on the other side of the tree, swinging on the swing set.

And, this Christmas as I looked out that same dining room window, I realized the concolor fir was a member of our family, requiring very careful consideration, not merely a landscape decision, such as one would give to any old tree. It was part of us; we could live together in its shade.

- and from Joanne Lender, our co-winner, on her Least Favorite Tree

A few years ago you could by law
Wipe out a Poplar with your saw.
Albany's ordinance which so allowed.
Has sadly now been disavowed.

What good is the dirty Poplar tree?
Anything positive? Please tell me.
This Cottonwood has no beautiful bloom
Nor glorious fragrance to fill a room.

It has no happy color in the fall.
It hasn't a redeeming feature at all.
Instead it throws that Cottonwood snow
Just when gardeners are trying to sow.

Gardening is anything but wonderful fun
When eyes and nose from Cottonwood run.

It invades our world, it makes us sneeze,
It sticks on screens, at night we wheeze.

Wouldn't it be nice if we could
Somehow rid the world of Cottonwood.

- and from our Junior Division:

My Favorite Tree
by Jonathan Getnick (5th grade)

My favorite tree is the one that I planted from a seed.
My father, my sister, and I were taking a walk in early autumn when we came across a huge, beautiful maple tree. Maple seeds were whirling down from the leaves. "We could take a few and plant them," I suggested. We took about five seeds and planted them in a pot. By late fall it was big enough and healthy enough to plant in the ground. That was three years ago. Now, it is taller than my father. Its big beautiful branches reach upward toward the heavens. Its light brown trunk stands up straight and tall even in the worst of storms. I really love that tree and I hope it will grow up to be like its mother, next door!

* * * * *

Three new trustees have been elected to the Board recently. Kathie Lippitt who works so hard at the Rock Garden and indeed has contributed time and energy in many ways, is probably known to you all. Our other trustees are Dr. William Fairchild of Union College and Linda Blumenstock, both of whom will bring new dimensions with their many talents.

FAMILY DAY A HOPPING SUCCESS

The frogs hopped, the leaf-hoppers hopped, and the children hopped too, as seventeen families signed in for an afternoon of discovery on June 26th.

At the pond by the big weeping willows, Mary Ann Finley explained the frogs and plants and insects while Chuck Weed splashed about getting more specimens. On the lawn nearby, Anita Sanchez-Steele talked about the insects which the children had netted and placed on a sheet. Plastic magnifying glasses were given out to add to the fun.

After two sessions of each activity, the group started on a walk through the trees led by Pam Rowling, with an assist from John Abbuhl. The walk was shortened a bit when the drizzle at the start turned after a half-hour into a downpour.

Everyone returned to the meeting room to get warm and dry. Then Chuck Weed gave a great presentation on bee-keeping without the bees, who were nasty because of the weather.

Through it was now 4 pm and the official end of the events, Mary Ann went up to the upper pond with a dozen or so die-hards, to see what a recently made pond might contain. The rain had let up, and the frogs and cat-tails were worth it.

Throughout the sessions (for 3 hours!), Nancy Rexford greeted newcomers with maps and materials at the parking lot, and got them to the activities. Marcia and Jack Middleton took lots of pictures.

Besides their own activities, the above-mentioned Friends of the Arboretum, along with Don Rexford and Wayne B'Rells, did all those things needed to make it a great and enjoyable day.

Almost all the families had never been to the Arboretum before, and had heard about Family Day from the media, so thanks are due to Kathie Lippitt, Anita, and Marcia for the publicity. The turnout, on a day of drizzles and heavy overcast, was very gratifying. Between 50 and 60 people, not counting the Friends, attended.

Report from Ann B'Rells

Notes from Pam

You will, no doubt, be glad to observe on your next visit to the Arboretum, that we are finally winning the battle of the knee deep lawn. This season's weather in Esperance had been very strange. We jumped from very cold, very wet weather to weather that is reminiscent of August - hot and dry.

We are using the grass hay to mulch around trees to help conserve moisture and control weeds.

The Albany Master Gardeners have been arriving once a week to labor over the Van Loveland perennial garden area. We have worked up a good sized holding bed for perennial divisions and seedlings to facilitate the restoration work. Now that we have this area and a means of watering it, we are soliciting donations from all you gardeners of named divisions of all types of perennial plants which we may incorporate into our design.

continued on page 6.....

* * * * *

Will you please check your records for your 1988 membership. We will add an asterisk on your mailing label if our not infallible computer records show the lack of current dues.

----- CUT -----

Friend \$10-25
Sponsor \$25-50
Supporting \$50-100
Patron \$100+

GEORGE LANDIS ARBORETUM

Membership Application

Please support the extensive work of the arboretum and make a tax deductible contribution.

Name _____
Address _____
Zip _____

Phone _____ [_____] Renewal

Amount Enclosed _____ [_____] New Member

THANK YOU

Pam cont... In addition to the perennial garden, other areas on the grounds are being targeted for particular attention this season. The Northeastern N.Y. State Nurserymen's association was very helpful in providing and installing the landscape planting at the meeting house. Mrs. Richard Paul, as a memorial to her late husband, Trustee and former treasurer of the George Landis Arboretum, donated the primary funds for this project. Further donations came from the generosity of the local nurserymen's association and the Board of the G.L.A.

The lilac area and the rhododendron areas are targeted for concentrated attention this year. After a particularly good flowering season, labeling is up to date. Plants lost due to reasons other than hardiness will be replaced as funds or donations are available.

A very dedicated core of volunteers has been working at the continual job of removing weedy trees and shrubs that had become established. They are also laboring to clean out much of the old, dangerous dead standing timber. We will try to leave certain solid dead trees for nesting sites but the clean up job will continue.

Attendance at our educational programs is on the rise. Bird watchers noted 45 species of birds on their tour. James Bates inspired people to go home and "properly" renovate all their overgrown shrubbery. Family Day was a particular success. Undaunted by the intermittent rain, 55 people (young and not so young) explored the worlds of insects, pond life, and trees of the world.

The continued success of our garden relies on the enthusiasm and input of the public. Please feel free to always get involved by your physical labor, your constructive ideas or criticism.



GEORGE LANDIS ARBORETUM
Lape Road
Esperance, N.Y. 12066

Non-Profit Organization
U.S. Postage Paid
Esperance, N.Y.
Permit No. 6
