



## THE BRENTON ARBORETUM

### Fall Newsletter, October 2012

FIRST THOUGHTS. The original idea for the arboretum was to take a piece of land and plant many different trees in groups of similar species, in order that the public might learn about them and, also enjoy a relaxing, tranquil experience. This idea grew into a clearer vision of an institution, which would also offer education as well as conduct limited woody plant research. These thoughts propagated an operating foundation, which would own in perpetuity an arboretum with employees, a board of directors and volunteers, as well as dependable, if limited, funding.

So that is where we are and this is what we have done. The board of directors fully agrees that these activities, which began in 1996, will continue to be central to our mission, and be our driving force. We just want to do it all better: we want to improve the breadth and provenance of our tree collections; increase sources of funding; control siltation and erosion problems; make individual trees and shrubs more easily found in the collection, and also expand beyond our 120 acres into the 20 acres of the Stine addition. This all is underway. Please keep your eye on us.

### What is going on out here

DROUGHT. We all are well aware of the drought in our lives. Here at the arboretum it has a special meaning. Our many young trees need special attention. We watered all trees planted this and last year plus certain others. The European larch, *Larix deciduas*, is an example of a special watering situation. Although well established, several defoliated, and then, in August, with some rain and cooler weather, they came back a bit. Katsura, *Cercidiphyllum japonicum*, is similar. In general, the native trees are fine; most oaks and hickories in particular. On the other hand, our Rocky Mountain Junipers, *Juniperus scopulorum*, which have struggled in the past, are actually thriving in this hot dry weather.

If you are wondering about planting a tree, this is a very good time to visit us and see how various tree species are doing in the drought. Take a look at our specimens or call Andy Schmitz, Director of Horticulture, to gain his opinion.

COLLECTIONS/EVALUATION/RESEARCH. Just north of our offices you will find a large group of 2'-3' Kentucky coffeetrees, *Gymnocladus dioicus*, growing in cloth bags. These grew from seeds collected by Andy Schmitz from 13 states and represent 45 populations. It is our hope to permanently plant many of these trees out in the arboretum next spring as part of our on-going evaluation of this species. This is a one-of-a-kind project in the United States.

In 2010 and 2011 we planted out most all the trees in our ten-year conifer research project, now completed. All species are thriving. We particularly like the looks and hardiness of the Korean fir, *Abies koreana*, and the Chinese white pine, *Pinus armandii*. Our aim is to encourage homeowners to consider these conifers when they see what beautiful, healthy trees they are.

***Please join us December 8th at 10 am for a tour of the conifer collections.***

During 2012 we continued to upgrade our collections by planting seeds from wild sources with known origins. Examples are post oaks, *Quercus stellata*, blackjack oaks, *Q. marilandica*, bitternut, *Carya cordiformis*, and shellbark hickory, *Carya laciniosa*. To make room sometimes this means the removal of a tree with unknown provenance. This practice is ongoing and better ensures that we have a very high quality collection.

MASTER PLANNING. We have engaged the services of Oehme van Sweden and Associates ([www.ovsla.com](http://www.ovsla.com)) to develop a master plan for the twenty-acre Stine addition, adjoining the arboretum on the southeast. This Washington, D.C. landscape architectural firm is particularly well known for their use of both woody and herbaceous native species in their work, and for pioneering the "New American Garden" style of landscape design. They are just completing a major project for the Chicago Botanical Garden in Glencoe, Illinois, which we find quite stunning. A major part of this master plan will be a riverine walk using native species and wildflowers. This work is being funded by the Eddy Family Foundation, for which we are grateful.

SUPPORT. Thank you to all of our members for your ongoing support. We list you on our back page. It means so much. Your membership is one of several ways you can help us with the work we do here. You might wish to also consider a membership as a gift for somebody special, or an organizational membership to share with valued employees. Another option would be to rent the Vista Room, a beautiful setting with magnificent views, for a holiday party.

There are opportunities for quiet enjoyment scattered throughout the arboretum; pockets among the trees or at the top of a hill where you can pause and enjoy the natural world around you. These "people pockets" are there just waiting for a bench or other enhancements. Let either of us know if you are interested in supporting or funding the development of one of these special places.

**NATURE PLAY.** You may have read about nature play in past newsletters or on our website, but have you visited the recently dedicated O'Brien Nature Play Area? This summer, we added a tunnel, pockets of prairie plants, new huge stumps, and more. We truly believe children need to experience nature first-hand and childhood is the best time for conservation values to form. For this reason we created the nature play area and why we offer activities like Puddles & Ponds, Tinder & Twilight, Family Play Dates and our popular Nature Clubs. So if you have not seen it yet, please come visit. Your children will really enjoy it.

**OUTREACH.** To determine what people think of and what they want from the arboretum, we have just completed a membership survey and held a focus group. The survey affirms that recreation and learning about trees are high on a list of uses, with exercise and education also very important. Once fully evaluated, we will share the findings with you on our website and tell you how we plan to use them. Your comments are valuable to us and always welcome.

**CONSERVATION.** As you may know, conservation is an important part of our work at the arboretum. It involves activities such as removing invasive plants, collecting seeds, burning prairie, and, of course, teaching the next generation about the natural world.

We have good news! Finally, after five years, a conservation easement has been placed on the 80 acres of farm ground adjoining us on the west, which limits the ways in which the land can be used. This will buffer the arboretum in the future from non-compatible development on our west side.

Once again, we will be burning a portion of our prairie this fall. We use this prairie management tool in order to reduce competition to native forbs and grasses.

You may have noticed that our small pond, "Teardrop", was dredged last month; the second time in three years. Recent algae, siltation and bank erosion along our east stream corridor have made us think about storm water best management practices for the future. In September, we hosted a visioning meeting to discuss potential watershed scale solutions, which would be environmentally and economically sustainable. This is an ambitious initiative, which would include providing education on water conservation and the role trees play in storm water management. We want to be involved in this important issue which affects us all.

RENTALS. Last year, we built a new wing, which houses what we call “The Vista Room”. Until now, we have had no space for large meetings of our own making and for our membership use. We now have a beautiful, functional room with kitchenette and presentation amenities. The room has an exceptionally dramatic view of the arboretum through tall, ceiling to floor windows. It is here for your use: weddings, birthdays, business meetings and retreats or a holiday party. Please take a look. Contact Lee Goldsmith (515.992.4211) for more information.

VOLUNTEERS. We mention our volunteers in many of our newsletters. Their substantial efforts speak to what we do, and are invaluable. Here is just one example: In early June we had two workdays. You may recall it was very hot and dry then. Yet, six people showed up to help with the O'Brien Nature Play Area and the new plantings around the Vista Room. Now, a few months later, plantings at both areas are thriving despite this summer's excessive heat. It looks very good, and we thank our marvelous volunteers. There are so many who have helped in a variety of ways and continue to do so. We look forward to highlighting the contributions of these special people in future newsletters and on our website.

Please visit our website ([www.thebrentonarboretum.org](http://www.thebrentonarboretum.org)) for a complete list of our volunteer opportunities, or call and speak with Lee.

VOLUNTEER OPPORTUNITY. It occurred to us that some of you might wish to become involved with a special need we have with our field-trip program for school children here at the arboretum. Occasionally, teaching assistants are needed to help with extra large school groups, which are increasingly wishing to visit the arboretum. Training is required for this satisfying and important work. Please contact Lee Goldsmith for more information.

Time to close. Our very best to you, our members, and friends as 2012 comes to an end...and, again, our thanks.

Sincerely,



Lynn Kuhn, Director



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