

Newsletter April 2014

Spring Greetings!

Have you ever asked yourself, “Why am I doing this?” Every once in a while, we have to pause to think about why we do what we do, because we simply can’t do it all. This certainly has been the case at the arboretum this past winter and early spring as our board and staff have engaged in strategic planning. As you know from past newsletters, we do much in each part of our mission; education, research, conservation and quiet enjoyment. It is easy to share *what* we do and *how* we do it with you our members, and now I want to share a few of the *why*’s.

Why do we engage in plant conservation? Many people think of water, soil, or even animals when they think of conservation. However, plant conservation is important too. Just like certain animals, some trees are threatened with extinction. Public gardens, like the Brenton Arboretum, play an important role in the protection of these trees. This is why we conduct research, curate genetic diversity and offer education on plant conservation. Here are some examples:

Research & Curating Genetic Diversity

Andy Schmitz, Director of Horticulture, has been on several seed collecting trips, primarily for Kentucky coffeetree seeds. He has collected from over 70 wild populations from across this tree’s native range, with more trips planned. The trees have been growing for three years and are ready to be added



to the permanent collection. As you can see, we will have a collection with much genetic diversity which adds to the conservation value of the collection. This genetic material will be available if there is ever a need to repopulate this species in the future.

Education

Vanishing Acts: Trees Under Threat is a traveling exhibit created by the Morton Arboretum.

The only place in Iowa to see this exhibit this year is at the Brenton Arboretum from **June 6 -**

November 21. This outdoor exhibit highlights seventeen threatened trees, four of which can be

found at the arboretum. Look for these trees during your next visit to the arboretum. What a

great opportunity to learn more about plant conservation!

Emerging Threats Join us on **June 7th** at 2 pm as Paul Tauke, Forestry Bureau Chief Iowa DNR, discusses serious diseases and pests threatening our trees. Don't miss this opportunity to hear the latest on emerald ash borer, and much more. This event is for members only, so bring a friend or colleague with you so they can join the arboretum that day for only \$15.



National Public Gardens Day is May 9 We will offer guided tours of the arboretum at 10 am and 2 pm that will highlight the Kentucky coffeetree project, alternatives to ash trees and tell the story of the "Restoration" chestnut. Make a donation to the arboretum on May 9 and receive a beautiful arrangement to take home to Mom. Better yet, bring her with you so she can experience the arboretum for herself!

See the back page for a complete list of classes and events.



Why is provenance important?

By Andy Schmitz, Director of Horticulture & General Manager

Provenance: The word provenance is being heard a lot more around the offices at the arboretum as we discuss our collections and decide on how to enhance and expand them. From art museums to arboretums, the word provenance is used for describing the origin or the history of an accessioned or acquired object, be the object a historical painting or in the case of the arboretum, a tree.

For a piece of art work, provenance is the history, who created it and owned it, and where has the art work resided until now; a chronological order.

But, for a tree, provenance is the seed origin, where the seed of the particular tree was collected, who collected it and the details about the collection site. The details of a collection site may range from basic information such as a description of the habitat and date sampled to very intricate details including species abundance, soil description, slope and aspects, plant height and width, leaf quality and/or notable ornamental characteristics.

Cold Hardiness: So, one might ask, why is provenance important in deciding what to add to our collections? Part of the answer is cold hardiness. In central Iowa, we want to plant trees adapted for our winter conditions. A real world scenario for the arboretum is the case of the post oak, *Quercus stellata*. The native distribution of post oak

extends from the last tier of counties in southeast Iowa to the Carolinas, down to Florida and over to Texas.

Considering the species can be found in Iowa, one may assume it is hardy. In 2003, three seedlings of this species were planted here at the arboretum. They grew tall until the very cold winter of 2008-09 (32nd coldest winter on record) with temperatures reaching 20 below zero. All of the post oak trees were dead in the spring of 2009.

The seedlings were purchased from a nursery that grew them from the south. Some of these seedlings are best adapted to a climate like Arkansas, where

winter temperatures are in the 30s and occasionally gets down to zero, in comparison to the cold of central Iowa where winter temperatures regularly reach 10 to 15 degrees below zero.

After losing these post oaks, we realized again how important provenance was in relation to a plant's performance regardless of the species. So, in order for this species to be successful at the arboretum, we needed genetics from a native post oak population that is adapted to cold temperatures similar to those in central Iowa. In the fall of 2009, Kay Meyer and I ventured to Appanoose County, Iowa and collected acorns from wild post oak trees. These acorns were grown, and seedlings were planted in 2011. Since their planting, they have not experienced winter injury. Because we grew the seedlings from acorns collected in Iowa, this collection will likely be growing at the arboretum for generations to come. Side note: while in Appanoose County harvesting acorns, we found the Iowa state champion post oak boasting an impressive size of 65 feet tall with a trunk circumference of more than seven feet.

The post oak is native to Iowa but it is rarely found except in the four far southeastern most counties of Iowa. But provenance is just as important for common native trees in Iowa. Take for instance, the bur oak, *Quercus marcocarpa*. Its native distribution extends from Canada to southern Texas, but just because this tree is native and suitable to Iowa, a Texas provenance would likely not be cold hardy for the state.

Cold hardiness is just one example of why provenance is significant to the successful establishment and longevity of a plant. Other examples that influence plant performance include heat, drought, and flood tolerances plus disease and insect resistance. Just as with the cold hardy post oak from Iowa versus the one from Arkansas, the ability of a tree to withstand other abiotic and biotic factors is generally the direct result of provenance.

Other Plant Performance: Another example from the Brenton Arboretum concerns drought, an abiotic factor. You may have noticed a few of the European larch, *Larix decidua*, at the front entrance have been removed this past year. With two years of drought, this species was under severe stress, with most trees losing their needles in the middle of the summer. Three out of fourteen have succumbed to the drought conditions. The original fourteen trees had been purchased from three different nurseries. Yes, the three trees that died all came from the same nursery.

Through these two examples, one can truly gain a sense of how provenance affects plant health and successful establishment, whether it's for trees growing at the arboretum or for the one you plant in your own backyard. Along with choosing the correct tree for any particular site, provenance can play a role in long term survivability.



Provenance is vital to the collections of the Brenton Arboretum and thus the arboretum will continue to improve its collections through acquiring material of known provenances through our own collecting endeavors or through receiving wild source seed from other arboretums and their Index Seminum, or seed list.

Knowing the history of art or a tree makes it much more interesting and opens it up for study. Long term, our wild source specimens will make the arboretum a place of study and research. More wild provenances in the collection will help us to better determine which ones are best suited for the central Iowa landscape.

*Watch for Andy's column on **Pruning** in the Fall 2014 newsletter.*

Why does the arboretum need your support?

"We are providing a tranquil oasis so people may be refreshed and inspired." – Founder, Buz Brenton

How many places can you think of where you can experience tranquility or the quiet enjoyment that is such a critical part of our mission? Thanks to Buz's vision and Sue's support, the Brenton Arboretum IS that kind of place. With westward growth of the Des Moines metro, these places are becoming all too rare and need to be preserved. THIS is why we need your support. Let's work together to ensure this special place is here for future generations. Support the arboretum by buying gift memberships for your friends, family and co-workers, attending a class or event, volunteering or making a donation. Thank you!

Volunteer Spotlight



If you are a frequent visitor, you know the trails are always mown just right, thanks to Roger Winterhof, who has been volunteering here the last five years doing so much more than mowing trails. His first job at the arboretum was snipping volunteer shoots from the base of the flowering crabapple trees. When asked why he volunteers at the arboretum, Roger said "I found contributing in nature, in an atmosphere of peaceful serenity, fulfilling and rewarding. The staff and leadership at the arboretum have been most gracious and pleasant with whom to work." Thank you for all your hard work, Roger!

St. John's Lutheran Church in Des Moines is hosting volunteer photographer Craig Shives as the April Artist of the Month. The Fine Arts Gallery will feature this special exhibit which includes images taken of the Brenton

Arboretum collections throughout the year. For more information, please visit our website at www.thebrentonarborium.org or St. John's Lutheran Church at <http://stjohnsdsm.org/finearts>.

Thank you to ALL of our volunteers for sharing your time and talents with us. Your help is truly appreciated!



New People

Beth Wingert, Director of Education and Outreach joined the arboretum in December 2013. Beth is an Iowa State University and University of Texas at El Paso alum. She lives in Dallas Center with her husband, Mike, and two sons. Her background in education and passion for connecting kids to nature has made her an invaluable part of our team. Please stop by

to meet her during your next visit to the arboretum!

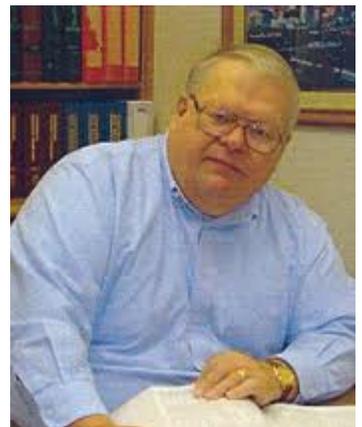
Bob Jester joined the board of directors in 2013. We are so pleased to have him! As president of Jester Insurance Services in Des Moines, Bob has over 50 years of experience in a wide variety of commercial property and casualty insurance. He is alum of Iowa State University and past president of the Independent Insurance Agents of Iowa. He serves as Managing Agent for large safety group programs sponsored by the Iowa Association of School Boards and the Iowa Association of Municipal Utilities. Bob has had numerous positions in a wide variety of community affairs including board member and past president of



Friends of Iowa Public Television and Iowa Natural Heritage Foundation. Bob and his wife, Patti, have a long history of supporting local and national environmental organizations.

New Trees

It is exciting to add to the collections each year. Look for these additions this spring...



Bonfire sugar maple *Acer saccharum* Bonfire™ Sugar maples typically have a slow growth rate. However, this vigorous cultivar is known for its fast growth rate, oval crown and fall color that ranges from orange to carmine-red. This tree grows to heights of 40' to 50' tall and is an ideal choice for parks, golf courses and large lawns.

paperbark maple *Acer griseum* This compact (25' tall x 20' spread) ornamental maple has the most exquisite cinnamon-colored exfoliating bark, especially against crisp white snow. Although bark is its best asset, the trifoliate bluish tinted green leaves often put on a show of red to brown fall color.

In closing I want to thank you, our members, for your encouragement, engagement and ongoing support. We couldn't do it without you! Please contact Andy, Beth or myself if you want to know more about why we do what we do here at the arboretum. Have a wonderful spring!

Sincerely,



Lynn Kuhn

Lynn Kuhn

Executive Director

SAVE THE DATE!

Join us **April 25 from 3-5 pm for Crabapples and Cocktails.**

Dr. Jeff Iles of Iowa State University will educate and entertain as we stroll through what has become a signature collection. Learn about superior cultivars you may want to add to your own yard!



2014 Classes and Events

APRIL

Crabapples and Cocktails

Friday, April 25

3pm to 5pm

Be refreshed during a tour of our bursting crabapple blossoms with Dr. Jeff Iles! Then, enjoy a cocktail as you take in spring vistas around the arboretum.

Members, free; Non-members, \$5

MAY

Birds and Bagels

Saturday, May 3

7am and 9am

Welcome the birds back to Iowa on this annual birding event! Then, visit with friends in the Vista Room over bagels and coffee.

Members, free; Non-members, \$5

National Public Gardens Day

Friday, May 9

Visit the arboretum today and enjoy free guided tours at 10am and 2pm!

Looking for something special for Mother's Day? With a donation, you can take home an attractive gift basket for Mom.

JUNE

Vanishing Acts: Trees Under Threat

June 6 through November 21

The outdoor exhibit Vanishing Acts is a compelling look at threatened and endangered trees and the importance of taking action to save them.

Free

9th Annual Membership Gathering

Saturday, June 7

2pm to 4pm

Members are treated to speaker Paul Tauke, DNR State Forester/Bureau Chief, as he discusses the importance of understanding emerging threats, diseases, and other pests harmful to trees. Member guests can become members for \$15 today!

Exclusive Member Event

Nature Explore Workshop

Friday, June 20

1 to 4pm

Experience innovative techniques for using outdoor classrooms as an integral part of children's daily living; ideal for educators and childcare providers.

Members and Non-members, \$25

The String Thing Performance

Saturday, June 21

6pm to 7:30pm

Be entertained and inspired by the lively storytelling of David Burrier.

Free will donation to the Hope Ministries food pantry.

JULY

Family Leaf Walk

Saturday, July 12

9am-10am

Learn to identify common trees of Iowa as we explore the many leaf shapes at the arboretum!

Members, free; Non-members, \$5

Summer Play Week

July 14 - 18

2 to 4pm, daily

Members, \$5; Non-members, \$10/day

Stream Hike. Monday, July 14

Treasure Hunt. Tuesday, July 15

Pond Life. Wednesday, July 16

Tree Art. Thursday, July 17

Water Color. Friday, July 18

AUGUST

Native Plant Art Imaging

August 1 through 15

Watch as artist in residence, Lindy Smith, gathers materials from the arboretum and creates stunning works of art.

Free

The Fusion of Native Plants & Sun-Print Art

August 16

10am to 11:30am

Join us for an exciting new class where we combine native plant education taught by Deb Lewis with the “sun-print” art of Lindy Smith.
Members, \$5 Non-members, \$10

Annual Chamber Music Concert

Saturday, August 23

4 to 5pm

Listen to the stimulating music of the **Odyssey Trio** as you enjoy pastoral vistas from our open-air pavilion.

Members, \$10; Non-members, \$20

SEPTEMBER

Founder’s Walk

TBA

10 to 11:30am

Tour the arboretum with Founder Buz Brenton and hear firsthand his fascinating history, insights and plans for the future.

Members, free; Non-members, \$5

OCTOBER

Bird Migration Hike

October, TBA

Scout out and identify birds in transit during this annual walking tour.

Members, free; Non-members, \$5

Brenton Music Series

Saturday, October 25

3pm

Drake University string musicians will amaze and delight with this unique program of music and narrative created especially for the Brenton Arboretum.

Members, \$10, Non-members, \$20

Family Photography

Sunday, October 12

It’s family picture day at the arboretum! Register for your 25 minute session with Katie at

515.783.7515,

katie@katielindgren.com.

A \$100 package includes sitting fee, one digital image and gallery access.

www.katielindgren.com

To register for classes or for more information, please call 515.992.4211, or visit our website,

www.thebrentonarboretum.org.