

February 2003

Dear Brenton Arboretum Friends:

It is now late February. The weather is dry, the temperature normal. At this time of year, we optimists become excited. The thought of what is ahead fills our minds. It makes us tingle. The marvelous exuberance of plant life is about to begin. Slow at first and then with a rush. This incredible change is never old. It is called "Spring."

The Arboretum is getting ready for these events soon to be upon us. We began working on the 2003 plan soon after our very gratifying dedication of last September 28. Let me enumerate what has been going on:

Research: We have signed an agreement with the Iowa State University Horticultural Department and the Landscape Plant Development Center, in Chanhassen, Minnesota, to study and evaluate ten conifer species which are seldom used commercially in Iowa. These species will be planted at the Arboretum and our study of them will help determine their adaptability for general use to the homeowner, towns and institutions of Iowa. This is a ten year study. The individual species were selected with the guidance of several well respected nurserymen in Iowa. We want these trees, if adaptable, to be included in nursery stock across our state and thus add to the rather limited list of conifers that are suitable for planting here. The harsh environment at the Arboretum should allow for excellent evaluation conditions.

Trees under evaluation are as follows: Fraser Fir, *Abies fraseri*; Korean Fir, *Abies koreana*; Rocky Mountain Fir, *Abies lasiocarpa*; Wilson Spruce, *Picea wilsonii*; Chinese White Pine, *Pinus armandii*; Korean Pine, *Pinus koraiensis*; Balkin Pine, *Pinus peuce*; 'Shawnee Brave' Common Baldcypress, *Taxodium distichum* 'Shawnee Brave'; 'Green Giant' Western Arborvitae, *Thuja plicata* 'Green Giant'; Japanese Larch, *Larix kaempferi*; Himalayan White Pine, *Pinus wallichiana*; and Bosnian Pine, *Pinus leucodermis*.

Education: This will be the second year for our educational program. As of this writing we have four school districts and twenty-two classes coming to our Knee-High Naturalist classes, which are for children from kindergarten through second grade. We have wonderful teachers for this program, lead by Anne Riordan of Menlo, who can be reached at the Arboretum. We will continue to expand and refine this program for very young children of school age. This is where we feel learning should begin.

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I enclose a list with times and dates for our expanded Adult Educational Field Programs. We hope you will find one or more programs of personal interest and pass this list on to others who might wish to come. Most of the events are Master Gardener accredited. Help us make this serious learning experience a success.

PLEASE NOTE: The first class will be on pruning, Saturday, March 22 at 10:00 a.m.

Grounds: With the addition this year of descriptive plaques for our Oak Walk, we are offering a broader self learning experience about trees and shrubs along our paths. This is the essence of the physical Arboretum: short walking paths that guide you along and teach you about trees and shrubs as you walk. It is wonderful for families, groups or individuals to walk these scenic paths, often through native prairie.

Funding: Although the majority of support for this public arboretum comes from the Brenton family, we do apply for grants and receive other monies from time to time. Of more interest are the following: we have sent our revised request to Vision Iowa for a \$50,000 grant to help us build a pavilion. This will be a \$200,000 shelter/pavilion for use in our educational activities and for our future members to use. We had been granted a \$222,000 grant by Vision Iowa but because of certain conditions, decided that it was not in our best interest to accept it.

We have been encouraged to apply for and soon will be requesting a \$2,300 grant from the Iowa Nursery Research Corporation in conjunction with our research project already mentioned. Also, a \$300 unsolicited general use grant was received from the Western Nursery Landscape Association.

Although we do not solicit private funds, we do receive gifts from individuals occasionally. We will be recognizing them in our next newsletter.

We have been asked on more than several occasions to provide a location for visitors to make donations after they see what is out here. We will soon do so at the information kiosk. Thank you.

Bridges: At a cost of \$30,000, we have replaced the three beautiful wooden bridges used as part of our short circular walking paths. They were washed away last spring in a flash flood. The new structures are in effect low water crossings, made of brown cement (it is hard to see them they fit in so well). They are very permanent, functional and, we think, blend in quite nicely with the landscape.

New Board Member: Mark Kane of Des Moines, formerly Garden Editor of Better Homes and Gardens magazine has accepted board membership. We are more than delighted. Mark has very extensive experience in visiting and learning about public and private gardens in our country. His thoughts about appearance, direction and emphasis are of great value to us.

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New Plantings: This growing season we will plant or replant about 250 new trees and shrubs. Among them are the following: river birch; red buckeye, nikko fir, katsuratree, common smoketree, golden rain tree, Iowa crabapple, flowering crabs (completing our collection), dawn redwood (again), London planetree, sargent cherry (again), scarlet oak, blackjack oak, chestnut oak, dwarf chinkapin oak, post oak.

In addition, we will also seed about three more acres at the Arboretum with little blue-stem, side oats grama and native forbes; and last November planted two acres around the north wetland. Also this spring we will add to the planting around the entrance, and start our plantings around the Lake Homestead outlet structure.

Staff: Amanda Benbow of Woodward is now working part time for us in community and group outreach as well as directing our adult work shops. Susan Kuker of Des Moines gives us part time help on our master mailing lists and web site. Mike Christman of Waukee is our volunteer coordinator. He is a volunteer himself. You can help us. There may be people you know who are interested in volunteering. You may be one. We have many tasks. Mike can be contacted at the Arboretum.

As mentioned, Anne Riordan heads our Knee-High Naturalist program as well as its development. Terry Sheperd of Dallas Center is our resident ornithologist and is in charge of our extensive bird survey. He also leads four bird walks a year at the Arboretum. (See adult education program.) And, Andy Schmitz continues very ably as general manager of the Arboretum.

And finally I wish to say that this year 2003 marks the 150th year of the Brenton Family here on this land. All of us think that it is just "neat" to save this beautiful and historic piece of land as an Arboretum. It is for all of us.

Sincerely,

J.C. (Buz) Brenton, Chairman
The Brenton Arboretum

PLEASE NOTE: We wish to communicate timely information with you through E-mail. Please if you would send to the Arboretum your E-mail address to brentonarboratum@aol.com. Thank you.