

October 2005

Dear Friends of The Brenton Arboretum,

I have come to realize that what the Brenton Arboretum has tried to do, without knowing it, is to create an oasis, a personal refuge, a place of silence and reflection. A different world. We hope that this is true for you.

The textures created by the mix of tree groves, grasses, water, woodlands, birds and butterflies, trails woven through are intended to bring quiet and repose. This is one of our important reasons for being here.

What is going on

This past summer was glorious for growing. The rains came. The weather was hot but not blistering. The growth from year to year is quite startling with young trees. Twelve inches of twig extension is really something on a six-foot tree. It is exciting to witness all of this on our grand scale with so many trees.

The growth is not confined to trees alone. There is expansion afoot. Let me cite several of the more noteworthy examples.

Pavilion

We have just now completed our new outdoor pavilion. It sits atop a knoll on the east side of the Arboretum with a commanding view of trees, water, and grass in this rolling setting. The wooden and stone structure, designed to seat 100 people at tables, has a graceful, arched roof. A refreshing, eye-appealing design we think.

The most unusual feature of this building is its green, living, growing roof. Approximately two thousand grass, forbe and sedum plugs have been planted on the roof.

Why such a roof one asks? We have incorporated this “green roof” into our building to show the practicality of these roofs, and also as a teaching tool. Although this green roof is used on our open, non-heated building, they are typically found on closed structures which are heated and cooled. The insulating qualities of the soil and material markedly cut down on utility costs for great saving of money and energy with virtually no storm water runoff. We think it is worthwhile having people know and think about ways to reduce energy costs on buildings. Green roofs would be but one example of energy saving possibilities. Have a look. You will soon find a brochure about the Pavilion and its green roof at the kiosk.

Classes

It has been very encouraging to see the growth of both our youth and adult classes. Since last spring we have offered sixteen different classes to adults, most all in the field. They have run all the way from “Life of the Monarch Butterfly” and nature photography, to planting trees and bird identification. Many of these classes are small with five to ten participants. Small sizes are preferred.

Our student or Knee-High Naturalist program will have almost doubled this year from under 1,000 to over 1,800 by season end. These programs are all in the field, where we think the action is. It takes a lot of work to get it all done but with Kay Meyer, our educational director, at the helm it is happening. Nancy Kunce is our outstanding lead teacher who brings the outdoor world to life. Thank you Kay and Nancy.

Membership

We soon will launch our new membership program. First mailing will be early in 2006. Building our constituency is the most important reason to do this. People will, of course, join for different reasons but we hope to appeal to those who will join because they see this as a valuable endeavor which they wish to help sustain and grow to become a significant institution. We will keep our membership fees low. There will be benefits. Please consider becoming a member when the time comes.

Research

You may recall that in 2003 the Arboretum commenced a conifer hardiness research project. This we undertook with two partners: Dr. Jeff Iles, head of the I.S.U. Department of Horticulture and Harold Pellett, head of the Landscape Plant Development Center of Chanhassen, Minnesota.

We have weathered two winters and three summers now in this ten-year project. Tentative results are appearing. Among others, we like the looks of our Korean Fir, Abies koreana. Although small, the specimens are thriving and well shaped. This little used specie might be a good candidate for wider planting here in the midwest.

Take a look at this tree and the others in our project. We will soon have a brochure about the project at the kiosk.

Tree of Merit

The Pagoda Dogwood, Cornus alternifolia, is a most beautiful small tree or large shrub. It has a horizontal branching habit, which makes it very picturesque and unique. Its toothed leaves are beautifully veined. A grove of these trees can be found on the Leaf Walk, north of the administration building. Unlike flowering dogwood, Cornus florida, it is hardy in our climate. A most worthwhile tree we believe.

Donors

While we do not actively solicit contributions, they do come in and make quite a difference in the young life of the Arboretum. I would like to mention the names of those who have recently encouraged us with their support:

Marilyn and William F. Vernon, Jr., Jean and James Palmer, Sarah Jane Stark, Caroline and Ronald Larson, Mark Knauer and Jane Brenton-Knauer, Robert B. Smith II, Marilyn and Anthony Tyznik, Pamela and Robert German, Kay and Bill Pritchard, Susan and Warren B. Lammert, Jr., Nancy and Daniel Schmitz, Ann and Wayne Geadelmann, Barb and G. David Hurd Revocable Trust, and Caroline and Arnold E. Levine,

I thank you all most fervently.

Visitors

We have recently installed a car-counting mechanism at our front gate. This counter, together with the sign-in register at the kiosk by the front gate, gives a pretty good indication of visitor numbers. For instance, in September, the estimated data indicated 462 visitor cars. These numbers have gone up each month since March 2002 when it was 166 visitor cars.

And thank you, our public, for your interest! All of you who receive this have visited the Arboretum at some time. You have an impression of us. I would like very much to know what your impressions and thoughts are. You can reach me at buzbrenton@aol.com or at the Brenton Arboretum, with contact information below.

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

P.S. We continue to seek volunteers to help in our prairies, trails and plant beds. Kay Meyer at the Arboretum is the person to contact should you wish information.

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