

March 2005

Dear Friends of the Brenton Arboretum:

It is now the middle of March, one of the very special months of the year here in Iowa. For it is in March that we see a dramatic seasonal change. Surely early March can be and often is winter at its most inclement? Cold, snow, wind, and wet abound. And then as if overnight winter lessens and goes. By month end the soil is warming up. The air is not only warmer but some days even soft. Plant growth is upon the ground. Just starting, but there for those who care to look. It is the magical delight of new life upon us and our world. What a time!

And also at the Brenton Arboretum there is newness. The significant job of tree and shrub pruning is about completed, and it shows. Trees are being moved to make way for the new pavilion where foundations have been poured. This building will have a green or living, vegetative roof (grasses, forbes and succulents), which excites us greatly. Trees are being planted along the front gate area to create a threshold, which separate the world outside from the world within the Arboretum. Two worlds.

The excitement of getting out on the land is upon us and upon you, we hope. Come out to the Arboretum.

There are many matters on our minds. Many plans. Much to do. I will briefly mention a few.

**Education:** This year we are significantly increasing our educational program. For children this will include weekend classes and a summer day camp program. For adults we have added more classes. WE HOPE YOU WILL COME TO ONE OR MORE CLASSES. The schedule is enclosed. All this is under the able management of Kay Meyer who is Outreach and Education Director.

**Volunteers:** This year we are undertaking a major new push for volunteers. We have all sorts of needs and jobs, many with minimal time involved. PLEASE CONSIDER VOLUNTEERING. Kay Meyer, Volunteer Coordinator, can be reached at (515) 992-4211 or (515) 465-9498 or email [kay@thebrentonarboretum.org](mailto:kay@thebrentonarboretum.org).

**KIOSK:** You will find for the first time a color map/master plan of the Arboretum with all plantings identified by common name. The color and the common name make identification and locating easier, we hope. Also our general brochures are found there as well as those on birding and leaf identification. PLEASE SIGN IN when you stop.

**Spring Planting:** This spring we will be planting about 150 new trees and shrubs at the Arboretum. Most will be replacements or additions to existing groups.

**New Land:** As earlier reported, Harry Stine has given the Arboretum approximately 20 acres of land adjoining us to the south and west. We have as yet made no plans for its use. It is continually being discussed. Do you have an idea or two for its use in a way compatible to our mission and of service to the public? You can reach me at (515) 237-5121 or email [buzbrenton@aol.com](mailto:buzbrenton@aol.com).

**Membership:** A central question for any new, public organization is how to become “institutionalized” and therefore enduring. That is where the Brenton Arboretum is today. We need to build a membership group, peopled with individuals who see value in the Arboretum and will therefore help guide its development. Later in the year we hope to launch our effort. I hope many of you will see value here and become a member.

**New Sculpture:** Fredrick Franck at 95 years of age, draws, writes, paints and sculpts. His work is in the permanent collection of the Museum of Modern Art, the Whitney Museum both of New York City, the Tokyo National Museum and many other public and private collections. He has written over thirty books including the classic The Zen of Seeing. We have come to know and learn from this most remarkable man. His eight-foot sculpture “St. Francis of Assisi and His Birds” is located on a high point of the west side of the Arboretum. Take a look. We are delighted to have it.

**Trees of Merit:** This past year we have seen extraordinary growth in our trees and shrubs, brought about by increased moisture last year. Many species are noteworthy as we see them grow and develop. I will mention two:

The European or Common Larch, *Larix decidua*, is to be found just inside the Arboretum entrance on the east side of the road. This large tree is one of the few conifers which sheds its needles in the fall. It has a most beautiful needle color and texture and it casts a filtered, light shade. The fall color can be most spectacular, and the tree is readily transplanted. I am surprised, given its beauty, that there are not more planted in our area. Take a look.

Our Swiss Stone Pines, *Pinus cembra*, are to be found on the west side, east of the road. Our specimens are still small, but it is already evident that this slow growing tree is most beautiful with its very dense form in youth. It will become more open and spreading in maturity. The needles are lustrous and dark green. One falls in love with this tree. Take a look.

I want to close by mentioning several last matters:

**Walking Paths:** The Arboretum above all is a place to walk. Five short-loop walking paths are developed and marked. Trees are identified. Several walks are through prairie and trees both. Take a short walk when at the Arboretum. It should add to your experience.

**Erosion:** We have experienced significant erosion along the dam side of Lake Homestead. You can see it across from the spillway. In addition, the stream there is digging a new channel. These matters are distressing. We are just now designing a plan to stabilize both situations.

**Performance Assessment:** Under the leadership of Mark Kane, the Board of Directors has begun a self-assessment program, designed by the American Association of Museums. Through this process we hope to become an institution with strong, highly professional processes and firm resources, so as to insure our institutional health over many years.

May I once again thank you for your interest in the Brenton Arboretum. I hope to see you here, where I can be found most every day.

Sincerely,

Buz Brenton, Chairman  
The Brenton Arboretum

P.S. Although this public Arboretum is funded in the main by the Brenton family, this will need to change over the years to insure a growing and independent institution. Although we do not actively solicit financial assistance, monies do come in and can be sent to the Brenton Arboretum at the address shown. I would be remiss if I did not thank those of you who did contribute. Your names, unless you wish otherwise, will be found in the fall newsletter. Thank you!

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