

April 15, 2006

Dear Members and Friends of the Brenton Arboretum:

After some cold weather in early December, this past winter has been the warmest on record for our nine-year-old arboretum.

This warming trend is true for much of our planet. Whether partly man-made (a preponderance of mainstream scientific belief says it is) or part of a natural cycle, of which there have been many, it will, if continuing, have an effect on what plants thrive and where. For the Arboretum, it means that some of our tree species generally found to the south of us and a bit tender here may do quite well in the future. The sweetgum, (*Liquidambar styraciflua*) and the tuliptree, (*Liriodendron tulipifera*) are good examples. This may be true for your plantings as well.

Membership

I want to again thank those of you who have taken out a charter membership in this recently launched membership campaign; our first. We are gratified to have over one hundred fifty members so far. Please, if you wish to become a member but have put it off, do so soon. Membership is a very important element in our becoming a mature, stand-alone institution.

Elms

Under the direction of manager Andy Schmitz, the Arboretum is undertaking the creation of a large and we hope significant elm collection. As you know, the magnificent American elm, (*Ulmus americana*) has been virtually eliminated over the last fifty years due to the Dutch elm disease. Many cultivars and hybrids are now being introduced, some commercially. We are already growing fifteen of these “new” elms. In addition, new species from China and, to a lesser extent, Europe and Siberia are being introduced. With the guidance of Dr. George Ware of the Morton Arboretum, we will be planting many more elms of various types over the next few years, creating a very significant collection. Some will have the very desirable vase-shaped characteristics of our American elm and some will have different forms. Our hope is to display many of these new elms for all to see and become reacquainted with the magnificent elm tree.

Plaques/Walks

We have just installed description plaques for the trees along our Valley Trail Walk (please see the map in our brochure). This will be the third set of plaques along our walking paths; the others being the Oak Walk and the Conifer/Crabapple/Maple Walk. The Leaf Walk on the east side has its own brochure for tree identification. These plaques give information about each tree species, so that the visitor learns a bit as he walks. It is part of our educational mission. Please look for yourself. These walks are short, well marked and easy.

Pavilion

The new pavilion was completed late last fall and will soon be open for use by educational groups and for the private use of our members. Its green, or living roof, is an intriguing and educational feature, both for its cooling and water conservation effects. We are very pleased with its graceful design and magnificent vista. It is screened and has a fireplace. Please walk over and have a look.

Institutional Assessment

The institutional assessment conducted by the American Association of Museums has been completed. It is proving to be most helpful in better enabling us to define what we are and are not. What we are is a place for quiet enjoyment among woody plants, a place of education and a place of observational research. With walking paths, ponds, trees and streams set in a native landscape, it is proving to be quite unique we are told. It will most appeal to those wishing to be in the out-of-doors.

The report, written by Charles Gleaves, Director of the Kingwood Center, Mansfield, Ohio, says, "I was intrigued by the integration of prairie plant communities into the arboretum coupled with the expressed ambition to manage the site with a special emphasis on conservation. I have never seen a public garden make a similar attempt to merge the horticultural style of management that is used for the collection with the techniques of native plant community management, which are being used, in part, for the spaces in and around the collections. This holds great promise as a pioneering approach."

The statement is most helpful in further enabling us to understand our uniqueness. He goes on to warn us to pay close attention to this or risk losing it as the trees and shrubs grow in size.

Classes

I enclose a schedule of adult classes for the coming spring and summer, and hope you will find some of interest.

Hours

We have expanded the hours when our grounds are open to the public. The new hours are Tuesday through Sunday, 9:00 a.m. until sunset.

Contributions

A number of contributions have been made to the Arboretum since the newsletter last October. My great thanks go to all of you who have done so and without solicitation! The next newsletter will list all of the names unless I hear otherwise. Again, thank you.

And thank you once again for giving us a feeling of value, and thank you for your interest and your membership.

Buz Brenton, Chairman
The Brenton Arboretum

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