

October 2008

Dear Members and Friends,

This newsletter comes at a time when a marvelous summer has just passed. The rains came. The woody plants flourished. New trees and shrubs were planted. Children came to many classes. Adult classes have been successful. The Arboretum never has looked so beautiful, so mature and tranquil. We are pleased. We are twelve years old.

Retreat: In June, we held our first board of directors' planning retreat. Regular board meetings are so filled with reports and details we somehow never have the time to talk extensively about our mission, our purpose, our direction and future. The news is that we reaffirmed what we are and the direction we are headed. The board of directors believe that, as a result of our concentration on displaying a multitude of woody plants in a natural setting, we currently and will increasingly have a unique place among arboreta and botanical gardens. We believe that the Arboretum addresses growing needs in our society. However, we must seek a continuation of and better execution of our plan, which emphasizes quiet enjoyment, education and plant evaluation. I agree with the ratification and challenge. We will work on it.

Questions About Plants: In attempting to fulfill our plan, we are evaluating certain plants---small trees and shrubs mostly---which for one reason or another are not thriving or are ill suited here. Most of these are in our Native Iowa Collection, where we try to display all native woody plants found in Iowa, which will grow here. After being in the ground now for five or six years, we recognize differences in the vigor and other growing characteristics of certain plants. Undoubtedly, our collection committee will recommend removal of some in exchange for better-sited and more attractive replacement species.

Music: In the late afternoon of August 23rd we held our first chamber music concert. Performing was the Linden Trio: Sarah Plumb, violin; George Work, cello; and Kim Helton, flute. The event was well attended with over 125 members and guests. It was a glorious day with beautiful, impressive music by Haydn, Bach, Genzmer, Kohler and Andriessen. A reception followed. We will do this again.

Dr. George Ware: On the afternoon of September 20th we held our third membership meeting with fifty in attendance. Dr. George Ware, the world renowned elm expert who has introduced many new elms from Asia to the United States, was our speaker. It was a fascinating presentation, followed by a reception.

New Building: Soon we will break ground on a new wing of our present administration building. Its main purpose will be to provide a large classroom. Library space will also be expanded. This has been several years in the making. We presently have no inside classroom, which we greatly need. This building will be heated and cooled thermally and have many other “green” features leading to a “LEED” certification.

Classes: We are finishing another year of children and adult classes. Most all of these are held out-of-doors with the following offerings for adults:

Identifying Trees in Winter
Planting Trees for Arbor Day
Pruning Workshop
Northern Migration Bird Walk
Iowa Water Monitoring Workshop
Emerald Ash Borer Workshop
Southern Migration Bird Walk
Founders Tour

Yet to come

Identifying Conifers 12/6/08
Audubon Society Christmas Bird Count 12/20/08

First and second grade children came from the following school districts to our Knee-High Naturalist classes: Guthrie Center, Urbandale, Adel, Minburn, East Green (Rippey), Panorama, Waukee, Perry, and Des Moines. We are drawing students from a wider area.

New Trees: Last spring we planted a number of replacement trees and established several entirely new collections. Notable among them were Falsecypress, *Chamaecyparis pisifera* ‘*Filifera*’, Dawn Redwood, *Metasequoia glyptostroboides* and Meyer’s Spruce, *Picea meyeri*. The Falsecypress is a medium size pyramidal conifer suited for but not often placed in the Midwest. The Dawn Redwoods have failed for several years in a row here, but now we have re-sited them and have our fingers crossed. We want this beautiful, large tree. The Meyer’s Spruce is a tree originally from China and much like the Colorado Blue Spruce, but is more resistant to pests and disease. It is a fine ornamental.

A Tree to Consider: The Shingle Oak, *Quercus imbricaria* is a native, smaller oak which transplants easily. It holds its russet leaves most of the winter. It accepts heavy pruning and can be used for hedges. You can find a dozen of these trees displayed at the east end of Overlook Pond on both the north and south side along the road. It is an outstanding tree year round.

Contributions: A number of generous people have made contributions this year beyond the support they give us for membership. We are very grateful and wish to acknowledge them:

Garth and Cheryl Adams, Nancy and Richard Amend, Linda Appelgate, Marietta B. Brandt, Bob and Babette Brenton, Julie Brenton and R.D. Galbraith, Natalie G. Brenton, Woodward and Natalie Brenton, Woodward and Julie Brenton, Kaye Condon, Jim and Patty Cownie, Bob and Marge DeMeulenaere, John and Jane Eddy, William and Cathy Eddy, Catherine Kirk Elliott and Tim Elliott, Virginia F. Galbraith, Wayne and Ann Geadelmann, Bob and Pam German, Mary Hays, Alan and Denise Holek, Helen and James Hubbell, Jr., Dave and Barb Hurd, Susan Kuker, Warren B. Lammert, Jr., Jeff Larson, Ron and Caroline Larson, Richard Levitt, Lockie Markusen, Katherine Meredith, Rick and Carroll Michalek, Dick and Polly Moore, John and Judith Nicholson, Cynthia O'Brien and Michael Fitzpatrick, Pioneer Hi-Bred, James Reinartz, Regina Rowles, Craig and Liz Sandahl, Wallace G. Spitt, Tom and Kitty Stoner, Anthony Tyznik, Tom and Mary Urban, Peter van der Linden, Steve and Linda Weitz, Melvin and Mary Beth Wilk. A substantial anonymous gift was also received.

The Arboretum has seen eleven growing seasons. None better than this. It has been terribly gratifying for me and my key associates, Andy Schmitz and Kay Meyer. I believe it will continue thus, but change will come. In our new addition we are adding office space. In time others will join us and I will move back. This is not imminent but will come. Thank you for all your interest and good will.

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

P.S. Note: The construction of the building addition will not commence this fall because of the weakening economy.