

April 2010

Dear Members and Friends,

Have you ever wanted spring to come more! I haven't. At times, I doubted it would come, but miracles of miracles, it did. For much of the winter our main road was closed for so long and very little walking possible. Now we are back in business at the Arboretum with so much to do! With an excellent staff and a tradition of a very high quality presentation, the spring work is upon us. Andy Schmitz, our manager, as in the past will get it done. Thank you, Andy.

Plantings: In Spring we plant. The following are several species we are now putting in the ground:

'His Majesty' corktree, *Phellodendron* 'His Majesty', is a medium size tree, originally from North China, with unique bark and spreading crown.

'Dart's Gold' Golden Ninebark, *Physocarpus opulifolius* 'Nugget', is a compact shrub with interesting yellow color.

'State Street' Miyabe Maple, *Acer miyabei* 'Morton'. These attractive maple cultivars are replacement trees.

Winterberry, *Ilex verticillata*, is Iowa native and good for mass effect and borders.

Pignut Hickory, *Carya glabra*, is a large native hickory which adds to our hickory collection. They are grown from seeds here at the Arboretum.

Engelmann spruce, *Picea engelmannii*, is a large non-native spruce which is quite ornamental. Should do well here.

Purple Cone Spruce, *Picea purpurea*, is a large, pyramidal spruce with Chinese origins and very interesting purple cones.

Collecting Seeds:

Blackjack Oak, *Quercus marilandica*, and Post Oak, *Quercus stellata*, are two oak species planted several years ago but mostly died. They were purchased through a nursery which probably got their seeds from a southern source. Andy Schmitz and Kay Meyer have collected new seeds from southern Iowa, which will be soon potted up for planting next year. These two oak species will add to our very substantial oak collection.

More and more, we are collecting our own seeds, in order to make sure we know the provenance.

Space: Reality is upon us. We are running out of room to plant new groupings on our original 120 acres in the manner we wish. Vistas must be maintained. We do not want to use designated space for a future reception area nor our prairie areas.

Most of the new trees and shrubs will find a home, but I suspect, except for replacements, we soon will be full. It is similar to a museum running out of wall space to show its canvases.

Fortunately, we are blessed to own an undeveloped 20 acres which Harry Stine gave to us several years ago. We do not have an overall master plan for this adjoining land but must soon develop one.

Shrubs: The Arboretum is perhaps under-represented with shrub and small tree displays, except for native species. The varieties and types are almost endless, but these are what we all plant around our homes. We want to see them. We need new ideas.

The Arboretum does identify certain groupings as being suitable for home use, but does this go far enough?

What is our role here? The Brenton Arboretum was not started as a residential landscape display institution, but there is a need and a possible role. The answer to this strikes to the heart of our mission and must be carefully considered and thoroughly answered by our board. More on this to come. Do you have thoughts?

Building Addition: It looks like our on again, off again building addition is on again. Some of you may recall that this addition, first proposed and actually bid out in 2008, was postponed because of the then great unknown of a sinking economy. Things look better now; in the near term anyway. This addition will house a classroom, office, library expansion, as well as more bathrooms, storage and archival space. Let's get the job done now!

Classes: Enclosed is a list of classes and events for the year, put together and ably administered by Kay Meyer, our education, membership and outreach director. We hope you find something appealing here.

Weather Station: We will soon install a weather station at the Arboretum. This will allow us to record and retain information about temperature, rain/snow fall, humidity, wind velocity, etc. As you may recall, we now are engaged in research of two tree species (Osage-orange and Kentucky Coffeetree) in addition to our observational evaluation of a dozen, little-used conifer species as well as 46 types of elms. This necessitates that we keep detailed information about the effects of weather on these species, and really all of our plantings. We do keep individual records on virtually all of our woody plants.

Phenology is the science of the relationship between climate and biological phenomenon. Our interest, of course, is following this relationship as it relates to woody plants here at the Arboretum. Kay Meyer has launched a most interesting program of engaging volunteers to help us keep track of leaf, bud and twig information for various species. Each volunteer group (often families) will note characteristics of a given species over the growing season. This information will add to our body of knowledge about what thrives in central Iowa and will be shared with the scientific community and our members. There seems to be much volunteer interest in this project. Call Kay at the Arboretum if you wish to know more.

A Gathering: On May 20th, we will be inviting landscape architects and nursery professionals to a meeting here at the Arboretum. The purpose will be to begin a dialogue among us about the role of the Arboretum in providing the public and professionals with information about our plantings, displays, and their usefulness. This will be interesting. The degree to which we broaden our shrubs collection will certainly come up. I will report back on this.

Membership: All of you have received information about membership renewal for 2010. The renewals are coming in and are extremely important to us. Thank you. It does seem, however, that we have just done this. The intervening year goes quickly. I wonder if there would be an interest in a multi-year membership. I have seen it used. Any thoughts?

Inevitable changes: I am 75 years old. Still OK but for how long? This public Arboretum lives, theoretically, forever. How to plan for the future?

For one thing, we need some young board members as openings come up. I also must think about replacing myself. This is hard but necessary. It is coming. Exactly how to structure such a transition is under discussion by our board of directors. This matter does have quite a bit of priority.

And so, this is enough for our Spring 2010 Newsletter. Thank you, our dear members and friends, for reading it.

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