



## THE BRENTON ARBORETUM

# SPRING NEWSLETTER 2016

## LETTER FROM THE DIRECTOR

*Melissa Burdick*

My father once told me a story about the time he helped his elderly Great Aunt Mattie travel from her farmhouse in south Alabama to a family function hours away. As he was helping her to the car, a breeze blew through the trees overhead. Aunt Mattie looked up and muttered, "I *told* Charlie we should have planted pines instead." Dad followed her gaze up into the branches of a massive live oak and was struck by the fact that these seemingly ancient trees were planted in his great aunt's lifetime.

That's the interesting thing about trees. When we come across an ancient oak in the forest it might as well have been there, just as it is, for eternity. Majestic, yes; but frozen in time the moment you marveled and then trekked on. But the trees around us also have a *human* story; a past, present, and future. Its people and their lives are intimately connected to it.



I planted a dogwood in the yard of my last house and I don't know if the new owners will keep it. To them it's just a tree, but to me it was a reminder of a friend I lost. I rocked my newborn son under the flowers of a Japanese snowbell in the backyard, but it was so close to the patio it might be deemed a nuisance. As we move from place to place the stories of our trees are sometimes lost.

It's more likely, though, that these trees have become incorporated into the new owners' lives. They've grown new stories as naturally as growing new leaves. Other children will play under the blossoms of the snowbell. And, instead of a bittersweet memorial, that dogwood may have become a joyful reminder of the first spring in a starter home. After all, the trees we plant *do* have lives after we've moved on.

A good tree, well planted, is more than just a lawn decoration. It's more than shade, or spring flowers, or fall color. When we live with a tree, even if it's for a short time, that tree becomes a part of us and is woven into the fiber of our memories. And even after we grow up and move away, the trees of our youth are a touchstone for the moments and emotions that formed the person we are now.

Planting a tree to celebrate a happy moment or mourn a tragic one is a way to express our emotions to the natural world. More importantly, it's a way to transform those human stories into living legacies that will endure long after we're gone.

If you're interested in planting a commemorative tree at the Brenton Arboretum, please consider our Memorial Tree Program; call for information.

## 2015 DALLAS COUNTY FOUNDATION GRANT

Thanks to a \$2,500.00 grant from the Dallas County Foundation, the Arboretum purchased a new electric John Deere Gator. The Gator is outfitted with extra seating on the back for tours, helping individuals on guided walks, and transporting students with mobility challenges during field trips. Of course, it will also be used by staff for daily jobs and by volunteers to work in the collections. We are so grateful to the Dallas County Foundation for their support!



## MASTER PLAN UPDATE

As we approach the 20<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the planting of our first trees at The Brenton Arboretum, we are in the midst of an update to our Master Landscape Plan. The original landscape, designed by renowned architect Anthony Tyznik of the Morton Arboretum near Chicago, set the scene for a rolling rural landscape that integrated groves of majestic trees and sweeping open vistas. Although our trees are still young, Tony's vision is already apparent and gorgeously compelling.

So, how can we possibly improve on a masterpiece? Architecture firm Oehme van Sweden of Washington, D.C. is evaluating our current landscape and recommending improvements to pathways, vistas, and underutilized spaces. These tweaks will add polish to the beauty of the landscape and enable us to move our plant collections forward without marring the design.

One of the most exciting insights that Oehme van Sweden presented to us is that many of our existing grass paths can be slightly adjusted, smoothing steep spots to create ADA-compatible paths that will be accessible to those with mobility issues. Of course there is much more to ADA compliance—such as surface materials that are wheel-friendly—so it will take time and fundraising to fully enable our pathways. If the journey of a thousand miles starts with the first step, this is the step!

Visit our website, [www.thebrentonarboratum.org](http://www.thebrentonarboratum.org), to learn how you can help support our fundraising goals.



## WELCOME OUR NEWEST EMPLOYEE

Karen Bishop has been hired to coordinate rental sales. Karen will help us increase awareness of the Arboretum as a spectacular event venue. She comes to us with a lot of great ideas, creative energy, and the perfect demeanor to keep an anxious bride calm and cool on her big day!

To book a rental, give Karen a call or an email today. Spring weekends book up fast; fall is a close second.

Call **515.992.4211, ext. 4** or email [rentals@thebrentonarboratum.org](mailto:rentals@thebrentonarboratum.org).

# SPRING AT THE ARBORETUM

By Andy Schmitz, Director of Horticulture

Spring is a wonderful time to explore the Arboretum. After the cold and drab days of winter, the trees and shrubs are coming to life again with many that bloom in the spring. The cornelian cherry dogwoods and white forsythia are blooming as I write this in mid-March, but there are a few hundred trees holding off long enough for your visit. In early to mid-May, Crabapple Hill will be painted with shades of red, white and pink as the collection comes into full bloom.

The Arboretum has 109 accessioned crabapples and 96 of those are planted on Crabapple Hill. With 33 different cultivars and species in many flower colors and different growth habits, from weeping to upright to broad and spreading, there is surely one to catch your eye.

When you visit the Arboretum, you won't miss Crabapple Hill. As soon as you turn into the front gate, just look west to the distant hillside to enjoy the crabapples from afar. To see them up close and be surrounded by their wonderful fragrance, take a short walk along Conifer/Maple/Crabapple Trail. Also consider visiting in the fall when Crabapple Hill will be red, purple, yellow and pink from the abundance of fruit.



In the Iowa Collection, we have four specimens of *Malus ioensis*, the Iowa or Prairie crabapple. There is also a naturally occurring small cluster of these growing along the east stream between Alder and Owl Bridges. The flowers of the Iowa crabapple are deep pink in bud and open to pinkish white. Though prone to some leaf diseases later in the season, its time to shine is in the spring when the blooms are back dropped by the clean green foliage.

## GOAL: 500 MEMBERS

We are working hard to reach our goal of 500 Brenton Arboretum members by the end of 2016. Please help us by spreading the word. Invite your friends and family to become members! Or consider a gift membership for someone you know would love this place.

Membership applications can be found in the kiosk or online at [www.thebrentonarboetum.org](http://www.thebrentonarboetum.org). If you would like a personal invitation mailed to friend or relative, please email their name and address to Beth at [beth@thebrentonarboetum.org](mailto:beth@thebrentonarboetum.org) or call 515.992.4211, ext. 2.

Thank you so much for supporting the Arboretum and continuing our mission to bring joy to all through the beauty and knowledge of the natural world of trees!

## MEMBERSHIP LECTURE: JEWELS OF THE PLAINS

### *Save the Date!*



Join us **Saturday, June 11<sup>th</sup>** at 2:00 pm for our 11<sup>th</sup> Annual Membership Lecture. This year, we are delighted to present Jim Locklear, Director of Conservation at Lauritzen Gardens in Omaha, NE. Jim will share his update of Claude Barr's quintessential native plant classic *Jewels of the Plains*, originally published in 1983. Barr's book is credited with "opening the eyes of gardeners around the world to the beauty and horticultural attributes of the flora of the Great Plains." Jim's illustrated presentation will take you on a journey across the prairies and plains of America to rediscover these garden-worthy plants. We welcome you to be inspired by the lovely flora and consider adopting some for your own garden!

This event is free, but limited to Brenton Arboretum and Greater Des Moines Botanical Garden members only. RSVP not required, but appreciated; call Beth at 515.992.4211 ext. 2.

Not a member? Join when you RSVP or on the day of the lecture for half price!

## UPDATING YOUR ESTATE PLAN?

Estate planning has become a hot topic for young and old alike. It seems like planning for the future has never been more popular! And the idea isn't limited to the ultra-rich; trends are showing that younger and comparatively less affluent people are diving into the adventure of planned charitable giving in greater numbers.

Spring is the perfect time to take out your estate plan, dust it off, and see if it's due for a refresher. As you do, you might consider including a few of your favorite charities in your will. This kind of planned giving is a great way to support the organizations doing the kind of work you value. For many of us, our income might be fixed during retirement or subject to the winds of change while we're still working. So providing financial support can be tricky or even impossible without compromising our personal financial security while we're still reliant on it.

Long-time supporter and board member Deb Wiley says,

"I recently updated my will when I realized that if I depart this life tomorrow, many people I care about will still have ongoing needs. These include the many people I don't know personally who will benefit from what The Brenton Arboretum creates and offers, making central Iowa - and our world - a more eco-friendly, educated, beautiful, and enjoyable place to live. If it's time for you to update your own will, please consider joining me in making a planned gift."

Deb isn't the only person who has let us know we're in her will. The number of people including The Brenton Arboretum in their estate plans is growing, and we are so grateful to each and every one. If you're interested in learning more about including a charitable organization in your will, contact your financial planner to learn how.

# UPCOMING 2016 CLASSES & EVENTS

## MAY

### **Birds and Bagels**

Saturday, May 7

7:00 am, *Meet in the Vista Room*

Welcome the birds back to Iowa on this annual birding event! Veteran and beginning birders are invited to join us in search of more than 190 bird species observed at the Arboretum. Afterwards, visit with your friends in the Vista Room over bagels and coffee.

***Members, free; Non-Members, \$5***

## JUNE

### **Garden Spaces for Pollinators**

Saturday, June 4

6:00 pm, *Meet in the Vista Room*

Learn why you, too, should have a pollinator garden in your yard from Nathan Brockman, Butterfly Wing curator at Reiman Gardens. Nathan will teach some tips and tricks sure to make your garden all the buzz in your neighborhood!

***Members, free; Non-Members, \$5***

### **Full Moon Night Hike**

Friday, June 17

9:00 pm, *Meet in the Vista Room*

Ever wonder what the Arboretum is like at night? Join us on a hike to investigate nightlife around the Arboretum. Grab a flashlight and discover the secret life of creatures like owls, bats, and spiders. You won't want to miss this exciting adventure! (Children must be accompanied by an adult.)

***Members, free; Non-Members, \$5***

## JULY

### **Tree Discovery with David Jahn**

Friday, July 15

6:00 pm, *Meet at the Pavilion*

Arborist David Jahn will share interesting facts about trees as we explore a variety of trees and shrubs around the Arboretum. This is an excellent opportunity to learn from one of the most experienced and knowledgeable consulting arborists in the state of Iowa.

***Members, free; Non-Members, \$5***

## AUGUST

### **Water & Mud Kitchen**

Saturday, August 6

10:00 am, *Meet at the Pavilion*

Explore water quality in Iowa with Susan Heathcote of the Iowa Environmental Council. We will test water quality and sample pond life. Then, we'll open the Mud Kitchen on Buckeye Bridge for the children to "bake" their own mud pies and cakes.

***Members, free; Non-Members, \$5***

## SEPTEMBER

### **Growing Trees and Shrubs from Seeds**

Thursday, September 17

9:00 am, *Meet in the Vista Room*

Join Director of Horticulture Andy Schmitz to learn basic information and techniques for propagating most woody plants.

***Members, \$5; Non-Members, \$10***

## OCTOBER

### **Birds and Bagels**

Saturday, October 8

7:00 am, *Meet in the Vista Room*

Enjoy fresh air and the friendly company of fellow birders on an early morning bird hike with John Bissell!

***Members, free; Non-Members, \$5***

### **A Walk with Buz**

Saturday, October, TBD

Tour the Arboretum on this annual walk with Founder Buz Brenton. Hear interesting facts about the Arboretum's history, plus Buz's personal insights and plans for the future.

***Members, free; Non-Members, \$5***

## NOVEMBER

### **B.A. Dog Day**

Saturday November 5

10:00 am

On this special day, all visitors may explore the Arboretum with their dog free of charge. Spend the day enjoying the lovely hiking paths, stunning vistas, and serene landscape with your furry friend. We hope you all find the Arboretum to be your new favorite place!

***Admission is FREE to everyone (including dogs today)!***

## DECEMBER

### **Holiday Wreath Make-&-Take**

Saturday, December 3

9:00 am, *Meet in the Vista Room*

Create your own holiday wreath with evergreen boughs and natural trimmings this year! Instructors will teach you tips and techniques to create a wreath with the perfect personal touch.

**Pre-registration required.**

***\$40 materials fee, Members and Non-Member***

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## **Brenton Arboretum Board Members:**

J.C. 'Buz' Brenton, Chairman

Fred Weitz, Vice Chairman

Robert Jester, Treasurer

Deb Wiley, Secretary

Ray Bening

Michelle Book

Bill Brenton

Julie Brenton

Sue Brenton

Doug Burnett

Tina Mowry Hadden

Phil Harrington

Lockie Markusen

Bill Niebur

Bob Rennebohm

Mike Simonson