



THE BRENTON ARBORETUM

SPRING 2021 NEWSLETTER

Technology + Trees: A Winning Combination —Melissa Burdick, Executive Director

Without a doubt, the pandemic made us all adapt to a strange new world that many of us weren't ready for. Technology played a major role in how we lived our lives, helping us with everything from grocery shopping to visiting grandma.

Technology is playing a role here at the Arboretum, too. With the help of a generous grant from the Dallas County Foundation, the Arboretum was able to implement a massive software update in our offices. Everything from operating systems to accounting programs, and most importantly, our tree database software was brought up to current standards. We were even able to add a computer work station—Laura and Kelly don't have to share a desk anymore!

Computer updates may seem pretty mundane compared to thousands of beautiful trees right outside our windows. But for a non-profit with a small staff and limited budget like ours, it makes a world of difference. Thank you, Dallas County Foundation!



Director of Horticulture, Andy Schmitz, appreciates the benefits of updated computing software.

These days technology isn't just for the office. Another exciting leap forward for the Arboretum is debuting this spring. This one will be right in the hands of our visitors! A grant from the Dahl Trust funded the creation of a web-based interactive Arboretum map. Visitors can explore our trees and landscape with their mobile phones and tablets. Our entire collection is being plotted on the map and is already loaded with links to take a deep dive into the fascinating details of the trees all around you.

It's been a lot of work getting the map up and running, and there's still plenty more to add, but we're too excited to keep it to ourselves anymore. See for yourself by texting "BrentonMap" to 56512—there's no special app to download, and we won't harvest your data. You'll get a reply with a link that works at the Arboretum or at home so you can make a "virtual" visit to the Arboretum whenever or wherever the mood strikes.

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WHAT ARE THOSE TREES?

—Andy Schmitz, Director of Horticulture

What are those dead pine trees at the front entrance? This is a question I hear fairly often during the winter months and one which leads to an educational conversation about evergreen conifers and deciduous conifers. Conifers are cone bearing plants, like pines (*Pinus*), firs (*Abies*), and spruce (*Picea*), which bear cones that contain “naked seeds,” seeds not enclosed in fleshy fruit but seeds that develop on the surface of the cone scales. All conifers have needles and usually these needles remain green and on the tree throughout the year, hence the term “evergreen.” This is the case for the pines, firs, and spruces, but not all conifers are evergreen. Larch, (*Larix*), are conifers, as they produce cones with naked seeds, but they are deciduous conifers, meaning they lose their needles every fall. So, what are those dead looking trees by the front gate? They are larches. Currently, we have three different species, European larch (*Larix decidua*), Japanese larch (*Larix kaempferi*), and American larch (*Larix laricina*). The European larch is native to the mountains of central Europe, in the Alps and Carpathian Mountains. The Japanese larch is native to the mountains of the Chubu and Kanto regions of central Japan and the American larch is native to moist bogs in northern Minnesota and Canada.



Dormant larch trees near the front entrance. Larch cones (inset).

seedlings. Buz and I had many discussions during the first 15 years after planting those scraggly little trees, wondering when they were finally going to amount to something. We even began to question the reasoning for placing them in such a prominent location. These conversations stopped about seven years ago when the larches finally got past their teenage years. Now, with their graceful outlines, branches cascading to the ground, and golden yellow fall color, we finally come to realize the vision of Tony Tyznik, the Arboretum's original landscape architect, and why he placed them there. One of those first accessions is over 34 feet tall now and will eventually grow to over 70 feet.

We are adding a new larch species to the collection this year, Western larch (*Larix occidentalis*). It is a species native to the mountains of north western North America. In 2019, we received five small seedlings from the Arnold Arboretum grown from wild seed collected from Lookout Mountain in central Oregon. They were potted up for more growth and are now beautiful little trees ready to be planted out. In time, they will grow to over 40 feet tall but remain quite narrow at only 15 feet wide. Due to our site, they may never reach the height of the tallest on record Western larch in Oregon, which stands at over 190 feet tall. Now, that would be an impressive sight at the Arboretum entrance, dead or alive.

To further our mission of enhancing our collections through wild collecting, we will also be planting out wild collected Japanese larch. Both of the wild collected larch plantings will provide valuable information to the Arboretum to see if these species can survive in central Iowa, since both were collected in mountain regions at nearly 6,000 feet in elevation.

On your next visit, take a moment to admire these majestic trees and watch them burst to life as the weather warms. Their soft, light green needles and pinkish new cones are a sure sign they're not dead but just a deciduous conifer waking up from winter.

TRIBUTE GIFTS—received between 8/1/20 and 3/31/21.

In Memory Of

Woodward “Woody” Brenton Jamie Martin
Jim Fox Samuel & Carolyn O'Brien
Deke Gliem Jerry Selover
Martha & Fritz Lattner

In Honor Of

Woody Brenton & Michelle Book Steve Myers
Joe Ferrentino Stephen Netteland
David & Jane Kurns Anniversary Deb Wiley

UPCOMING CLASSES & EVENTS

All classes will be held outdoors and begin at the Pavilion unless otherwise noted. If a class has to be cancelled or postponed due to weather, registered participants will be notified via email.

APRIL

Wellness Series: Human Design

Friday, April 30; 5:30 to 6:30 pm; Vista Room Lawn

Alison Van De Pol will help you discover your unique human design. This “roadmap” provides the answers to help you live your most satisfying, successful, and peaceful life. All ages welcome.

Registration Required by April 25; \$5 per person

MAY

Wizards & Woods

Sunday, May 2; 10 am to Noon

In preparation for International Harry Potter Day spend a morning at our HogWoods Forest School of Magic! We'll make our own messenger owls, mix up bubbly potions, and decorate wands before taking a forest hike. Wizarding costumes encouraged! Best for ages 5-12.

Registration Required by April 27; Members \$5 per person—Non-members \$15 per person

Spring Bird Walk

Saturday, May 8; 7 to 9 am

Walk the Arboretum edges, woods, and fields in search of spring birds with birding enthusiast John Bissell. No birding experience necessary. Best for ages 12+, sorry, no pets.

Registration Required by May 7; Members \$5 per person—Non-members \$15 per person

Container Pollinator Gardens

Saturday, May 8; 10 am to Noon; Curbside Craft Kit pick-up at Admin Bldg

Take-and-make a beautiful gift for Mother's Day and for our local pollinators. You'll pick up all the supplies needed to make the container garden, including plants to host and feed butterflies and bees. 15 kits available.

Registration Required by May 7; Members \$40—Non-members \$60 per container garden

Wellness Series: Kids Yoga

Wednesday, May 12; 6:30 to 7:30 pm; Vista Room Lawn

Our certified yoga instructor welcomes children ages 4-11 to this basic outdoor yoga class. Movements will be taught through themes, games, music and partner poses and focus on breathing and mindful movement. A parent/guardian must stay with each child for the class. Students should bring water and a towel or yoga mat.

Registration Required by May 8; \$15 per parent/child pair

Wellness Series: Parent & Child Play

Friday, May 14; 9 to 10 am; Vista Room Lawn

Jill Woodward, play therapist and local artist, will focus on Constructive Play. This type of play improves the relationship and communication between parent and child. Bring one child (age 2-5) per parent and some floor toys.

Registration Required by May 11; \$5 per parent/child pair

JUNE

Wellness Series: Kids Yoga

Wednesday, June 9; 6:30 to 7:30 pm; Vista Room Lawn

Our certified yoga instructor welcomes children ages 4-11 to this basic outdoor yoga class. Movements will be taught through themes, games, music and partner poses and focus on breathing and mindful movement. A parent/guardian must stay with each child for the class. Students should bring water and a towel or yoga mat.

Registration Required by June 4; \$15 per parent/child pair

Wildflower Walk

Sunday, June 27; 1 to 2:30 pm

Join us for a peaceful guided stroll through the Arboretum's prairies and meadows to enjoy the various summer wildflowers in bloom. Appropriate for ages 16+. Sorry, no pets allowed.

Registration Required by June 25; Members \$2 per person—Non-members \$5 per person

UPCOMING CLASSES & EVENTS, Continued

All classes start at the Pavilion unless otherwise noted. If a class has to be cancelled or postponed due to weather, registered participants will be notified via email.

JULY

Teddy Bear's Picnic Saturday, July 3; 1 to 2:30 pm; Nature Play Area

Children and their stuffed animal friends are invited to an afternoon of forest play. After we play teddy games, we'll go on a short "hike" with our animals to the Pavilion for some picnic snacks.

Registration Required by June 30; Members \$5 per child—Non-members \$15 per child

Wellness Series: Family Yoga Wednesday, July 14; 6:30 to 7:30 pm; Vista Room Lawn

Our certified yoga instructor welcomes all ages to this basic outdoor yoga class. Movements will be taught through themes, games, music and partner poses and focus on breathing and mindful movement. Students should bring water and a towel or yoga mat.

Registration Required by July 9; \$6 per person

Family Pond Dip Sunday, July 18; 1 to 2:30 pm

We will spend the afternoon at Lake Homestead to discover what's living there. We'll have nets, buckets, and field guides as well as staff on hand to help identify your aquatic discoveries. Bring a towel and wear your old shoes.

Registration Required by July 16; Members \$5 per family—Non-members \$15 per family

AUGUST

Photo Challenge: Virtual Nature Quilts August 1 through September 12

Create a virtual "quilt" of nature photos taken at the Arboretum during this 6-week challenge. We will provide a template for participants. Your masterpiece will be exhibited on our website beginning September 15.

Members & Non-Members—Free

DNR Furs Program Sunday, August 8; 2 to 3 pm; Vista Room Deck

Conservation Officer Dustin Eighmy will teach your family about Iowa furbearers. You'll get up close with real furs and learn about the animals, their habitat and hunting and trapping regulations related to fur harvesting in Iowa.

Registration Required by August 3; Members \$5 per family—Non-members \$15 per family

Wellness Series: Family Yoga Wednesday, August 11; 6:30 to 7:30 pm; Vista Room Lawn

Our certified yoga instructor welcomes all ages to this basic outdoor yoga class. Movements will be taught through themes, games, music and partner poses and focus on breathing and mindful movement. Students should bring water and a towel or yoga mat.

Registration Required by August 7; \$6 per person

Fall Homeschool Day Friday, August 27; 9 am to 4 pm

The Arboretum is one of the best outdoor classrooms in central Iowa. All participants will receive a packet of self-guided learning activities emailed to their inbox. Do as much or as little as you'd like as you explore the Arboretum.

Members & Non-members free

MONTHLY

Kids' Nature Club PLUS (ages 6+)—1st & 3rd Thursday (unless otherwise noted); 9 to 10 am

Kids' Nature Club (ages 2-5)—1st & 3rd Thursday (unless otherwise noted); 10:30 to 11:30 am

We have two great options for children to learn about nature at the Arboretum this year. Each nature club will cover a different topic and will be held outdoors. Meet at Administration Building.

Registration required by the Tuesday before the program; Members free—Non-members \$5 per child

Unless otherwise noted, to sign up for a class, go to our website www.thebrentonarboretum.org or email Kelly at: education@thebrentonarboretum.org.

CAPTURING CHANGING VISTAS

—Gail Turner, Membership & Volunteer Manager

Member and volunteer Craig Shives has been photographing 11 vistas throughout the Arboretum grounds since 2012, taking over 2,500 photos to date! He and his wife Kathy became members after Craig discovered the Arboretum while exploring the countryside surrounding Des Moines.

Craig saw a volunteer brochure in the Welcome Kiosk and expressed his interest in photography to then-Volunteer Manager Lee Goldsmith. They walked the grounds and chose ten vistas (which became 11 the following year) that Craig would photograph in every season as a means of cataloging the growth of the Arboretum. As you can see in the photos below, the results after just nine years have been impressive.

For Craig, the best part of volunteering has been the opportunity to wander the grounds in all seasons, making new discoveries along the way. He wants to encourage everyone to take the time to soak up the beautiful views afforded by the Arboretum's rolling landscape.

You can see four more vista photos on the outer page of this newsletter. We are grateful to Craig for his dedication as a volunteer and member of The Brenton Arboretum.



Summer Sycamore Vista photos taken in 2012 (left) and in 2020 (right).

REFLECTING ON SUCCESSES IN EDUCATION DURING A PANDEMIC YEAR

—Kelly Clime, Education & Outreach Manager

There is no question that the past year has posed many challenges to all educators. Since the abrupt cancellation of all 2020 spring break programs, we have explored new ways to reach our audiences and in doing so have been able to successfully serve more people than some of our traditional programs could have previously reached.



Orion Burdick arrives for Halloween event.

Our first success in pandemic programming came on Spring Homeschool Day, where participation tripled from approximately 15 families in 2019 to more than 45 families in 2020. Self-guided programs with digital materials turned out to be a great strategy not only for pandemic safety, but also for reaching more people. The next big success came in the fall when we converted our haunted Halloween walks to a drive-through event. Where social distancing would have limited participation, we were instead able to share the event with over 150 carloads of attendees, estimating a total reach of approximately 400 people.

Our make-and-take programs are always popular, and several were easily packaged as Curbside Craft Kits this past winter. This proved to be the perfect way to keep these programs going without gathering indoors. Now we've come full circle, with the passing of another spring break. Using the proven format of self-guided digital-download activities, we saw incredible success serving over 200 families during spring break this

year. The next big task now will be tackling the decline in field trips by creating teacher totes for classroom checkout to bring the Arboretum to school.



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Arboretum Beauty in All Seasons



Vista Photos Courtesy Craig Shives