



## THE BRENTON ARBORETUM

### SPRING 2022 NEWSLETTER

#### A TREE MUSEUM —Buz Brenton, Founder

These past 25 years have been very good to me, in no small measure because of the Arboretum, which has thrived so well. Its success, in no small measure, is because of you, our members and friends. Thank you so much!

As we become busier, I need to remind myself what we are: we are an arboretum. A place for your enjoyment but also a growing collection of woody plants from known sources, free and open to all for study and enjoyment. We collect in the wild and from other institutions for planting here.

This definition helps guide our board of directors and staff as we make decisions. We are a tree museum.

I hope to see you out here, where I spend many afternoons. I'm the older man with the felt hat. Again, thank you for being part of all this.

*Mark your calendar to join Buz for a Founders Walk  
on September 17! Details on page 6.*



Buz planting trees in 1997.

#### CHANGE AND GROWTH —Bob German, Board Chair

Nature, like Iowa weather, is in a constant state of change. Nowhere is that statement more apparent than at The Brenton Arboretum. Before the last skim of ice is gone from the ponds, the dark red buds begin to show on red maple trees (*Acer rubrum*). Crabapple buds (*Malus* sp.) begin to swell as large numbers of Canada and snow geese fill the sky in seeming confusion over their direction. The bluebird scouts trickle in looking for the best nesting sites while trumpeter swans swim in the ponds.

When we view all these seasonal changes in the biological life at the Arboretum, we sometimes miss the fact that tiny changes in the trees are building on one another—building on one another to form growth. Few of us will notice that a favorite 'Chimney Fire' oak tree (*Quercus x reifii* var. *warei* 'Chimney Fire') north of the Pavilion is larger this year than last. However, there is a small group of us who helped Buz Brenton plant the first trees in 1997 and we can hardly believe the change and growth that has occurred at the Arboretum over those 25 years. We used to say we were "an arboretum in the making", but we don't use that phrase anymore. Yet, I realize that change and growth at The Brenton Arboretum is also a constant, as it must be.

If you enjoy summer and fall exploring among the trees at the Arboretum, give the constant changes of springtime an opportunity to amaze you. And look closely, see the growth!

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#### Brenton Arboretum Board Members

Bob German, Chair  
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J.C. 'Buz' Brenton  
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Fred Weitz  
  
Harry Stine, Honorary

## “SIGNATURE COLLECTIONS”

—Andy Schmitz, Director of Horticulture

Even if you have driven through the Arboretum in the past six months, you may not have noticed three new signs as they are small and blend in with existing genus signs. The next time you are out, take a look for signs that mark a Signature Collection. Here’s a hint: You will find them at the Kentucky Coffeetrees, Osage-Oranges, and Elms.

What is a Signature Collection? These are collections we have decided to really focus on, putting more time, effort and money into expanding through collecting and acquiring seeds, cuttings, and plants. We are really the only arboretum working with Kentucky coffeetree and Osage-orange collections, and our elm collection is one of the most diverse in the Midwest, possibly in the country.

Of course, I must mention our Kentucky coffeetree (*Gymnocladus dioica*) collection is designated as a Nationally Accredited Plant Collection by the American Public Gardens Association. To build this collection, we started a relationship with Jeff Carstens at the USDA Plant Introduction Station in Ames, Iowa, more than 13 years ago. The USDA wanted to preserve this species in the seed bank, and The Brenton Arboretum wanted to grow out trees from across the species’ native range. Thus, we began joint collecting trips covering 16 states and more than 150 seed collections. To date, 88 of these seed collections are preserved at the USDA facility in Ames, Iowa, and one seed collection from Holt County, Missouri is stored at the Svalbard Global Seed Vault, which lies deep in the permafrost halfway between Norway and the North Pole. The Brenton Arboretum currently has 136 living accessions of Kentucky coffeetree, each representing a different wild location within the species’ historical native range. Both the seed and the living tree collections are preserving germplasm *ex situ*, meaning they are out of the species’ native habitat. Preserving species *in situ* are preserving them in their native habitats.



One of three Signature Collections at the Arboretum.

The Osage-orange Signature Collection (*Maclura pomifera*) began with a push from Guy Sternberg, founder of Starhill Forest Arboretum in Petersburg, Illinois, who convinced Buz Brenton and me—through some fast talking and arm twisting—to start expanding the Osage-orange grouping by planting known selections. Osage-orange is naturally an extremely thorny tree. They were planted as living fences to keep in livestock, but today’s selections are thornless, or nearly so, and also fruitless to ensure no hedge balls are laying all over the yard. To get these selections, I traveled to the John C. Pair Horticultural Center in Haysville, Kansas, in 2010 and 2020 to take dormant cuttings for rooting. The cuttings came from trees planted by John Pair himself, who selected thornless and fruitless trees. Currently, we have 90 Osage-orange trees planted representing 39 cultigens, (cultivars or genotypes of documented origin) with nine more cultigens hopefully rooting in the propagation bench as I write. In time, this, will be a Nationally Accredited Plant Collection.

Our oldest Signature Collection was started way back in 1997 when Buz brought the first elms (*Ulmus*) to the Arboretum. In his white Ford station wagon, he drove the little trees all the way from the Morton Arboretum near Chicago and planted them. Dr. George Ware at the Morton Arboretum, an eminent tree authority whose primary passion was the elm genus, gave these trees to Buz. Today, six of those original seven trees are still here and wonderful specimens. All are Asian species resistant to Dutch elm disease and include Accolade™, Danada Charm™, Wilson, and David. In the spring of 2006, 2007, and 2008, I had the privilege of visiting Dr. Ware myself to bring back more Asian elm species. Dr. Ware was a wonderful man and so willing to share trees. He almost threw trees in the truck as I drove away. Altogether, Buz and I brought back 116 elms, and today 45 of these are growing well here. Many have died and were never going to be cold hardy for Iowa, but we learn just as much from trees that die as from the ones that live. There are currently 115 elm trees planted at the Arboretum representing species, hybrids and cultivars, and American elms that are resistant to Dutch elm disease.

As we continue to lose tree species to diseases like oak wilt and insects like emerald ash borer, the trees represented in these Signature Collections have great potential to be replacement trees. Our work places the Arboretum on the forefront of knowing which perform the best. The next time you are here for a visit, take some time to explore these three Signature Collections and see for yourself why they are so special.

# CHEERS TO 25 YEARS!

— Melissa Burdick, Executive Director

Wait a minute, didn't we *just* celebrate our 20th anniversary? How can it possibly be our 25th already? Time flies when you're having fun I suppose. And it is fun working at The Brenton Arboretum. When you love nature, every day is a celebration.

You might remember our 20th anniversary, June Moon, back in 2017; it was such a good time we did it again in 2018. Now for our 25th we're pulling out all the stops for another great shin-dig. Mark your calendars for Saturday, August 27 and join us for Cheers to 25 Years!

Cheers to 25 Years will be a fabulous event under a tent on the newly renovated Vista Lawn. The party will feature live music by central Iowa favorite Max Wellman and a scrumptious summer buffet by The Des Moines Embassy Club. But the real star of the event will be the beautiful trees and prairie of The Brenton Arboretum highlighted by a stunning summer sunset.

Our parties are a casual affair, so don your favorite flip flops and Bermuda shorts and leave the stuffy suits and sequins at home. Unless, of course, you just really love sequins—then by all means, go for the glitz!

Keep an eye out in your mailbox and inbox for your invitation and more details on this event. We love to party and we want all our friends to be a part of it!

# cheers TO 25 YEARS!

SAVE THE DATE: AUGUST 27, 2022

6–9 PM

THE BRENTON ARBORETUM

## Cheers to 25 Years! Tickets & Sponsorships

Tickets go on sale on May 27, visit our website to purchase

### Individual Tickets: \$125

Individual tickets include undesignated seating for one, full buffet meal, and unlimited access to the bar.

### Table Sponsorship: \$1,500

Table Sponsorships include reserved seating, full buffet meal, and unlimited access to the bar for a party of eight. Sponsors will also receive recognition online and in the printed program.

### Presenting Sponsorship: \$2,500

Presenting Sponsorships include preferred and reserved seating, full buffet meal, unlimited access to the bar for a party of eight. Presenting Sponsors will also have the opportunity to promote their business with their logo online, in the printed program, and on all other printed materials.

*A limited number of Presenting and Table Sponsorships are available. To reserve your sponsorship early, call or email Melissa: 515-992-4211 ext 3 or [melissa@thebrentonarboretum.org](mailto:melissa@thebrentonarboretum.org).*

## TRIBUTE GIFTS—received between 9/30/21 and 3/31/22.

### In Memory Of

Doug Burnett	Gene Maahs
Robert Galbraith	Dan Petersen
Charles 'Gary' Gately	Ronald Schmidt
James Lindberg	Jean Warren

### In Honor Of

Liz Eddy & Matthew Hansman	
Joe Ferrentino	Stephen Netteland
Tina Mowry Hadden	Audra Warmuth

# ENDOWMENT FUNDRAISING CHALLENGE

— Melissa Burdick, Executive Director

Every now and then a once-in-a-lifetime opportunity falls in your lap; when that happens you have to embrace it with gusto! An opportunity like that just recently cropped up for The Brenton Arboretum: a generous donor has challenged us to raise \$5 million for our endowment by September 30, 2023. If we succeed—scratch that, when we succeed—this donor will add an *additional* \$6 million to the endowment!

A charitable institution's endowment is vital to ensuring its ongoing stability in perpetuity. The corpus of an endowment should be untouchable and invested responsibly for growth over time. The fund benefits its organization through the interest earned from year to year. Responsible organizations will have thoughtful policies in place to allow the strategic use of that earned interest without undercutting market performance or being outpaced by economic inflation.

The Brenton Arboretum focuses on responsible endowment stewardship. Our Board of Directors recognizes the importance of a strong endowment in securing institutional stability from generation to generation. Arboretum policies cap annual endowment draws to a maximum of 4% of a three year average of the funds' market value. This strategy accommodates both the use of the endowment to support institutional needs *and* its ongoing growth.

Our endowment is a blessing. Currently, it totals approximately \$3 million dollars, contributing more than \$120,000 annually to our operations and capital projects. This endowment-building challenge will grow the fund to \$14 million, generating as much as half a million dollars annually. This boon will allow us to keep up with the Arboretum's growth in all it's facets. As our trees and visitation grows, so must our staffing, equipment, and facilities grow to keep pace. We also want to share our love of trees by growing our educational programming, which will depend on adding teachers and naturalists to our staff.

I sincerely hope you'll consider making an extra donation or coordinating a future gift in your estate to help us fulfill this challenge over the next 18 months. Down below you'll find a handful of ways that donors can contribute to this amazing opportunity.

## Ways to Donate to The Brenton Arboretum Endowment Challenge

**Check:** Simply send a check made out to The Brenton Arboretum and note that it is for the "Endowment" in the memo line.

**Credit/Debit Card:** Visit [www.TheBrentonArboretum.org/endowment-gift](http://www.TheBrentonArboretum.org/endowment-gift) to make a donation online.

**Gifts of Stock:** Gifts of stock can be made directly to the Arboretum's Permanent Endowment held at The Community Foundation of Greater Des Moines. Please call or email for asset transfer instructions.

**IRA Distribution:** Directed to The Brenton Arboretum, include "Endowment" in the memo line. If needed our tax ID number is 31-1578089

**Grant from a Donor Advised Fund:** Indicate to your fund manager that you would like to issue a grant to The Brenton Arboretum (EIN #31-1578089), and to please specify that your grant is for the endowment.

**Include the Arboretum in your Estate Plan:** If you plan to include The Brenton Arboretum in your estate, please send us a letter outlining your intended gift and its approximate value. We understand that estate gifts are revocable at any time and that final donation amounts are dependent on markets at the time of realization.

*If you have questions regarding making a donation to the endowment challenge, call or email Melissa: 515-992-4211 ext 3 or [melissa@thebrentonarboretum.org](mailto:melissa@thebrentonarboretum.org).*

## UPCOMING CLASSES & EVENTS

If a class has to be cancelled or postponed, registered participants will be notified via email. Classes are being added throughout the year so check our website regularly: [www.thebrentonarboretum.org/events](http://www.thebrentonarboretum.org/events).

### 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 Pavilion.

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

### MAY

**Back to Our Roots: Tree Planting & Care**      Saturday, May 14; 9 to 11 am; Starts in Vista Room

Join our Horticulture Director, Andy Schmitz, to learn all of the tips and tricks to ensure a successful tree planting. He'll explain root flares, what to look for when purchasing a tree, proper planting techniques and more. This class will start in the Vista Room before heading outside for a tree planting demonstration. Fee includes a bare root tree.

*Registration Required by May 10; Members \$40 per person—Non-members \$50 per person*

**Spring Bird Walk**      Sunday, May 15; 6:30 to 8:30 am; Starts at Pavilion

Birding enthusiast John Bissell will guide this walk in search of birds at the Arboretum. No prior birding experience is necessary. Wear sturdy shoes and bring your binoculars. Light refreshments provided.

*Registration Required by May 12; Members \$5 per person—Non-members \$15 per person*

**Eddy Woods Exploration—Members Only**      Sunday, May 15; 1:30 to 3 pm; Starts at Administration Building

Executive Director Melissa Burdick will lead you on this special history-filled exploration of Eddy Woods. She'll also talk about some of the unique features of this section of the Arboretum and future plans for the area.

*Registration Required by May 13; Members Only-Free; Inclement Weather Date—May 22nd*

### JUNE

**Story Time in the Willows**      Sunday, June 5; 3 to 4 pm; Willow collection past the Pavilion

Author Megan Cline will read her children's books featuring Winston the wombat and his many adventures in the shade of the willow trees. Bring a blanket or chair and enjoy the stories with your family.

*FREE for members & non-members*

**Father's Day Mud Kitchen**      Sunday, June 19; 1 to 2:30 pm; Meet at Conifer Parking Area

What's better than getting dirty with Dad?! Put on your old clothes and we'll make muddy creations near the stream at Buckeye bridge.

*Registration Required by June 15; Members \$5 per family—Non-members \$15 per family*

### JULY

**Wildflower Walk with Inger Lamb**      Sunday, July 24; 2 to 3:30 pm; Meet at Administration Building

Inger Lamp of Prairie Landscapes LLC will lead this walk and talk, answering your questions about prairie plants before we take a leisurely half-mile stroll along the prairie. Appropriate for ages 16+. Sorry, no pets allowed.

*Registration Required by July 20; Members \$5 per person—Non-members \$15 per person*

**Iowa's Geologic Past**      Sunday, July 31; 2 to 3:30 pm; Meet at Administration Building

Inger Lamp of Prairie Landscapes LLC will lead this walk and talk, answering your questions about prairie plants before we take a leisurely half-mile stroll along the prairie. Appropriate for ages 16+. Sorry, no pets allowed.

*Registration Required by July 20; Members \$5 per person—Non-members \$15 per person*



## UPCOMING CLASSES & EVENTS, Continued

### AUGUST

#### **Story Time in the Willows**

Sunday, August 7; 3 to 4 pm; Willow collection past the Pavilion

Author Megan Cline will read her children's books featuring Winston the wombat and his many adventures in the shade of the willow trees. Bring a blanket or chair and enjoy the stories with your family.

*FREE for members & non-members*

#### **Fall Homeschool Day**

Friday, August 26; 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*

#### **Cheers to 25 Years!**

Saturday, August 27; 6 to 9 pm; Vista Room lawn

It's time to celebrate our 25th anniversary! We will have delicious food, drinks and live music under the stars as we toast the 25th anniversary of The Brenton Arboretum.

*Ticketed Event*

### SEPTEMBER

#### **Founders Walk**

Saturday, September 17; 9 to 11 am; Starts at Pavilion

Celebrate our 25th anniversary with a walk guided by our founder Buz Brenton. Don't miss this opportunity to hear stories and learn about plans for the future of this special place.

*Registration Required by September 14; Members Free—Non-members \$10 per person*

#### **Family Twilight Hike**

Friday, September 23; 7:30 to 9 pm; Starts at Administration Building

This family-friendly excursion will take walkers of all ages on an educational sensory adventure and allow you to experience the Arboretum in a whole new light! Sorry, no pets.

*Registration Required by September 21; Members \$5 per family—Non-members \$10 per family*

#### **Back to our Roots: Land Management**

Sunday, September 25; 1 to 3 pm; Starts at Administration Building

In this class you will learn how to shift from being a land owner to a land manager. Penny Erickson will discuss natural forces that shape the landscape and ways to better utilize them to enhance the home landscape.

*Registration Required by September 21; Members \$40 per person—Non-members \$50 per person*

### OCTOBER

#### **Harvest Moon—Members Only**

Saturday, October 15; 7 to 9 pm; Vista Room lawn

We'll enjoy an evening at the Arboretum with a bonfire and s'mores under the light of the moon.

*Registration Required by October 11; Members Only-Free*

#### **Spooktacular Trees Halloween Drive-Through**

Sunday, October 30; 1 to 5 pm

Our annual Halloween event keeps getting bigger and better! During this family-friendly drive-through event you'll view delightfully spooky scenes with scenic fall vistas in between.

*Drop-In Event; \$5 per car, exact change—no change will be made at the gate.*

Classes are being added throughout the year so check our website regularly: [www.thebrentonarboretum.org/events](http://www.thebrentonarboretum.org/events). Sign up for classes on our website or email: [education@thebrentonarboretum.org](mailto:education@thebrentonarboretum.org).

## THE GIFT OF MEMBERSHIP

—Gail Turner, Membership & Volunteer Manager



Do you struggle with gift ideas for that person in your life who already has everything they need? Do you have a loved one who adores nature? Are you a grandparent with children in the Des Moines metro always on the lookout for fun and educational classes for all ages? I have the solution for you—a gift membership to The Brenton Arboretum!

Mother's Day and Father's Day will be here before you know it. If you're like me, your parents don't want any more stuff. A gift membership is a great way to show them you care at the same time you support this oasis of trees, prairies, streams, and trails for the next generation. Birthdays, weddings and anniversaries are other ideal occasions for a gift membership to The Brenton Arboretum.

There are so many benefits to membership with the Arboretum, including reciprocal admission privileges to other gardens in the metro and beyond; reduced and/or free class registration fees; a dog pass to bring the family pooch with you as you enjoy our trails; special member event invitations; and more.

Consider sharing your love of the Arboretum with your family and friends this year. We are grateful for your continued support!



Arboretum visitors take in the view.

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## REFLECTING ON SUCCESSES IN EDUCATION DURING A PANDEMIC YEAR

—Kelly Clime, Education & Outreach Manager



Kelly explains natural tie dying to a spring break class.

There is no question that the past year 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, successfully served more people than some of our traditional programs previously reached.

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 a decline in field trips by creating teacher totes for classroom checkout to bring the Arboretum to school.



Spring break class fun this year.



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## THE BRENTON ARBORETUM

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Return Service Requested

## Check out these classes to get healthy at the Arboretum!

**Wellness Series: Stroller Fit in Nature**—Tuesdays, May 10 through June 7; 10:30 to 11:30 am

This class is for moms with youngsters in tow. The class will incorporate bodyweight movements and light cardio, plus some activities to get your child moving. Please bring your child in a stroller. Dress for the weather!

*Registration Required; Members \$5 per parent/child—Non-members \$10 per parent/child*

**Wellness Series: Tai Chi**—Thursdays, May 5 through October 27; 6 to 7 pm; Meet at Pavilion

Our tai chi instructors welcome all ages and fitness levels to these weekly classes. Children under 14 must be accompanied by an adult.

*Registration required by the Tuesday before the program; \$15 per person*

**Wellness Series: Yoga**—1st Wednesday May through October; 6 to 7 pm;  
Meet at Labyrinth

Earth Om Yoga owner and instructor Alicia Bassett leads this class for all ages and fitness levels. Children must be accompanied by an adult.

*Registration required by the Monday before the program; \$15 per person*

**Wellness Series: Family Yoga**—4th Wednesday May through October; 6 to 7 pm;  
Meet at Labyrinth

Earth Om Yoga owner and instructor Alicia Bassett will guide you in a relaxing yoga session to help you and your family get closer to nature. There will be a different theme each month!

*Registration required by the Monday before the program; \$15 per person*



Participants enjoyed yoga at the labyrinth.