



THE BRENTON ARBORETUM

NEWSLETTER, AUTUMN 2024

Growing Your Tree Rings - Melissa Burdick, Executive Director

The crisp air and shorter days bring out a unique transformation in each tree, creating a vivid tapestry of red, orange, and gold. Just as every tree's evolution is unique, so is the journey visitors make when they explore the trails. How many of us can count our memories like the rings of the mighty oak? Each life stage, adversity, or event grows us stronger, bit by bit.

Walking our trails in fall is a sensory experience—crunching leaves, the scent of prairie, and a cool breeze carrying an invigorating sense of change. Whether you attend an event or simply enjoy a peaceful afternoon under the trees, your visit supports the mission and future of the Arboretum, adds to your own personal tree rings of life, and weaves you into the fabric of something lasting.

Autumn is a season of reflection and evolution, and the trees at The Brenton Arboretum remind us of the resilience and strength found in nature. As the leaves fall, their strong framework beneath is revealed. Like the trees, The Arboretum relies on a framework of support from our members and donors. Your contributions help ensure that the Arboretum remains a place of beauty, learning, conservation, and peace for all who visit. By helping us reach our annual fundraising goals, you're directly contributing to the preservation of these natural spaces for future generations to enjoy.

As we prepare for winter, we're reminded of the importance of community and real, tangible connections; part of the crucial framework of our lives. Please consider how you can enrich your own life by helping support this beautiful space. Whether by renewing your membership or making an additional donation, with your help as members of The Brenton Arboretum community, we can continue offering the programs, events, and serene spaces that make Arboretum a strong branch in the framework of our lives.



To make a donation go to www.TheBrentonArboretum.org/Donate-Now

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Nuts, Nuts and More Nuts

Andy Schmitz, Director of Horticulture

Fall is in the air, and, to a seed collector like me, this means trees are dropping their seeds and it's time to start picking them up. Several species at the arboretum are dropping seeds: the oak genus, *Quercus*, with acorns; *Aesculus* with their buckeyes; *Carya* hickories with their nuts and chestnuts; *Castanea* chestnuts and their seeds to roast.

One of the largest nuts at the arboretum is the black walnut, *Juglans nigra*. This tree is quite common throughout Iowa and across its native range of the Midwest, Northeast, and Southeast United States. It can grow more than 75 feet tall with an equal size spread. In its native habitat you will find it in riparian zones (along bodies of water) with rich soils. It also grows in drier conditions, but slower. It's highly valued for its quality logs, and Iowa is a top-producing state of logs for making walnut veneer. There are 14 black walnut trees in the collections that were planted by squirrels from an old nearby tree. You can see them just to the west as you cross Walnut Bridge.



black walnut, butternut, little walnut, and Arizona walnut



Black walnuts planted by the Brenton family in early 1900s

The Brenton family planted a row of black walnuts in the early part of the 1900s on what is now the southern part of the arboretum in Eddy Woods. If you walk the Eddy Woods trail, you'll see them on the north side of the stream in a row. These black walnuts are a historical part of the arboretum, but we have expanded the *Juglans* collection by planting other species, such as butternut, *Juglans cinerea*, and the little walnut, *Juglans microcarpa*. Next year, will plant Arizona walnuts, *Juglans major*, grown from seed wild collected in New Mexico.

The butternut is a native Iowa tree, but across its native range, which extends from the Midwest to the eastern United States, this species has been decimated by butternut canker, a fungal disease which has killed more than 80 percent of butternut trees since it was first discovered in Wisconsin in 1967. Because the disease is killing so many trees, the butternut is a threatened species. It also hybridizes with Japanese walnut, *Juglans ailantifolia*, making pure butternut trees even more rare.

As part of the arboretum's mission in conservation and research, I made four seed and leaf collections of diseased but living butternuts in Iowa this fall. The seeds will be used to grow trees to plant here, and some will be shipped off to other arboretums to grow trees to help preserve the species. The leaf samples are being sent to a researcher at the University of Minnesota for testing to determine which trees are genetically pure butternuts.

Our little walnuts, with their specific epithet *microcarpa* (*micro* = small and *carpa* = fruit), have seeds the size of marbles. They were planted in 2017 and 2018, grown from wild-collected seeds representing genetics from Oklahoma and southern Kansas, considered the northern part of its native range. The seedlings at planting time were less than a foot tall and are now more than 10 feet. Who knew this species would do so well at the arboretum? Obviously, they are cold hardy enough and enjoy Iowa's soils like their cousin, the black walnut. Only time will tell if the Arizona walnuts like Iowa's cold winters and our nutrient-rich soils, but either way, we will plant them and see.

I wonder if those first Brentons to plant trees on this land thought about future generations planting trees here. I would venture to say they never thought the black walnuts they planted would be part of an arboretum one day. So, the next time you are out, take a walk amongst the biggest trees planted at the arboretum, and grab a walnut to take home to plant your own tree.

Sneak Peak of our 2025 events!

Luke Stutzman

LIVE IN CONCERT



JUNE 21, 2025
6 - 8 PM
GATES OPEN AT 5 PM
BRING A LAWN CHAIR OR BLANKET
FOOD AND DRINKS AVAILABLE FOR PURCHASE

 **Get on Board DSM**
personal size charcuterie boards
available for purchase



Purchase tickets at:
www.thebrentonarboretum.org/events/luke-stutzman-in-concert
<https://lukestutzman.com>

Happy EARTH DAY



Let's pledge to protect and preserve our precious planet.
12:00-3:00 PM

Special appearance from Smokey the Bear at 1:00 PM

www.TheBrentonArboretum.org

April 27, 2025

Baan Vaan Ice cream & treats
12:00-3:00 PM available for purchase
baanvaan.com (menu & pricing)

Dallas County Sheriff's Department
12:00-3:00 PM

Art by Kat Face painting
Facebook: <https://www.facebook.com/artbykatfacepainting/>
Special pricing for Earth Day guests
12:00-3:00 PM

Artist Jill Woodward
create a bug out of found objects
12:00-3:00 PM (free, while supplies last)

Des Moines Parent
Bingo: 100 Things to Do In Des Moines before you die
12:00-3:00 PM (no charge)

DNR Conservation Officer Dustin Eighmy
All things animals and furs
12:00-3:00 PM (no charge)

Local author of the Winston book series, Megan Cline
Kids craft/activity
12:00-3:00 PM (free, while supplies last)

Local book Illustrator Jill Woodward will have a kids craft
"All the Colors of the Moon"
12:00-3:00 PM (free, while supplies last)

For more information or to register for any classes, please visit:
<https://thebrentonarboretum.org/events/>

Summer Fun at the Arboretum - Penny Perkins, Education & Outreach Manager



The education department hosted the annual summer camps for the second year this past summer. Campers learned about the arboretum through frog-calling lessons, crafts, exploration, and games, including Into the Forest, an exercise where families battled while dealing with the food chain.

Stay tuned for the launch of our new summer camps in 2025. Visit this link to see all the upcoming events and activities that are planned for children and families:

<https://thebrentonarboretum.org/parents-and-teachers/>

Spotlight on Volunteers - Megan Webster, Membership & Volunteer Manager

We want to thank our generous volunteers, along with our volunteer Board of Directors listed on page 1, for donating more than 250 hours of their time and talents to the Arboretum during the past year.

We would like to introduce our new little library volunteer, Connie Fischer.

Connie has been a volunteer out at the arboretum for quite some time. She is one of our many gardeners that come out to help take care of our grounds and keep everything looking pristine.

We are thrilled to have her helping with our little library near the O'Brien Nature Play.

Have you thought about volunteering?

We are always in need of volunteers for various jobs on the grounds and for outreach. If you are interested, please email us at Memberships@TheBrentonArboretum.org.





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Return Service Requested

Come out to see the fall colors while they last!

