



P.O. Box 2607 | Acton, MA 01720

# Arboretum Notes

**DON'T FORGET TO RENEW  
YOUR MEMBERSHIP!**

*sample*



## What's Happening



Above: The grape arbor in fiery fall colors by Instagram user @lovefrommolly.

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Follow us on social media!

The Arboretum is active on Facebook and Instagram! For the latest information on projects and events, "Like" our Facebook page, Acton Arboretum. For fun photo updates, follow our Instagram account, @actonarbo. Tag #actonarboratum so that we can like your photos, and maybe even include them in the next newsletter!

Right: Broadleaf Mountain Mint by Instagram user @emilmrny.  
Far right: Bees pollinating daisies by Instagram user @kbeck8261.



Arboretum Notes is produced by Magdalen Abe in collaboration with the Friends of the Acton Arboretum.

# Arboretum Notes



FRIENDS  
of the ACTON  
ARBORETUM

November 2015 | Volume VII | Issue II

## Our Mission

To raise and donate funds, materials and services to the Town of Acton for the development and maintenance of the Acton Arboretum; to educate the community about the unique environmental, horticultural, geological and historical qualities of the Arboretum property, about the process of wetland and field succession, and, in an era of decreasing public funds and natural resources, about conservation, effective horticultural practice; and generally to do all the things permitted to non profit organizations under the provisions of Chapter 180 of the General Laws of Massachusetts and Section 501c3 of the Internal Revenue Code of 1984, as from time to time they are amended.

## BECOME A MEMBER

FRIENDS of the ACTON  
ARBORETUM, INC.  
P.O. Box 2607  
Acton, MA 01720

## Upcoming Projects

The Friends of the Acton Arboretum have been busy planning multiple projects to improve accessibility, safety, and continuity. These undertakings are in various stages of completion; detailed below are the most significant changes:

### Bog Boardwalk

This summer, Jesse Beaverson of Fred's Construction built the new 271 ft boardwalk across the bog to ADA specifications. While the old boardwalk compressed and killed plants beneath it, the new structure is elevated 18 inches. Its fiberglass decking allows light to filter through to flora and fauna below and has been treated with a gritty, non-slip finish. The fiberglass will resist rot and corrosion for 30 years. A wide observation deck now stands in the middle of the bog, complete with a teak bench. The Town plans to construct a paved sidewalk ramp from Minot Ave to make the boardwalk universally accessible; an Eagle Scout will build a 60 inch round platform at the esker side of the boardwalk to facilitate wheelchair maneuverability.



### Parking Lot

As this issue goes to press, Lenox Landscaping Company is shaping and grading the new parking lot with help from the Acton Natural Resources Department. The new parking lot will be fully paved with painted lines delineating its 26 spaces, two of which will be handicap-accessible. A one-way entrance and one-way exit configuration will reduce congestion. The Town plans to finish the lot before winter. Next spring, we will build a rain garden adjacent to the lot to collect runoff. Contaminants will be filtered out by plant communities comprised of Eastern redbud, Dwarf fathergilla, Common elderberry, and many other species.

### Well

In November, Skills & Sons will be drilling a new water well across from the Sun Pond, enabling the Arboretum to have its own water supply. Electricity will be wired into the Arboretum to power the well pump. For two years, a leak in the Arboretum's underground irrigation system has caused the Acton Water District to shut off our water supply. This well will provide a reliable water source for our volunteers tending the gardens and will also allow the Acton Water District to divert more water to the demands of Acton residents and businesses.



### Fern Boardwalk

Next summer, we plan to rebuild the decaying fern boardwalk and remove a dying red maple alongside. 13 black walnut trees will also be removed to allow volunteers to plant more wildflowers along the trail, restoring a healthy diversity of understory plants. Black walnut trees deposit the phytotoxin juglone into the soil; care will be taken in choosing understory plantings that are capable of growing in the presence of the toxin. New plantings will include members of the genera Viburnum, Halesia, and Styrax, among others.



### Garden Shed

A new 10x16 ft garden shed has been erected by the Butterfly Garden to house the equipment used regularly by volunteers and Town staff. Thanks to a generous donation from the Haartz Corporation, we have also purchased new gardening tools. Arboretum volunteers rejoice!

Top: The new fiberglass bog boardwalk.

Next from top: Get ready to say goodbye to these potholes and ruts when the new parking lot is complete!

Next from bottom: Ursa the chocolate Labrador stakes out the future site of the well.

Bottom: Our beautiful new tool shed!

## Featured Flora!

November is a beautiful time at the Arboretum, bedecked in vibrant vermilion and rich terracotta, replete with tessellating textures and striking profiles. Whether you're a photographer pursuing that quintessential Fall shot, a hiker seeking solace among the trees, or any other variety of Lorax, dryad, wanderer, or catch-all nature-lover, be sure to scope out these particularly lovely plantings!



### Bald Cypress

*Taxodium distichum*

View this deciduous conifer by the Rhododendron Garden. Its "knees" (root projections) are visible around the trunk.



### Closed Gentian

*Gentiana andreae*

These wildflowers grow by the Swale Bridge. In the spring, they are a deep blue.



### Oxeye Daisy

*Leucanthemum vulgare*

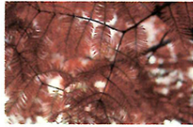
Find this perennial in the Butterfly Garden. It is a hearty plant used in many traditional medicines.



### Seven Sons Plant

*Heptacodium miconioides*

Its fragrant white flowers redden as fall persists. Find it by the Swale Bridge.



### Dawn Redwood

*Metasequoia glyptostroboides*

Once thought to be extinct, you can find this "living fossil" growing in the Main Lawn and Rhododendron Garden. It is deciduous and hails from China.



### American Sweetgum

*Liquidambar styraciflua*

This popular ornamental tree grows by the Main Lawn. It is named for its resin—"liquid amber"—which smells pleasantly like ambergris.



### Monkshood

*Aconitum sp.*

Admire this infamously poisonous bloom by the Butterfly Garden. In Greek myth, it figures into Medea's plot to kill Theseus.



### Wild Teasel

*Dipsacus fullonum*

Its spiny cones are preceded by purple flowers. Birds, especially goldfinches, enjoy its seeds. View it in the Fragrance Garden.



### Blueberry Foliage

*Vaccinium sp.*

Find the Highbush variety in the Hosta Garden, and the Lowbush variety by the Grape Arbor and in the Herb Garden. Birds, bunnies, and bears are among the animals that feed on blueberries.



### Miscanthus Grass

*Miscanthus sp.*

View this silvery waving grass by the Butterfly Garden. It is a beautiful ornament, but notoriously hard to transplant.



### Dwarf Blue Star

*Amsonia montana*

This shrub can be found in the Butterfly Garden. It grows icy blue flowers in the spring.



### Winterberry

*Ilex verticillata*

This shrub grows by the Swale Bridge and Sun Pond. It prefers wet, acidic environments, and is a favorite food of cedar waxwings.



### Paperbark Maple

*Acer griseum*

Located by the Stone Reading Circle, this tree's copper, "exfoliating" bark gives it a flaking appearance.



### New England Aster

*Symphoricaric novae-angliae*

Find these flowers in the Butterfly Garden and Sun Meadow. They can endure multiple frosts.

## Membership Application

# Friends of the Acton Arboretum

Membership benefits for Friends include: a biannual newsletter, seasonal walks, talks and workshops, and civic pride in a special gift of land used for enjoyment and education.

## WHO ARE THE FRIENDS?

We are a group of citizens who care about the natural world and share a vision of preserving and enhancing our natural resources for educational purposes. Friends contribute time, money, plants and other gifts and talents in support of the Acton Arboretum in order to achieve these goals.

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Address: \_\_\_\_\_

Telephone: \_\_\_\_\_ I am a  NEW MEMBER  RETURNING MEMBER

TYPE OF MEMBERSHIP (CHECK ONE)

INDIVIDUAL | \$15  FAMILY | \$25  SUPPORTING | \$40  CORPORATE | \$100

CONTACT ME FOR VOLUNTEER OPPORTUNITIES

Commemorative gifts, honoring marriages, births, deaths or other special dates, are gratefully accepted and recorded in a commemorative listing.

PLEASE DETACH AND MAIL TO: FRIENDS OF THE ACTON ARBORETUM, INC. | P.O. BOX 2607 | ACTON, MA 01720

## Gardening Tips from an Expert

This issue's topic: **To Mulch or Not to Mulch?** Friends of the Acton Arboretum board member, gardening guru, and tireless volunteer, Sue Whitcomb, shares her expert advice on how to prepare one's gardens for the coming winter.

"I am of the low maintenance gardening school. I prefer to rake only paths and lawns; leaves from the paths can be raked into the gardens, and leaves on the lawn can be mulched with a lawn mower and blown into the gardens when you do the last mowings of the year. Excess leaves make great compost! Otherwise, I do not mulch my gardens excessively. I do mulch my garlic crop, some tender perennials such as Crocosmia, and some evergreen perennials that are susceptible to wind burn, such as Erica and Calluna. It is best to plant these in locations naturally shielded from wind in the first place, but mulch is a good secondary defense. In the spring, I only remove leaves that I feel are in excess, leaving most on the beds to become summer mulch. For a more polished look, the edges of beds can be treated with a "fancier" mulch, such as buckwheat hulls or mini chips. Regular, undyed mulch works too, but if it is hot, let it cool off before spreading, as hot mulch may burn emerging plants. I lay down this mulch around April 1st, avoiding hard spring frosts that can damage tender, emerging foliage. For those dismayed to find their gardens have become browsing grounds, deer-proofing is a vital measure! Place 3 stakes around saplings to prevent deer from rubbing off the bark, and apply deer repellent sprays while the weather is still warm (over 45° F) in the fall and early winter. Repeatedly spray as the weather permits throughout the winter for the best results. Lastly, a word of caution: heavy hay mulches make inviting homes for mice and voles during the winter, and can contribute to loss of plants! Happy gardening!"

-Sue Whitcomb

Have a gardening question or conundrum? Email [maggie.abe125@gmail.com](mailto:maggie.abe125@gmail.com) with your query, and we might answer it in our next issue!

## Volunteer Projects of Note

From students to scouts, enthusiasts to master gardeners, the Arboretum is forever indebted to the volunteers who keep its gardens and trails beautiful and accessible. Below are some of the many projects undertaken this season:

- 20 student volunteers, grades 8-11, from the Groton School came on workdays in both the spring and the fall to help with trail maintenance.
  - Volunteers from NuPath Inc. of Westford worked every Monday in the spring and summer, raking trails and mulching gardens.
  - Student volunteers from Acton-Boxborough High School and RJ Grey Junior High School come on Tuesdays and Thursdays—spring, summer, and fall—as their schedules permit. They work alongside the adult volunteers planting, shoveling, pruning, watering, and mulching.
  - Liam Jones completed his Eagle Scout project by renovating 100 ft of the Rhododendron Garden trail.
  - Jacob Crowley completed his Eagle Scout project by removing 30 invasive honeysuckle and multiflora rose bushes and re-planting 20 new wetlands shrubs by the Sun Pond.
- Want to volunteer at the Arboretum? Please contact Bettina Abe, Natural Resources Assistant, at [babe@acton-ma.gov](mailto:babe@acton-ma.gov). Workdays are held during the spring, summer, and fall on Thursdays from 9:00-12:00 and Tuesdays from 2:30-6:00. All experience levels and abilities are welcome!



Above: Student volunteers from the Groton School rest after a morning of spreading stone dust and mulch.

The charm of a woodland road lies not only in its beauty but in anticipation. Around each bend may be a discovery, an adventure. #DALLERXCOMAN