

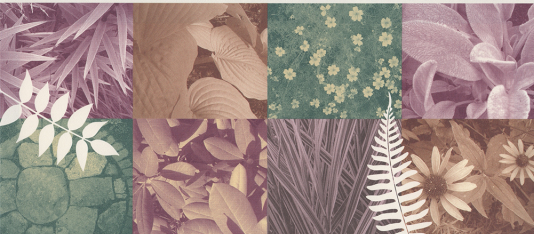


P.O. Box 2607 | Acton, MA 01720

Arboretum Notes

**DON'T FORGET TO RENEW
YOUR MEMBERSHIP!**
YOUR MEMBERSHIP IS
VALID THROUGH:

THANK YOU!



Arboretum Notes



FRIENDS
of the
ACTON
ARBORETUM

October 2016 | Volume VIII | 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

Current Projects

The Friends of the Acton Arboretum are always conceiving of new projects to improve accessibility, safety, and continuity. These undertakings are in various stages of completion; detailed below are the most significant changes:

Fern Boardwalk

In August, Fred's Construction completed the new fern boardwalk between the Understorey Study and the Wildflower Trail. The new boardwalk is made of pressure-treated pine and is expected to last 20-30 years. It was built upon the same footprint as the previous structure, but with a reduced grade to comply with ADA guidelines of less than 5% pitch, making it wheelchair accessible.



Understorey Study

The Understorey Study is a new garden abutting the fern boardwalk: last year, we cleared the area of several black walnut trees (*Juglans nigra*), which were depositing the toxin *juglone* into the soil and decreasing the natural biodiversity around them. Replanting them are a number of understorey trees such as sweetheart magnolia (*Magnolia sspicata*), black tupelo (*Nyssa glauca*), Persian ironwood (*Parrotia persica*), and Japanese maple (*Acer palmatum*), as well as woody shrubs such as *Calycanthus* spp. and *Viburnum* spp. We are planning to plant pink horse chestnuts (*Aesculus hippocastanum*) and a silver bells tree (*Hibiscus syriacus*) as well. Our vision for this area is a horticultural collection that celebrates the aesthetic and environmental virtues of understorey plants—those not exceeding 25-30 feet—by selecting trees and shrubs that are colorful, pleasant to look at, and beneficial to the natural habitat.

Rain Garden/Bioretenention Basin

This area adjacent to the parking lot is responsible for filtering contaminants from storm water runoff, allowing it to percolate slowly downward and recharge the groundwater. After digging a four-foot pit, volunteers spread several layers of earth: first coarse gravel, then coarse sand, and lastly a mixture of organic compost and loam. Volunteers then planted shrubs and grasses specially suited to filtering out toxins, filling in the surrounding ground with mulch. Rain garden plants include dwarf dogwood (*Swida japonica*), red twig dogwood (*Cornus sericea*), various sedges, and *Monarda*. Tom Tidman, Natural Resources Director, designed a stone footbridge crossing the garden, which was installed by the Acton Natural Resources Department. Luke Phillips, an Eagle Scout, raised \$500 to put toward materials for the rain garden and spent many hours volunteering on the site with other members of Boy Scout Troop 1. Mr. Sheth of Acton also generously donated \$200 toward the purchase of plants. Volunteers from the Gronon School as well as regular Tuesday and Thursday volunteers are also largely responsible for the completion of this project.



Rock Garden

Construction is currently underway on the Rock Garden between the main lawn and the stone reading circle. This garden will be situated on preexisting bedrock ledge and will include a variety of alpine plants and low-growing perennials. Lenox Landscaping excavated soil from the site to reveal the ledge, and the Acton Fire Department power-washed the rocks to clean them further. The Acton Natural Resources Department is in the process of building a stone patio at the base and has already installed stone steps and a stone bench for visitors to enjoy. In the spring, Lenox Landscaping will deliver a special growing medium—a mixture of soil and gravel—for the rock garden plants to grow in. The North American Rock Garden Society is planning to donate plants to the Arboretum for this project, possibly including Himalayan whorl flower (*Morina laffraia*), woodystem speedwell (*Thlaspi flavum*), and sundrops (*Oenothera* sp.).

New Kiosk & New Arbor

We are still fundraising for a new kiosk by the parking lot and a new arbor by the Butterfly Garden to replace the old one, which collapsed last March. These new structures will be made out of cedar.



Top: The new fern boardwalk.

Middle: The Rain Garden (also called the Bioretention Basin), soon to be completed, with stone footbridge to left.

Bottom: Town of Acton employees Jen and Shawn install a stone bench and stone steps at the Rock Garden.

What's Happening

Current Projects

A Brief History of our Arboretum

An Interview with Sue Whitcomb

Recs: The Arboretum's 30th Birthday Celebration

Membership Application



Above: Charming moth (*Hemerocallis thylax*) by Instagram user @grayswand.

Inside this Issue:

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 #actonarboresetum so that we can like your photos, and maybe even include them in the next newsletter!

Right: Eastern cottontail (*Sylvilagus floridanus*) by Instagram user @kkoeb2061.

Far right: Great shagbark flycatcher (*Empidonax cyathellus*) by Instagram user @kathefly.



Arboretum Notes is produced by Meghan Allen in collaboration with the Friends of the Acton Arboretum.

A Brief History of the Arboretum

To commemorate the Arboretum's 30th anniversary, the Friends of the Acton Arboretum president, Cathy Hasfield, rolled up her sleeves and went through Acton Town Reports dating from 1976 to the present to compile a cohesive history of our beloved conservation land. Published below is a distilled version, detailing the most salient points and key players. We hope to update an unabridged history of the Acton Arboretum to our website in the near future for visitors who wish to learn more about how this wonderful place grew into the 65 acres of gardens and trails we are able to enjoy today!

In 1976, the Acton citizenry voted at Town Meeting to purchase a 36.5-acre parcel of land in the center of Acton for conservation purposes for a total of \$118,000. An additional 15 acres were purchased in 1977, and the collective area became known as the Acton Center Park. It was not until Town Meeting in 1980 that Acton residents John M. Whittier and Brewster Conant proposed that the Acton Center Park be reimagined as an arboretum. The article was approved unanimously, and the Acton Arboretum was born!

Following the 1986 vote, the town got to work. Former Arnold Arboretum director and Acton resident Dr. Richard Howard orchestrated a donation of 150 trees from the Arnold Arboretum to the nascent Acton Arboretum. 1987 saw town crews hard at work planting 80 dwarf crab apple trees by Taylor Road, creating the lawn, and developing trails. Among many volunteers at this time was resident Sandy Bynne, who offered her invaluable landscape design expertise. Current Natural Resources Director, Tom Tidman, began working as a Conservation Administrator this year as well.

The Swale and Herb Gardens were planted by volunteers in 1988. In 1990, the town, embarking on what would become a priority in the Arboretum's Master Plan, began efforts to make the site handicapped accessible. Acton resident Judy Demsey helped the creation of the Hoots Garden in 1991; also this year, resident Belle Choate helped develop the Butterfly Gardens, and the town won the "Acton Looks Good Award" from the Chamber of Commerce. 1993 saw the accessible trail grow by 2,000 feet thanks to a \$6,000 grant from the William F. Wharton Trust, ending in the Wildflower Garden. Originally called the Wharton Trail, it is known as the Wildflower Loop today.

Friends of the Acton Arboretum board of local Girl Scouts, designed and planned to the town in 1994. The Wharton through the conservation land, entered 1995, the Rhododendron Garden was trail. Resident Fred Knipfel would do Rhododendron Garden five years later.

Sponsored by the Acton-Boothroyd hosted an outdoor sculpture exhibit in Back-40 were originally part of this event installation. A second environmental in 1997, showcasing the work In 1997, the town applied meadow rest the overgrown land near Wood Lane, opened the Wildflower Garden, passed the Carley, who still oversees its maintenance to Concord Road was facility Nancy Barrow in 1998.

"I move that the land referred to in this article as the Acton Center Conservation Land, be henceforth designated as the Acton Arboretum, and dedicated to the observance of Acton's 250th anniversary, and further, that it be developed under the permanent direction of the Conservation Commission as an arboretum for the growth and preservation of trees, shrubs, and plants consistent with the local ecology, and that the sum of \$9,000 be raised and appropriated for the initial expenditures by the Conservation Commission."

-Sukhdev Motwani made under Article 41 of the 1986 Town Meeting by John M. Whittier

Though the Arboretum continued to be an official plan for its future development, prompting residents Belle Choate and Susan Wyval to assemble a Master Plan Committee in 1998, drafting the first documents in 2000. Over the years the Master Plan continues to evolve, though its central tenet stays constant: "Plant life and natural resources are vital to the well being of our lives, and as an educational tool, an Arboretum can serve to restore, teach, and ultimately accomplish this task as well as beautify our surroundings. By using...existing ecosystems given on the site, visitors will be able to better understand the theory of 'Right Place, Right Place'" (Master Plan, Section 1, page 5). In 2000, the Arboretum was awarded the Gold Leaf Award from the International Society of Arboriculture.

In 2002, Mary and James Donald donated 11.2 acres of red maple swamp fronting Minot Ave to the town for the Arboretum, with volunteers working to curb invasives in the area in 2003. The removal of invasive species, such as garlic mustard, has been a concerted volunteer effort over the years, thanks to residents like Bruce Carley and Jim Snyder-Groat.

In 2005, the Friends of the Acton Arboretum compiled the first self-guided tour of the Arboretum, with a map of the largely universally accessible Upper Grounds. This was followed in 2007 by a self-guided tour of the "Back-40," including the acres of trails that go through the bog. The Fragrance Garden, including the Lilac Garden dedicated to the memory of resident Dean Charney's father, was installed in 2008, but additions continued into 2015.

In 2010, the town installed over 500 feet of paved trails to offset erosion, an effort that continues today. The Friends and Acton Conservation Trust worked together in 2012 to purchase a 1.0 acre plus off Wood Lane, and the following year they embarked on the renovation of the 8x Wood Lane Bear Run by the town for the Arboretum. In 2013, the Sun Meadow Garden was planted by the Sun Pond, and the "Adopt-a-Garden" program was initiated, ushering in a new wave of volunteers.

The history of the Arboretum is still being written! 2015 and 2016 have been as enterprising as ever as town employees and volunteers have worked together to maintain our existing gardens and create new ones, such as the Understory Study and the Rain Garden. From its inception to the present, the Arboretum has been blessed by dedicated volunteers and town workers, including Boy Scouts, ABRES students, and residents of all ages and levels of gardening expertise. Here's to another 30 years of putting down roots in our community!

For more information about our gardens and trails, please visit www.actonarboretum.org/

The Back-40 and Upper Grounds maps are available for download under the "Trails/Maps" tab.

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

ARBORETUM

Membership Application

Friends of the Acton Arboretum

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.

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

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 01730

An Interview with Sue Whitcomb

Anyone who enjoys strolling through the Arboretum's many gardens in the spring and summer has undoubtedly seen Sue Whitcomb, clipboard and trowel in hand, tending to the many plants she has helped select and maintain for the Arboretum for almost three decades. A tireless volunteer and endless source of horticultural knowledge, Sue answered a few questions for us about what the Arboretum has meant to her over the years.

Q: What is your background in regards to gardening and horticulture?

A: I have been a gardener for most of my life and was given my own garden to plan and plant at age five. Over the years, I continued to take courses and eventually changed professions about 40 years ago to gardening full time. I worked at Lexington Gardens, Russell's Garden Center, and Arrowhead Nursery before eventually starting my own horticultural business.

Q: How, when, and why did you first decide to volunteer at the Acton Arboretum?

A: My first introduction to the Arboretum was when the committee asked me to design the Herb Garden. I also worked with Judy Demsey in the Hoots Garden for years, and assisted Sue Beveridge with selecting plants for the Wildflower Garden. Later, I was asked to take over planning and care of the Butterfly Garden and to help with the Arboretum's volunteer workdays. We have a great group of volunteers, and my hope is that we can continue to take care of the increased maintenance in the future.

Q: What is your favorite project that you have helped work on at the Arboretum? Do you have a favorite tree or plant that you helped introduce to the Arboretum?

A: I have particularly enjoyed the Rain Garden and the planning and preparing of the Rock Garden, which we are still in the process of creating. I am very fond of all the ginkgos (*Ginkgo sp.*) and dawn redwoods (*Metasequoia glyptostroboides*), as well as the seven-son flower (*Lipstickium micranthum*). The public sincerely seems to love the Arboretum and it is very pleasurable to interface with such an enthusiastic group!

Want to volunteer at the Arboretum? Please contact Bettina Abe, Natural Resources Assistant, at 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!

An Interview with Sue, cont.



Sue oversees a cohort of high school volunteers hard at work grooming and for the new Rain Garden. Thank you, Sue!

Recap: The Arboretum's 30th Birthday

On the afternoon of September 18th, we celebrated the Acton Arboretum's 30th year as our favorite conservation land!

The celebration was held on the Arboretum's main lawn, where the public was invited to eat, cake, sign a guest card, and participate in a raffle. Raffle prizes included various plants—such as a highbush blueberry shrub (*Vaccinium corymbosum*) and eastern prickly pear (*Opuntia infastrum*)—a handmade quilt, and a basket of gardening supplies. Thanks to all of our wonderful volunteers and participants, we managed to make a profit of \$744 in raffle ticket sales! All of these earnings will go towards the purchase of a new cedar arbor for the Butterfly Garden to replace the structure that collapsed last spring.

Happy birthday, Acton Arboretum!



Above: Card (left) and cake (right) from the celebration. Many well-wishers signed paper butterflies and flowers and stuck them on the card, which is now on display in Town Hall.