



P.O. Box 2607 | Acton, MA 01720

# Arboretum Notes

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



## What's Happening



Above: Drumstick allium  
by Instagram user @gerrysvard.

### Current Projects

Wildflower Scavenger Hunt  
Gardening Tips from an Expert  
The Arboretum's 30<sup>th</sup> Birthday!

### Volunteering News

### Membership Application

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

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

Right: Snow-covered wildflower boardwalk by Instagram user @rose\_gold123.

Far right: Early spring snowdrops by Instagram user @redhairedphotographer.



# Arboretum Notes



FRIENDS  
of the ACTON  
ARBORETUM

April 2016 | Volume VIII | Issue I

## 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:

### Well, Irrigation, & Electricity

Skillings & Sons Co. dug the new well in January across from the sun pond. Water was struck at 260ft and flowed at 20gal/min, sufficient for our watering needs. Well water will not be potable; we request visitors continue to bring their own bottled water until a drinking fountain is built in the future. We plan to hire an irrigation company to lay underground flexible piping from the well due to leaks in the old pipes. Eversource recently installed a telephone pole on Taylor Road. Next, an electrician will wire the pole to the transformer in the parking lot. Electricity from the transformer will power the new well and run to a locked outlet on the kiosk, which will be used for plugging in power tools during maintenance.



### Fern Boardwalk & Understory Management

The Acton Conservation Commission recently issued an Order of Conditions (under the Wetlands Protection Act) to permit demolition and reconstruction of the deteriorated fern boardwalk, which we hope to rebuild this year. A nearby multi-trunked red maple in poor condition will be removed before construction to prevent it falling on the new boardwalk. This winter, 13 black walnuts were removed along wildflower trail to make room for a new "understory study," plantings that will showcase a variety of trees and shrubs with special horticultural interest, including *Persea parviflora*, *Stewartia*, swamp white oak, Japanese maple, Korean mountain ash, magnolia, silver bells tree, and pink horsechestnut.



### Parking Lot, Kiosk, and Rain Garden

In December, Lazaro Co. finished paving the new parking lot with separate entry and exit points to promote a one-way flow of traffic and cut down on congestion. The parking lot was funded by a CPA (Community Preservation Act) grant. Trees and shrubs, such as white fir, *Kousa dogwood*, and witch-hazel, will be planted throughout the spring, summer, and fall as they are acquired for landscaping around the lot. The rain garden bio-retention area will be built during the driest summer conditions adjacent to the swale ditch. This storm water collection and filtration system is approximately four feet deep and is comprised of layers of earth materials of varying sediment size, such as gravel, loam, and mulch. It will also contain plantings such as dwarf *fothergilla* and common elderberry, which naturally filter contaminants from runoff that has come into contact with the asphalt lot.



### Bog Boardwalk Ramp

Thanks to a mild winter, we were able to start construction in March on an accessible sidewalk ramp to the new bog boardwalk. The ramp comes off Minot Ave at the crosswalk and is standard sidewalk width. Previously, the only way to access the bog off of Minot Ave was by use of some decaying wooden stairs or walking down a steep embankment. The sides of the sidewalk will be seeded, and plantings will be added to naturalize the area. Paving of the ramp is expected to occur within the month of April, as we go to press.

### Arbor Replacement

Sadly, the arched wooden arbor by the butterfly garden collapsed during a March nor'easter. It was constructed by local carpenter Josh Geller-McGrath close to 20 years ago. We are hoping to replace it with a similar structure as soon as funding is acquired.

*Top: Much of the wood of the current fern boardwalk is rotted and the structure is uneven. Time for an upgrade!*

*Middle: Ursula the chocolate lab oversees smoothing of the new Minot Ave ramp leading to the bog boardwalk.*

*Bottom: The poor arbor by the butterfly garden has finally succumbed to the elements.*

# Wildflower Scavenger Hunt

Some of our favorite warm-weather harbingers at the Acton Arboretum are the "spring ephemerals," a group of woodland plants which flower for a very brief time, usually in early spring, before producing seed and then returning to a dormant state for the rest of the year. Eager photographers, gardening enthusiasts, and other Arboretum visitors must be quick and observant to glimpse these unique, transient specimens. Below is a checklist of some—but by no means all—of the wildflower species that grow along the Wildflower Trail at the Arboretum. Grab a friend, grandchild, second cousin, or neighbor and see if you can spot them all! If you come across an unlisted flower that you are curious about, please message us on Facebook or Instagram and we will help you identify it!



❑ Wild ginger  
(*Asarum canadense*)  
Blooms:  
Early-mid May  
Single flower under  
heart-shaped leaves.



❑ Wild columbine  
(*Aquilegia canadensis*)  
Blooms:  
Early-mid May  
Drooping, bell-like  
flowers on high stalks.



❑ Black cohosh  
(*Actaea racemosa*)  
Blooms:  
July  
Tall candles of fuzzy  
white flowers.



❑ Goldenseal  
(*Hydrastis canadensis*)  
Blooms:  
Early-mid May  
Composed of clus-  
tered white stamens.



❑ May-apple  
(*Podophyllum peltatum*)  
Blooms:  
Early-mid May  
Flower grows in fork  
of two large leaves.



❑ Bloodroot  
(*Sanguinaria canadensis*)  
Blooms:  
Late April  
Stark white petals,  
grows low to ground.



❑ Wood poppy  
(*Stylophorum diphyllum*)  
Blooms:  
Early-mid May  
Four yellow petals,  
grows in clusters.



❑ Dutchman's-breeches  
(*Dicentra cucullaria*)  
Blooms:  
Late April  
Double-spurred flowers  
suspended from a stalk.



❑ Squirrel-corn  
(*Dicentra canadensis*)  
Blooms:  
Late April  
Kernel-shaped, al-  
ternating flowers.



❑ Wild bleeding-heart  
(*Dicentra eximia*)  
Blooms:  
Early-mid May  
Heart-shaped, grow in  
clusters atop stalks.



❑ Yellow violet  
(*Viola pensylvanica*)  
Blooms:  
Early-mid May  
Velvety yellow,  
veined with purple.



❑ Labrador violet  
(*Viola labradorica*)  
Blooms:  
Early-mid May  
Several pale purple  
flowers on same stalk.



❑ Spotted wintergreen  
(*Chimaphila maculata*)  
Blooms:  
July  
Small, waxy, down-fac-  
ing clusters of flowers.



❑ Starflower  
(*Trientalis borealis*)  
Blooms:  
Early-mid May  
Grows in pairs, se-  
ven petals per flower.



❑ Purple-flowering  
raspberry  
(*Rubus odoratus*)  
Blooms:  
June  
Broad, grows in patches.



❑ Barren strawberry  
(*Waldsteinia fragaroides*)  
Blooms:  
Early-mid May  
Yellow, tight, tubular  
long stamens.



❑ Wild geranium  
(*Ceranium maculatum*)  
Blooms:  
Late May  
Five petals, flowers  
cluster at end of stem.



❑ Blue wood phlox  
(*Phlox divaricata*)  
Blooms:  
Early-mid May  
Many flowers growing  
in a bushy throng.



❑ Virginia bluebells  
(*Mertensia virginica*)  
Blooms:  
Late April  
Drooping clusters of  
trumpet-like flowers.



❑ White wood aster  
(*Eurybia divaricata*)  
Blooms:  
October  
Blade-like petals,  
grows in bunches.



❑ Golden star  
(*Chrysogonum virginicum*)  
Blooms:  
June  
Bright yellow flower  
on a hairy stem.



❑ Yellow trout-lily  
(*Erythronium americanum*)  
Blooms:  
Early-mid May  
Mottled leaves, tall  
nodding yellow flower.



❑ Solomon's-seal  
(*Polygonatum biflorum*)  
Blooms:  
Early-mid May  
Light green, tubular  
flowers hang in pairs.



❑ Wild  
lily-of-the-valley  
(*Maianthemum canadense*)  
Blooms:  
Early-mid May  
Pette flower, dense.



❑ Large-flowered  
bellwort  
(*Uvularia grandiflora*)  
Blooms:  
Early-mid May  
Big, nodding, twisted.



❑ Great white trillium  
(*Trillium grandiflorum*)  
Blooms:  
Early-mid May  
Waxy, white,  
three-petaled flower.



❑ Red trillium  
(*Trillium erectum*)  
Blooms:  
Early-mid May  
Crimson petals  
curve slightly back.



❑ Large yellow lady  
slipper  
(*Cypripedium pubescens*)  
Blooms:  
Early-mid May  
Pouchy, veined flower.

All "Wildflower Scavenger Hunt" photos are courtesy of the Lady Bird Johnson Wildflower Center, [www.wildflower.org](http://www.wildflower.org), and have been reproduced by this non-profit for educational purposes.

The charm of a woodland road lies not only in its beauty but in anticipation.

Around each bend may be a discovery, an adventure.

DALE REX GOMAN

## 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 civic pride 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 01720

## Gardening Tips from an Expert

This issue's topic: **How to Garden in a Rocky Area.** Friends of the Acton Arboretum board member, gardening guru, and tireless volunteer, Sue Whitcomb, shares her expert advice on how to prepare a unique alpine garden.

"Thanks to glacial retreat 20,000 years ago, many properties in Acton have rocky, pebbly soil and ledges. The Arboretum too has an outcropping that lends itself perfectly to hosting a rock garden, and has become the site of my latest project. This outcropping is on a slope and has an attractive grouping of exposed rocks, with sizeable "pockets" in the stone to accommodate the deep roots of dwarf shrubs and alpine and woodland plants. There is an antique apple in the center under which I intend to plant shade-loving perennials, such as hellebores, *Jeffersonia dubia*, and anemones. On the sunnier slopes, I will plant alpine meadow and dwarf perennials that need a lot of light, like dwarf asters, bellflowers, serratulas, primroses, and *Iris cristata*. Thriving in partial sun are *Anemone blanda* bulbs from the mountains of Europe, which must be soaked before planting. Many alpine plants do not like our comparatively warmer weather, so do your research. Finally, remember that soil in a rock garden should be sandy and gravelly, not rich in humus and other organic matter. Happy gardening!"

-Sue Whitcomb



Pretty purple *Anemone blanda* flowers, which bloom in early spring.



The site of the Arboretum's future rock garden.

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!

The Arboretum's 30<sup>th</sup> Birthday!

Come one come all! The Friends of the Acton Arboretum are delighted to announce an upcoming party to celebrate the Arboretum's 30<sup>th</sup> year as Acton's favorite conservation land.

We are planning to celebrate on the Arboretum lawn sometime this summer. All are welcome to eat cake and partake in various games, such as bean bag toss and a scavenger hunt! A giant card will be provided for all to sign; do stop by and add your decorations and birthday wishes!

Please keep an eye out for a birthday invitation in your mailbox detailing the date and time of this wonderful event!

## Volunteering News

*Thank you volunteers!* In December, Pat Marchetti, Cathy Hatfield, Bettina Abe, Betty Wood, Sid Levin, Sheila Vince, Sue Whitcomb, Sandra Mika, Sallie Brainard, and Cindy Soule collected apple tree branches (trimmed by a certified arborist) on the upper lawn and assembled a pile for burning. Brrrr!

*Upcoming:* The fern boardwalk needs to be disassembled to make way for its replacement. Volunteers are being sought to help with this project in the spring or summer.

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: Volunteers braving the cold to keep the Arboretum looking its best.