

# Winter Newsletter *January 2026*

## Ongoing Projects Update



### Arboretum *Notes*



Acton Arboretum Usage Survey

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## Strategic Plan

The Arboretum Strategic Plan is well underway. The Friends of the Acton Arboretum, Inc. received a 2025 Community Preservation Act (CPA) grant for \$7,000 from the Town of Acton to fund a team of copy editors and graphic designers who will prepare the Strategic Plan in its final form. With input from Conservation Commission members and staff, a public survey, Acton Arboretum Usage Survey, was posted online. It was shared through social media, advertised at Town Hall, displayed in the Arboretum kiosks, and published in local newspapers. The draft Strategic Plan will be reviewed—and, it is hoped, approved—by the Conservation Commission, the Select Board, and other relevant boards and committees, with formal requests for feedback. All survey responses will be documented and published in the appendix of the Strategic Plan. A final draft is expected this winter and will include updated maps for the kiosks. This document is intended to guide the Arboretum’s management and development for the next 20 years.

## Trees and Shrubs Planted in 2025

<u>Species</u>	<u>Location Planted</u>
1 <i>Buddleia</i> 'Miss Violet'	Butterfly Garden
1 <i>Spirea japonica</i> 'Double Play Doozie'	Butterfly Garden
1 <i>Weigela florida</i> 'Wine and Roses'	Butterfly Garden
2 <i>Hydrangea paniculata</i> 'Quickfire'	China Trail Garden
3 <i>Hydrangea macrophylla</i> 'Starfield'	China Trail Garden
3 <i>Weigela florida</i> 'Very Fine Wine'	China Trail Garden
1 <i>Koelreuteria paniculata</i> (Golden Rain Tree)	China Trail Garden
1 <i>Pinus mugo</i> 'Slowmound' (White Pine)	China Trail Garden
1 <i>Physocarpus opulifolius</i> 'Ginger Wine'	Dawn's Pond
1 <i>Laburnum x watereri</i> 'Vossii' (Golden Chain Tree)	Dawn's Pond Garden Area
2 <i>Pieris japonica</i> 'Dorothy Wycoff'	Behind Dawn's Pond
4 <i>Pieris floribunda x japonica</i> hybrid	Behind Dawn's Pond
1 <i>Cornus Florida</i> (White Flowering Dogwood)	Herb Garden Upper Lawn
1 <i>Cornus florida</i> 'Rubra' (Pink Flowering Dogwood)	Rhododendron Garden
1 <i>Larix laricina</i> 'Deborah Waxman' (Dwarf Tamarack)	Rock Garden
1 <i>Acer palmatum</i> 'Mikawa Yatsubusa' (Japanese maple)	Rock Garden
1 <i>Cercis canadensis</i> 'Vanilla Twist' (Redbud)	Rock Garden
1 <i>Juniperus horizontalis</i> 'Bar Harbor' (Juniper)	Rock Garden
1 <i>Juniperus procumbens</i> 'Nana' (Juniper)	Rock Garden
1 <i>Picea omorika</i> 'Pimoko' (Dwarf White Spruce)	Rock Garden
1 <i>Pinus strobus</i> 'Green Wave' (Dwarf White Pine)	Rock Garden
1 <i>Pinus strobus</i> 'Blue Shag' (Dwarf White Pine)	Rock Garden
1 <i>Gaylussacia baccata</i> (Black Huckleberry)	Stumpery
1 <i>Hydrangea arborescens</i> 'Haas Halo'	Stumpery
1 <i>Itea virginica</i> 'Henry's Garnet'	Stumpery
1 <i>Kalmia latifolia</i> 'Carousel' (Native Mountain Laurel)	Stumpery
1 <i>Chionanthus virginicus</i> (White Fringe Tree)	Stumpery
1 <i>Picea glauca</i> (White Spruce)	Understory
1 <i>Prunus subhirtella</i> 'Hally Jolivette' (Flowering Cherry)	Upper Grounds

## Wheelchair Boardwalk Repaired



*Pictured (left to right) Joost Quaadgras, Paul Kim, and David Hazen.*

We were very fortunate to have a “fix-it” team this summer. Pictured above are (left to right) Joost Quaadgras Paul Kim, and David Hazen. These gentlemen repaired some rotten deck boards and stringers on the wheelchair shortcut boardwalk on the Wildflower Trail. The lumber was paid for by the Friends of the Acton Arboretum, Inc.

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## Pond Fence Rebuilt



The fix-it team also built a brand new pond fence. The old spruce split rail fence was not holding up and was not stable. So this time the fence was rebuilt using ground contact pressure treated pine. We are hoping the hefty posts and boards will hold up for a long time. The lumber was paid for by the Town of Acton Conservation budget.

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## What's New

### Summer Heat and Drought



*While all volunteers spent countless hours watering, Kris Kim became watering foreman supreme managing the multiple hoses in the Arboretum's irrigation system. Though many trees were stressed, we are proud to say that all of the trees and shrubs planted this spring and summer survived the summer drought.*

This summer was challenging for the newest plantings. Although our area received plentiful rainfall in May and June, by July the temperatures soared and stayed hot well into September. Volunteers were in full watering mode twice a week for 12 weeks. There were many days when the only gardening that took place was watering. Times like these make us grateful for having a private well (funded in 2015 by a Community Preservation Act grant).

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### Contracted Work

The Town of Acton put a maintenance contract out to bid this fall to hire a company to edge and mulch 6 major gardens as well as professionally prune up to 20 specimen trees. This is the third year that the Town of Acton has allocated \$20,000 to the Arboretum's care. One of our American Beech trees is showing signs of Beech Leaf disease. It will be treated in 2026.

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## **Paving Project**

The Acton Conservation Division has drafted an application for a Community Preservation Act grant for accessible trail resurfacing. The amount requested is \$51,000. The project will be presented to the Community Preservation Committee this winter, then voted on at spring 2026 town meeting. The purpose of the project is to install solid surface trails in 3 locations at the Acton Arboretum where the grassy/gravel trails have degraded from a previous level of accessibility. The objective is to create lasting improvement with bituminous asphalt. The three sections are a 225' Orchard Trail segment that runs behind the water pump shed; a 265' Fragrance/Lilac Garden trail segment; and a 440' Rhododendron Garden Trail segment.

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## Possum

A frightened possum (*Didelphis virginiana*) came out of hiding when some hungry hawks were hovering over the upper grounds looking for lunch. It was crouching near a crabapple tree when volunteers decided to help shoo it to safe cover and away from the driveway. The “Virginia Opossum” is North America’s only native marsupial. They are widespread in Massachusetts and thrive near forests and wetlands. We are grateful to them for eating ticks. They are generally solitary and also eat earthworms, toads, snakes, fruits, vegetables, and carrion.



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**Dawn's Pond Information Panel Installed**



An educational information panel was installed at Dawn's Pond this fall. Designed and hand painted by local artist, Magdalen Abe, the panel explains how the tiny pond is a functioning ecosystem with resident fish, amphibians and reptiles, as well as beautiful plants like cattails and water lilies.

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## Stumpery



The Stumpery

The new stumpery garden along the Wildflower Trail, on the right approaching the Fern Boardwalk, received many new plantings this spring and summer in between and all around the decaying wood pieces. Artfully arranged by volunteer Joost Quaadgras, the stumpery was inspired by King Charles III of England's garden at his private residence, Highgrove House in Gloucestershire, at the suggestion of volunteer, Ardythe Ashley.

## Visit Highgrove Stumpery



*Volunteers planting at the Stumpery, Spring 2025*

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**New Restoration Area Between Fern Boardwalk and Stumpery**



*Newest area for ecological restoration with native plants between the Understory and the Fern Boardwalk*

Volunteers stayed active in November as the weather was cool and comfortable. They worked hard removing invasive multiflora rose (*Rosa multiflora*) and invasive Oriental bittersweet (*Celastrus orbiculatus*) regrowth in the Understory. It revealed the beautiful stone walls previously overgrown with the noxious vines. As the wall was revealed, it became apparent that the 95' x 55' area along the paved trail between the Understory and the Fern Boardwalk and Stumpery required ecological restoration. Like many areas at the Arboretum property that have been previously disturbed by farming and development in recent centuries, invasive shrubs colonize and take over. Volunteers have begun to reclaim this area by digging out dozens of invasive honeysuckle shrubs (*Lonicera morrowii*), *Rosa multiflora*, and *Celastrus orbiculatus*. We have applied for a grant through the [CISMA Small Grant program](#) to purchase many new native plants in the spring to repopulate the area. The SuAsCo CISMA (Cooperative Invasive Species Management Area) is a partnership of organizations that intend to manage and control invasive species in the Sudbury, Assabet, and Concord (SuAsCo) watershed.

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*Prunus subhirtella 'Autumnalis' Higan Cherry  
Tree*

## Donate a Tree or Shrub

In these times of climate change, trees and shrubs are under a great deal of stress due to weather extremes, such as surplus rain, bitter cold winds, high winds, or prolonged heat and drought. There are plenty of pests and blights that infest certain species. Some plants don't "play well" together, either (Google "Juglans nigra and soil toxicity"). We do not have 100% survival rate, and some plants do age out; so replacement trees and shrubs are always being planted. Please let us know if you'd like to donate a tree or shrub. We'll tell you what's on our shopping list (it changes all the time) and you tell us your budget. We can collaborate to purchase something to honor your friend or family members.

[Email for Donation Options](#)

**The Arboretum 40th Anniversary in 2026!**



*Photo shows the Arboretum's 30<sup>th</sup> Anniversary gathering in 2016.*

The Arboretum has come a long way in 40 years! Please watch for announcement of a birthday cake on the upper lawn and some fun activities to celebrate our favorite place!

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*Arboretum Notes* is produced by Bettina Abe and Cathy Fochtman. Photos are courtesy of Bettina Abe.  
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*The Friends of the Acton Arboretum, Inc. is an all-volunteer organization. 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, as well as the processes of wetland succession, conservation, and effective horticultural practice; and comply with permissions granted to non-profit organizations under the provisions of Chapter 180 of the General Laws of Massachusetts and Section 501(c)(3) of the Internal Revenue Code of 1984.*

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