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:

Bug Boardwalk
This summer, Jesse Bevanorson 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 girty, 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 seat 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 easter side of the boardwalk to facilitate wheelchair maneuverability.

Parking Lot
As this issue goes to press, Lensa 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 fothergilla, Common elderberry, and many other species.

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 urban environment, horticultural, geological and historical qualities of the Arboretum projects, about the process of artland 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 501(c) of the Internal Revenue Code of 1984, as from time to time they are amended.

Become a Member
Friends of the Acton Arboretum
P.O. Box 2607
Acton, MA 01720

What’s Happening

Inside this Issue:

Don’t forget to renew your membership!

Sample

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Arboretum Notes is produced by Magellan Arts in collaboration with the Friends of the Acton Arboretum.
Featured Flora!

November is a beautiful time at the Arboretum, bedecked in vibrant vermillion and rich terracotta, replete with tessellating textures and striking profiles. Whether you’re a photographer pursuing that quintessential Fall shot, a hiker seeking solitude amongst the trees, or any other variety of Loxas, doppelganger, or wish-all-nature-lover, be sure to scope out these particularly lovely plantings!

**Bald Cypress**
_Taxodium distichum_

View this deciduous conifer by the Rhododendron garden. In the “knees” (root projections) are visible around the trunk.

**Closed Gentian**
_Gentiana andrewsii_

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

**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.

**Dwarf Blue Star**
_Amsonia montana_

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

**American Sweetgum**
_Liquidambar styraciflua_

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

**Monkshood**
_Aconitum napellus_

Admire this famously poisonous bloom by the Butterfly Garden. In Greek myth, it figures into Medea’s plot to kill Thesues.

**Wild Teasel**
_Dipsacus fullonum_

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

**Paperbark Maple**
_Acer griseum_

Located by the Stone Reading Circle, this tree’s exuberant “exfoliating” bark gives it a flaking appearance.

**New England Aster**
_Symphyotrichum novae-angliae_

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

**Blueberry Foliage**
_Fagus sylvatica_

Find the highbush variety in the Hornet 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.

**Muscarnus Grass**
_Miscanthus sinensis_

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

**Seven Sons Plant**
_Hepatica nobilis_

Its fragrant white flowers resemble a shallow press. Find it by the Swale Bridge.

**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 mowing 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 "fancy" 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 breeding 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!”

_Dave Whitcomb_

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 Grafton School came on workdays in both the spring and the fall to help with trail maintenance.
- Volunteers from NapaPath Inc. of Westford worked every Monday in the spring and summer, raking trails and mulching gardens.
- Student volunteers from Acton-Bedford High School and RJ Grey Junior High School come on Tuesdays and Thursdays—spring, summer, and fall—and help with schedules permit. They work alongside the adult volunteers planting, shoveling, pruning, watering, and mulching.
- Liam Jones completed his Eagle Scout project by renovating 100% of the Rhododendron Garden trail.
- Jacob Crowley completed his Eagle Scout project by re-planting 30 invasive honeysuckle and mulberry rose bushes and re-planing 20 new wetland shrubs by the Sun Pond.

Want to volunteer at the Arboretum? Please contact Bettina Abe, Natural Resources Assistant, at babeton-arva.ma.gov. Workdays are held during the spring, summer, and fall on Thursdays from 9:00-12:00 and Tuesdays from 2:30-5:00. All experience levels and abilities are welcome!