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UPCOMING



Hudson Valley Community College Field House March 25-27. General admission is \$10 at the door. Children under 15 are admitted free. Seniors 62 and older will be admitted for \$7 on Friday, March 25, the MVP-sponsored Senior Day.

THE NEWSLETTER

The vernal equinox marks the time when the sun crosses directly over the Earth's equator and the official start of spring in the Northern Hemisphere. There is no shortage of rituals and traditions surrounding the coming of spring—and this year, the Arboretum continues one of its own.

Bring your friends and associates to the Arboretum's passage into spring: a little March madness and a special brunch and auction, accompanied by seasonal music.

Arboretum Encores
RITE
of SPRING
Brunch
& Fundraiser

Sunday, March 20
Noon to 3 PM

Tickets to this Arboretum fundraiser are only \$25 per person. A limited number of tables for eight are available for \$175.

What a great way to introduce potential new members to Landis! The event will be held at the Settles Hill Tree Farm, 1123 Settles Hill Road, just off Route 20 in Altamont, a short drive from anywhere in the Capital District.

There will be lots to celebrate: live music, silent and open auctions, and the gathering of old friends and new acquaintances.

RESERVE NOW! Call 518-875-6935 for an afternoon of delight!

2010: The Year in Review

INTRODUCTION

Louise Polli

Like many organizations, the Landis Arboretum faced a challenging year in 2010. Landis is at the same time a very valuable and a very vulnerable resource, one that needs to be protected and preserved. Without the ongoing support of its members, the Arboretum would cease to exist.

If you are not currently serving as a volunteer, please consider sharing your talents and skills in 2011. There is a place for everyone! You do not need to be a gardener or a botanical expert to volunteer at the Arboretum. Perhaps you have some carpentry or construction skills to help out with minor repairs. Do you enjoy baking or cooking? Are you a musician, a poet, or a storyteller? Can you lead a group, teach a class, or staff an exhibit booth? Are you technically savvy? Perhaps you can prune or lend a hand at clearing trails? Do you have a hobby or special gift that others might enjoy or benefit from? The possibilities are almost limitless.

Take a look at the achievements of last year and the committees that work behind the scenes. Follow the lead of our Board president, and get involved. One or more of these groups is certainly a good match for your interests and expertise. Contact a committee chair for further information, or our volunteer coordinator, Susan Sagendorf, at (518) 234-8970 or ssagendorf@yahoo.com.



BOARD PRESIDENT

—**Anne Donnelly**

I retired from SUNY Cobleskill in the fall of 2005 determined to not attend another meeting for at least a year. However, because of Barbara Brabetz's encouragement, I was on the Landis Board by January. I was chair of the Education Committee by March and of the Publications Committee by May. In January 2008, I became president. These last two years have been perhaps the most challenging volunteer effort I have ever undertaken, but they have truly been a labor of love. I have met and worked with some amazing people and learned many things—among them the wisdom of the collective mind—and the value of term limits.

I'm delighted by the new direction the Arboretum is taking. Our new director, John Sanchirico, is grounded, realistic, experienced, and generous. He has taken the time to learn the workings of non-profits through seminars given by the NY Council on Nonprofits (NYCON). We have new Board members and a new slate of officers. I'm optimistic regarding our long-term future and proud of all we have accomplished in these trying circumstances. We have been good stewards, but we can be better. I think the people are in place—now we must muster the resources.

BUILDINGS AND GROUNDS

—**Laura Scoones, Chair**

In 2010, restoration of the Arboretum's greenhouse became the focus of the Building and Grounds Committee. We installed a new plastic "skin" to replace the aging and damaged roof. This will ensure a functional space that will allow volunteers to start more plant materials in advance of the Arboretum's Spring Plant Sale.

In 2011, the Committee will consider a number of projects that might contribute to the Arboretum's sustainability goals. Of course, costs and benefits will need to be weighed. Modernizing the Meeting House is a possibility, the goal being both to provide a multi-purpose venue for year-round use and to increase the Arboretum's revenues.

The Committee welcomes volunteers who have a background or experience in construction.

COMMUNICATIONS

—**Nolan Marciniec, Chair**

In 2010, the Publications Committee officially became the Communications Committee. Recognizing that our mission—to serve as the "voice" and the "face" of the Arboretum—was rapidly moving from traditional print to electronic format, we managed the transition to a greener, more environmentally and financially

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THE LANDIS ARBORETUM NEWSLETTER is published quarterly for its members. The Arboretum's mission is to foster the appreciation of trees and other plants and their importance in our environment.

EDITORIAL BOARD

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The Arboretum is located at 174 Lape Road, Esperance, NY. It is one and one-half miles north of Route 20 in Esperance. Follow the signs from the village to Lape Road. The Arboretum is one-quarter mile straight ahead.

Visit our website for more information and directions.



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responsible electronic distribution of the *Newsletter*. Now fully two-thirds of our members receive the *Newsletter* on line.

We also keep our membership informed of events and updates by our Constant Contact mailings twice a month, in addition to our ReadMedia press releases. We work in conjunction with Bill Combs Jr. to post information on the Landis website. Our goal is to give a professional look and feel to all of the Arboretum's communications, from tickets and postcards to brochures and newsletters.

In the coming year, we hope to use social media to engage a younger generation of potential members.

We welcome members who are interested in writing, electronic media, and the graphic arts.

EDUCATION

—Gina Nielsen, Chair

Last year's *Calendar of Events* offered a diverse list of classes and workshops in outdoor sciences, recreation, and the arts. We received two grants in 2010, one of which purchased snowshoes for the well-attended Second Sunday Snowshoe events, and we will continue to offer snowshoe events this winter. Norcross grant monies were used to purchase GPS units, and Fred Breglia, Katie Long, and I had a great time teaching kids and adults how to access the three geocaches on site at the Arboretum. The monies also were used to purchase new insect nets for another wildly popular event, dragonfly hunting with Anne Donnelly. George Steele used new compasses to teach "Finding your Way in the Woods."

The Education Committee's responsibility is to develop events that promote outdoor education and recreation activities at the Arboretum. We are always looking to enlarge our

committee with members who have an interest in developing programs, reaching out and securing programming, or teaching classes. Members who have experience with grant writing are greatly needed and are also encouraged to join.

FINANCE

—John Sanchirico, Executive Director

First and foremost, thanks to all those who gave so generously during our year-end appeal. We were able to raise some sorely needed funds to cover essential operating expenses during the winter months. Thank you for your continued support and dedication to the Arboretum's mission.

Like all organizations, for-profit or not, and like each and every household today, we are learning to swim in different fiscal waters. This new and challenging economic reality is, unfortunately, showing signs of sticking around for some time to come. Generations before us learned to make do during times like these, and the Arboretum will cope with this economic downturn. No doubt we will learn some valuable lessons as well. In the future, there will necessarily be a global culture of conservation: we will all need to learn to make do with fewer resources and to maximize use of those we have.

By year's end in 2011, I hope to see the Arboretum standing on a much firmer financial footing. To do so, we will be targeting our fiscal efforts on increasing our earned revenues through sure and steady growth of our vital membership base, educational program participation, special event attendance and overall facility visitation rates. At the same time, we must learn to diminish our reliance on ever-dwindling government funding and grant opportunities. We must learn to more effectively manage the limited revenue and resource base that we now possess.

In sum, we are in a much better place than most other not-for-profit organizations: we have no debt. Moreover, we have at our disposal a seemingly limitless potential to provide services and to earn revenue by capitalizing on our facilities, extensive grounds, and educational resources.

In a nutshell? Things are definitely looking up for 2011.

HISTORIAN

—Lee Lattimer

Who am I? Where do I fit in? What can I expect in the future? Everyone, at one time or another, asks these questions. Inevitably we try to find the answers by looking backward, not only into our own lives, but also into the lives of our forebears.

As with individuals, organizations also benefit by examining the people, places, and events that shape their present. This is one of the reasons why I have taken on the duty of historian for the Landis Arboretum.

While many people have shaped the Arboretum, certainly none is more fascinating than its founder, Fred Lape, poet, botanist, musician, linguist, educator, farmer. George Erwin Landis and Levan "Van" Loveland are two other persons who have captured my attention. By researching in town halls, county offices, libraries, and museums, I have been able to discover much about the Arboretum and the people who are an integral part of its history.

I enjoy a good mystery and relish pouring through books, papers, pictures, and rumors too. At times I take on the aspect of an amateur archaeologist as I sift through the dust and debris of past decades. Like any other treasure hunter, I also enjoy bringing my finds to others through PowerPoint programs. My goals for 2011 include contacting some of the people who knew Fred Lape and his associates and

recording their testimony. I also hope to establish a room at the Arboretum as a museum and library where the Arboretum's past can be displayed and studied.

Do you have information that I can use in my pursuit? Are you an explorer like me and want to discover the unknown? I'm looking for amateur detectives who can help in the quest for the historical truth. If interested, please call the Arboretum or e-mail me directly at lrlat-timer@midtel.net.

HORTICULTURE

—Jeff Schworm, Chair

With such stalwart committee members as Ed Miller and Sonja Javarone—not to mention Fred Breglia, Director of Horticulture—it's fairly easy to talk about accomplishments. The NYS natives collection and the Ed Miller Trail were the major focus this year, with a great deal of detail management and trail improvement. Ed reports particular success with establishing a true native bittersweet and three more species to add to an already comprehensive collection. Other projects include a propagation sub-committee lead by Cindy King that is focused on trillium production as well as providing other seedlings and cuttings produced for the plant sales. Rejuvenation of the existing lilac collection and planting of a number of new varieties are slated for the near future.

Our committee strove to develop and implement a sustainability policy that is also mindful of keeping costs under control. This includes a follow-up and review of the previously adopted land management plan lead by Jason Castle, our newest member. We are also working on a revision of the Arboretum's plant collection policy.

Indoor projects include improving and updating BG base, the database which records the history of the Landis collection. Another grant request to the Stanley Smith Foundation was written.

The skill set of the Horticulture Committee's members ranges from forestry and tree care to biology, landscape design and nursery management. Prospective committee members should have some interest in these areas, as well as in ecology and sustainability, but a willingness to learn and be a part of the Landis' evolution is key.

MEMBERSHIP

—Wilma Jozwiak, Chair

Call this the "Year of Reflection and Reorganization" for Membership.

We have been able to move the database to a stable platform and to clean up erroneous information, particularly important in the case of e-mail addresses as we increase the number of newsletters distributed through Constant Contact, our electronic mail management system. We've instituted a change in membership with a single date of renewal, beginning May 1 to coincide with the month of the Spring Plant Sale. This will allow our members to more easily remember renewal time and allow us to have a better understanding of our current membership base. The extraordinary efforts of volunteers like Susan Iona and Louise Polli have added to this base. We've also held drives with drawings for those who joined or renewed their memberships.

Our membership base is critical for the financial health of the Arboretum. The task for Membership is to support our existing members, to encourage their renewal, and to spread the word about the benefits of a

Landis membership to the people in our region.

To accomplish these tasks, we need volunteers! Some duties like distributing renewal reminders will require organized folks who like to create and manage mailings. Those who like meeting and talking with people will be given the opportunity to "talk up" the value of an Arboretum membership. This can be done at Plant Sales and other Arboretum events, through presentations before groups, or with individuals of the community who are aligned with the Arboretum's mission of preservation and education. If these ideas attract you, please contact me at wljodziak@aol.com.

NOMINATIONS

—Jim Paley, Chair

In 2010, the Nominations Committee put forward Jason Castle, Rich DiMaggio, Carolyn Edwards, Wilma Jozwiak, and Louise McColgin for positions on the Arboretum's Board of Trustees. All nominations were accepted, and each of the nominees was voted into office. Each Board member serves a three-year term and is eligible to serve a second. Each of the new Board members will be profiled in the *Newsletter* in 2011.

The terms of both Barbara Brabetz and Jeff Schworm expire in 2011.

Elections were held in November. The Board voted to approve the following slate of officers: president, Jim Paley; vice-president, Anne Donnelly; member-at-large, Jason Castle. In December, the Board voted to approve Carolyn Edwards as treasurer and Wilma Jozwiak and Nolan Marciniec as co-secretaries.

Propagation Committee Anticipates Spring Plant Sale

—Cindy King



The middle of winter signifies the nearness of spring. The Arboretum's Propagation Committee is already ordering and planting seeds for the spring plant sale. Soon it will be time to take cuttings and start transplanting growing seeds.

The more volunteers we have, the more plants we can raise. The more plants we raise, the more plants we can sell—and the more the Arboretum will benefit. If you enjoy working with plants and have even a little time to spare, consider joining the Propagation Committee. You will learn a lot about raising plants, meet others with mutual interests, and know the satisfaction that comes from helping the Arboretum.

If you can't manage the time, consider donating supplies. We are always in need of four-inch pots, preferably square ones, though we will fill any pots with plants. We can also use half-gallon and gallon size pots. We go through large amounts of seeding media, Pro Mix, and peat moss. Donations of these items or the money to buy them are very much appreciated.

As we approach spring, think of what plants in your gardens could be divided to provide donations to the plant sale. Donated plants should be delivered to the Arboretum at least two weeks before the plant sale, which is scheduled this year for May 14–15. We can supply pots for divisions, and, if you give us notice in late March or early April, we can even arrange to help you with the divisions.

To join us or to donate, please call Cindy King at (518) 396-8563.



HORTICULTURE CORNER: IDENTIFYING DECIDUOUS TREES IN WINTER

Fred Breglia, Director of Horticulture and Operations

Identifying deciduous trees

in winter is not nearly as difficult as it might seem. It does, however, take some practice to accurately identify trees without leaves. A few basic tips, combined with your powers of observation, will enhance your winter tree identification skills.

To determine what type a tree is, look to see if the branches or stems are directly across from each other (opposite) or alternating from one side to the other (alternate). If a tree is native to New York and has opposite branches, then apply the M.A.D. Horse rule. This mnemonic stands for "Maple, Ash, Dogwood and Horse Chestnut." The tree will most likely be one of these. Now look at the buds to distinguish further. Maple buds are generally

more pointed and can be either smooth or covered with little scales. Ash buds resemble animal hooves. Dogwoods have buds that resemble onions. Horse chestnuts have very large, often sticky buds that are covered with scales, making them very distinct. The more closely you observe, the easier winter identification becomes.

Here's an example of how it works. Let's say the tree we are looking at has opposite branches, so it falls into the M.A.D. Horse rule. The terminal buds on the branches are very pointed, looking like the tip of a lead pencil. From previous study, we know that sugar maples' buds resemble them, so it is probably a sugar maple.

Let's try another one. This tree has opposite branches and buds that look like animal hooves. It's most likely an ash tree.

To narrow down the species, we look more closely at the branches. The most common ash trees in New York are green and white ash. Green ash is known to have a fine pubescence on the branches near the tips, and white ash has smooth branches all the way out. Since the branches have very fine hair, it probably is a green ash.

If the tree has branches that are alternate, then other clues are needed to identify it. Sometimes a tree's unique crown shape, fruits, persistent leaves, twigs, or growth habit can provide useful leads. Trees easily identified this way are oaks (acorns and persistent leaves), beeches (long, pointed buds and persistent leaves), hickory (strong, thick twigs), sweet gums (remnant fruit and corky twigs), sycamores (remnant fruit), willows (drooping limbs), and

elms (zigzag twigs with angled terminal buds).

You can also pinpoint many trees by looking at the trunk. The texture and color of the bark might be the only clue you need for identifying them. Trees easily identified thusly are beeches (smooth bark), birches (smooth and flaky, often peeling), aspens (whitish smooth), sycamores (exfoliating camouflage bark), and hackberry (lumpy bark).

A key is often an invaluable tool in identifying trees in the winter. A "dichotomous" key uses a pattern of questions, sometimes by asking two questions with each response leading to another question until the tree is identified.

Identifying trees in the winter is certainly a challenge, but one which will reward your patience and practice.

Black Locust: Friend or Foe?

Ed Miller, Curator: Native Plant Collection



If you have visited the Pine Bush Visitor Center or have been exposed to its press releases, you may have the impression that black locusts (*Robinia pseudoacacia*) are the worse invaders since Attila the Hun. Perhaps a valid point if your goal is to keep open areas conducive to the health and welfare of Karner Blue butterflies or if you want to create a historical environment circa 1600, but for most of us, there are good things to be said for the black locust.

It's a legume that affixes nitrogen, and so nearby plants do quite well. The wood is strong and rot resistant, and many old time farmers kept a portion of their property in locust for fence posts. It also makes good firewood. It has deep roots, making it suitable for landscape use; few locusts blow over in windstorms or are seriously damaged by ice and snow. It seems to be disease and insect resistant, a good thing considering the real possibility of

losing several of our native tree species to introduced insects and diseases.

The trouble with black locust is that it has small leaves that fill out late in the season, permitting lots of light to reach the ground and encouraging an understory of shade intolerant shrubs. In our area, the worst of these is the Asiatic honeysuckle (*Lonicera maackii*). In



A "Musical Bridge" is yet another interesting feature of the Miller Native Plant Trail. It's a toy pipe organ played with paddles and appeals to children and the child in adults who hike the trail. It's attached to the bridge in the wetland area, over the outlet of the Willow Pond. Ed Miller's son Nick demonstrates.

Albany's Pine Bush and other preserves, along bike paths and trails, roadsides and transmission corridors, and in young forests, honeysuckle is extremely invasive.

On the other hand, the light shade of a locust grove presents an opportunity to grow shade tolerant plants, but you may have to give them a bit of help to get them started. Between the pine family planting and the wetland along the Arboretum's Native Plant Trail, we have beat back the honeysuckle under the locust trees and have planted about 40 species of New York's native shrubs. They are doing well. We pull small seedlings of honeysuckle whenever they appear. There are not too many, and they are remarkably easy to pull up when they are small. We both hope and expect that our shade tolerant shrubs can hold their own against the honeysuckle as they and the black locust mature.

Go see! Locust forests do not have to look like they do in the Pine Bush Preserve, nor do they always deserve to be clear cut as invasive weeds.

LANDIS PORTRAITS

A series about the people behind the plants at the Arboretum

—Nolan Marciniec

Bonnie Fewtrell and Susan Iona

According to Bonnie Fewtrell, donkeys get a bad rap. People think that they are stubborn and mean. Not so, she says. They have a “sweet” disposition—and, according to Susan Iona, are genetically programmed to be work animals. “They are either working or they’re dead,” Susan added. “They are unique among equines because they can kick with all four feet and in all directions—like Ninjas.”

Bonnie and Susan should know. Their move to Esperance in 2002 was occasioned by the arrival of their two donkeys, Pepper and Max. Having settled in Esperance, they began to notice signs for the Arboretum. “What’s that?” Susan remembered thinking. They visited in the spring and were “smitten” by the peace and the beauty of the grounds. They registered for an early morning bird walk. They came to plant sales. They became members. They began to volunteer—Susan wore the sandwich board sign at plant sales to solicit new members.

And they are the women who lead the effort to build Landis’ new Equine Trail.

They estimate that they have spent more than 100 hours planning, mapping, marking, and cutting the trail. They are assisted by the Landis Arboretum Trail Blazers, a



Susan Iona (standing) and Bonnie Fewtrell (seated) take a well-deserved break from working on the Arboretum's new Equine Trail.

group of fifteen volunteers of all ages and interests. A lot of work remains to be done: laying culverts, building small bridges, cutting brush, pouring gravel, designing switchbacks. The terrain of the Arboretum’s 300-acre parcel in Montgomery County is sometimes very challenging. Bonnie quipped that the trail would be completed “hopefully before I die.” But much of it is already open to riders of both equines and trail bikes, hikers and snowshoers and crosscountry skiers.

Susan grew up in Philadelphia, “a city kid through and through.” She attended a small college in Salina, Kansas, and that was her first contact with the country. “I fell in love with the people and the way they lived and their philosophy about the earth,” she said. After college she returned East and worked in Albany. She currently works for the Department of Social Services.

Bonnie’s life was a bit more peripatetic. Born in Massachusetts, she moved to North Carolina to England—her husband

was in the Air Force—to Utah to Rome, NY. Then to Schenectady and finally Esperance. She currently serves as supervisor for Adult Protective Services in Schenectady.

Bonnie remembered when she first received the Board’s permission to build the trail. She, who had never cut a trail, walked the land with Arborist Fred Breglia and, under his tutelage, was struck by how “respectful of the land” a good trail should be. She marvels, too, over the many attractions offered by the Arboretum, especially the workshops and the star parties—“you’ll see more stars than you’d ever seen in your lifetime.” And the people she’s met.

Susan echoes that sentiment. “What draws me back and will forever is the people.... They are so knowledgeable. There’s no limit to what you can learn just in the course of a casual conversation.” She continued, “I talk to people all the time about [the Arboretum’s] preservation aspects and how important it is. That and communing with the earth. If walking and enjoying the trees is not your thing, you can always learn here. Learn to cook or to prune, to do music or art, to build a stone wall, whatever.”

Or explore the new Equine Trail. It’s for people too, both women insisted.

BOOK REVIEW

David Quammen’s *The Song of the Dodo*

David Quammen’s first two books were compilations of his column from Outside magazine. This book has one basic theme: island biogeography. It is the study of how characteristics of an island determine species distribution, a concept quantified by Robert MacArthur and E. O. Wilson. This topic and more are presented in a manner that is easy to read and understand. Humor and tragedy grab our attention and emotion. We also travel to exotic locales and meet individuals as diverse as the areas they study.

Quammen begins by chronicling the life and works of the other founder of evolution—Alfred Russell Wallace. Just who deserves credit for the first theory of natural selection is an historical mystery. While Darwin stayed in his study sorting through notes of his voyage and works by others, Wallace was collecting specimens in the Amazon jungles and on islands off the coast

of Southeast Asia. Both men, a world apart, seem to have arrived at the same conclusions at the same time. Since the two men were in correspondence, how much was coincidence is still being argued.

While collecting in the area known as the Malay Archipelago, a scattering of islands including Indonesia and New Guinea, Wallace began noticing species distribution. In this area are two small islands, Bali and Lombok, both about the same size and located nearly 20 miles apart. Yet the organisms found on each island are decidedly different. “Why here and not there?” is one question on his mind as he traveled. He also noticed that occasionally where a species once existed, it did no longer.

Thus Quammen begins exploring the reason behind his book, sub-titled *Island Biogeography in an Age of Extinctions*. Extinction is the dark side to evolution. Examining islands makes it easier to comprehend both concepts. In his book, the term “island” takes

—Lee Lattimer

on a broader meaning. Any distinctive ecosystem is an island. The forested highway median strip is an island. A pond is an island. Certain factors such as size and location of the “island” influence specie type and number, creating a natural balance if let alone. Yet islands are more susceptible to ecosystem degradation. Often man’s ignorance upsets the natural balance. Through the study of islands, we can more easily understand what effect our actions have, regardless of the environment’s size.

Finally, we are left with the understanding that the living quilt that is our planet is losing its color. The loss of any specie equals a loss in the complex pattern. Therefore saving diversity, a major goal of the Arboretum, is paramount. Equally important is enjoying the richness before it is lost. The song of the dodo, if it had one, is gone forever. Stop and listen the next time a wood thrush calls.