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ARBOR FRIENDS

SUMMER 2019



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FROM THE EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR



DEAR FRIENDS OF THE NATIONAL ARBORETUM:

As summer’s heat bears down on the National Arboretum, we at FONA are looking back at a busy spring and preparing for a fall full of activity. As a member of FONA, you already know how wonderful the Arboretum’s grounds and collections are and have committed to supporting FONA’s work to protect and promote them.

Much of our work at FONA these days is devoted to expanding our circle of supporters. Almost all of us, at some point, have probably heard the Arboretum described as a “hidden gem.” As much as we all love having what may feel like a private enclave in the Arboretum, in truth we need to increase its visibility and role within the community—if only to maintain the government funding for the Arboretum’s operations. And as both the city and the region grow, the need for the Arboretum to provide residents, visitors, and students access to plants and nature continues to grow as well.

That’s why you see FONA stepping up and working with the Arboretum’s staff to provide programs for all kinds of visitors to the grounds. In addition to our long-running Annual Garden Fair and 30+ years of managing the Washington Youth Garden, FONA has added activities ranging from Full Moon Hikes and Forest Bathing to Summer Concerts and 5K runs.

The Youth Garden has increased the scope of its work and the number of people involved in it. This summer we added a second group of young adults to our Green Ambassadors program, who worked closely with the Arboretum staff to get exposure to careers in science and horticulture while directly supporting staff efforts. All these programs, which your support has made possible, are introducing new faces and groups to the Arboretum. Our intent is to turn each of those new faces into members and supporters, joining you in their commitment to making the National Arboretum the treasure that we all know it is.

Be sure to check our website and sign up for FONA’s email newsletter—that’s the best way to stay on top of everything that’s happening on the grounds these days. Thank you for all you do to make FONA the vibrant organization you see today. I hope we’ll see you here on the grounds soon! 🌿

Tom McGuire, Executive Director
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ON THE COVER Poppies and nigella bloom in the National Herb Garden.

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LETTER FROM THE DIRECTOR

Thrive Despite...



WHEN I STARTED MY TENURE AS DIRECTOR here at the United States National Arboretum, my mantra for moving forward was based on the concept of *thrive despite*. That despite near perpetual budgetary deliberations, the Arboretum needed to thrive. That despite ongoing vacancy and recruitment challenges, the Arboretum needed to thrive. That despite the machinations of federal government and politics, the Arboretum needed to thrive. Now this may be heresy, but the point is, in 92 years, the National Arboretum has thrived despite the challenges our predecessors have faced. Created by Congress as part of its Constitutional responsibilities to the people of the United States, the National Arboretum needs to thrive for all as we strive to meet the environmental and horticulture challenges of the twenty-first century.

This summer, we co-hosted the American Public Garden Association’s annual meeting, whose theme—*Thrive together, Diversity grows gardens*—emphasized the need for public gardens to embrace diversity beyond that which is represented in their botanical collections. Diversity and inclusivity are core values in the federal workforce and are values that we work to fulfill at the National Arboretum. Nearly 1,200 of our colleagues from all parts of the United States, Canada, and Mexico joined us as we shared lessons and opportunities to embrace diversity, increase inclusivity, and grow our gardens. The highlight was an evening reception at the Arboretum, where our guests enjoyed the incredible gardens and displays around the Ellipse meadow, including the National Bonsai & Penjing Museum, GrassRoots exhibit, and the newly redesigned Friendship Garden, and then relaxed and chatted over a delicious dinner. We also showcased the Washington Youth Garden, whose tremendously noble work represents our efforts to connect gardens to underserved youth in Washington, DC.

Our staff, colleagues, and friends worked hard to put our best foot forward for our peers, despite many obstacles we encountered along the way. In order to thrive, we need continual support and engagement from all of our friends and especially our friends at FONA, who work tirelessly to leverage increasingly important private dollars with our public funding to truly fulfill our vision of a National Arboretum. 🌿

Richard T. Olsen, Director
The United States National Arboretum

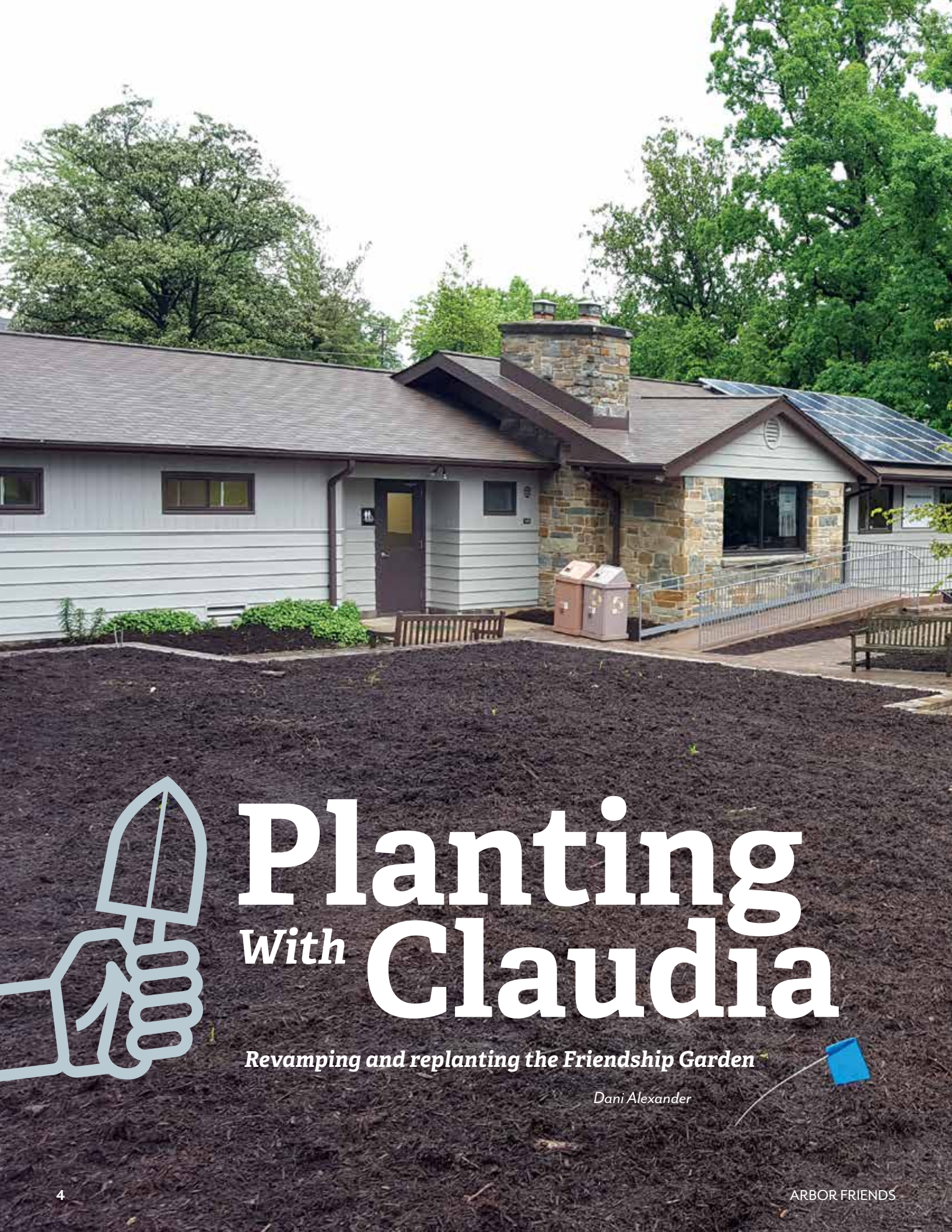
IN MEMORIAM DR. EDWARD LUKE REA



PHOTO CREDIT: GLENDA KAPSALIS

ONE OF FONA’S ORIGINAL MEMBERS died on June 23 at the age of 98. A fourth-generation Californian, Ed Rea came east to attend medical school at George Washington University, where he met his late wife, Betty. They started their married life in McLean, Virginia, and lived in the same house for 60 years. Betty Rea was the founding president of FONA. She was passionate and outspoken about the unsung beauty of the U.S. National Arboretum and the need for congressional support. She was a tireless advocate for appropriations to enhance the Arboretum. Ed shared her passion and they were a dynamic duo who contributed their good energy to the Annual Dinner, the Garden Fair, and Government Relations Committees. They charmed corporate sponsors and members of Congress. Together, they dedicated themselves to FONA and the Potomac and Virginia Commonwealth Units of the National Herb Society. Both organizations have benefited from their commitment. With the loss of Ed, we say good-bye and thank you to a couple whose vision and passion started FONA on a 35-year journey of support for the National Arboretum and its friends organization. 🌿

—TUCKIE WESTFALL & KATHY HORAN



Planting *With* Claudia

Revamping and replanting the Friendship Garden

Dani Alexander



We are so excited about the new garden and cannot wait to see it next year. This project has been such an amazing collaboration... We received excellent feedback from the American Public Gardens Association, even though the garden is still in its infancy. There is a lot of interest in this type of planting, and many visitors to the Arboretum are excited to watch the garden grow and mature. The nuances of the design will start to become visible next year, but it will take a good two to three years for everything to really fill in. This is not an instant landscape but a complex community of beautiful ecological plants. Thank you for all your support!!

—CLAUDIA WEST, Principal, Phyto Studio LLC

From bare earth and mulch, to thousands of young plants, the garden has had a dramatic transformation this spring.

At 9am

it was already sweltering at the U.S. National Arboretum Friendship Garden. I looked down at a flat of plugs of *Viola sororia*. The leaves were supple and tender, desperate for a drink. It was like looking in the mirror. I, too, was already drooping.



Claudia West, dozens of Arboretum staff, and volunteers put thousands of plant plugs in the ground, following Phyto Studio LLC's landscape design plan. Photo credit: Dani Alexander and Cherie Lejeune.

Claudia West, however, was like the pots of pink astilbe: bright, upright, smiling, and ready to get to work. A native of Germany and Principal of Phyto Studio, Claudia has a work ethic and presence that inspires. I immediately perked up, excited to get fresh compost under my fingernails. As a recent transplant to DC, a landscape architect with a nascent practice, and a new member of the Capitol Hill Garden Club, I am somewhat surprised to find myself in the position of being the new National Garden Club representative to the Friendship Garden. Until I arrived to volunteer with its replanting by Phyto Studio, I had yet to visit this garden. Its history is as rich as its soil. It is a National Garden Clubs project



and began in 1989 with the intention of creating a four-season interest garden of perennials that would appeal to the average homeowner. Initially designed by landscape architects Oehme, van Sweden, it marked a new era in planting styles, deploying plants in large drifts that required little maintenance. The garden continues to be revolutionary in its current edition through Phyto Studio's update. Claudia, with her two partners, Thomas Rainier and Melissa Rainier, promotes cutting-edge sustainable planting practices in several ways and has done so now for over a decade. In their book *Planting in a Post-Wild World*, Claudia and Thomas outline their philosophy of resilience through horticultural and design

For each section of the Friendship Garden, a different composition of plants will suppress weed growth, adapt to microclimates and highly localized soil conditions, create habitat for pollinators, and provide color and sculptural interest for human visitors.



Dani Alexander (above, left) and Claudia West (above, right). Photo credit: Cherie Lejeune

methodology, case studies, and planting recommendations. It is both a highly technical and an expressive approach. Focusing on layers of planting and plant sociability, they construct gardens and landscapes that are balanced in their environmental and artistic performance. For each section of the Friendship Garden, a different composition of plants will suppress weed growth, adapt to microclimates and highly localized soil conditions, create habitat for pollinators, and provide color and sculptural interest for human visitors. Claudia takes an educating approach and often directs the staff and volunteers to take two seemingly similar cultivars to very different locations based on just a hint more shade or sun. We broke into teams of three, carrying

flats of plants and stakes around the site. After our orientation to the planting operations, Melissa and Thomas joined the fray. The smiles on their faces reflected the joy of pleased practitioners watching their vision come to life. I know that joy well. The number of species was baffling. The volunteers and I often dashed back and forth with our heads down, searching for a particular species and specific cultivars within that very species. Most were in the plug stage of development, and with only an inch or two of baby leaves sprouting from the soil surface, the plants appeared to be identical to the untrained eye. And yet Claudia and Melissa seemed to know them like the faces of old friends. For several busy days, it was all hands on deck, with dozens of Arboretum staff



and volunteers working together in this one garden. At the end of our work, we marveled at the newest iteration of the Friendship Garden. All gardens are a process and a labor of love, and so thus begins a new cycle of this one's life. All gardens need advocates as well, and I am sure, as visitors are entranced by the remarkable qualities of this garden, it will have many. I am thrilled to serve as one of its stewards in the coming years. 🌱

DANI ALEXANDER is a member of the Capitol Hill Garden Club and the National Garden Club representative to the Friendship Garden.

U.S. NATIONAL ARBORETUM
Friendship Garden Planting Plan,
June 2019*

Based on Phyto Studio LLC handout



BEAUTY AND EMOTION
Strong seasonal color themes, low planting height, and clear planting layers result in deeply emotional, evocative planting.



ECOSYSTEM SERVICES
This planting is so much more than decoration! It adds essential ecosystem services back into the urban landscape. The garden's dense plantings soak up rain, cool and clean the air, provide habitat for beneficial wildlife, and sequester carbon in the soil.



SUSTAINABLE MANAGEMENT
Dense plant spacing and vertical layering reduce weed pressure and eliminate the need for future mulching. Planting management will allow some self-proliferation of species within clearly defined frames to preserve the legibility of the planting.



LAYERED PLANTING
Structural plants
Seasonal theme plants
Ground cover plants
Dynamic filler plants (seeded)



The Arboretum's research fields have row upon row of crapemyrtles. Flowers come in a variety of colors from white, to red, to purple, to magenta, and more.

Next page: Developing new varieties with narrow upright forms is one of the aims of current crapemyrtle breeding projects.

Photo credit: USNA.

Some Like It Hot, Especially Crapemyrtles

Roberta Gutman

When the flowers of most perennial plants and shrubs wither in Washington's summer heat, crapemyrtles are resplendent with color—and nowhere is the crapemyrtle show more beautiful than at the National Arboretum.

Crapemyrtles (*Lagerstroemia*) are a major Arboretum research focus. Dr. Margaret Pooler oversees the Arboretum's research program on ornamental shrubs and trees, including the work with these colorful summer bloomers. With so many crapemyrtle varieties available, the focus is on improving color intensity, especially deep reds and purples; creating unique forms, in particular narrow upright and dwarf varieties; increasing disease resistance, especially against powdery mildew; and promoting earlier blooming.

The Arboretum uses traditional breeding processes—the cross-pollination of promising plant varieties—as opposed to inserting or editing individual genes. “Gene insertion or editing isn't useful yet in many of the species we work on because,” notes Dr. Pooler, “the technology isn't there quite yet, and many traits that we're interested in, such as tolerance to environmental stress, are controlled by a complex of genes that would be difficult to alter by a single insertion or editing event.” Many Arboretum crapemyrtle introductions resulted from crosses between *L. indica* and *L. fauriei*, which have produced a range of colorful as well as white flowers, striking exfoliating bark, and disease resistance.

Originally from Asia, crapemyrtles are the focus of many Southern gardens, from zone 7 southward. If gardeners in, say, zone 6 want to grow crapemyrtles, Dr. Pooler suggests that they encourage dormancy by withholding fertilizer and decreasing water in late summer and fall. “Dormant plants are more tolerant of cold.” In addition, because crapemyrtles bloom on new growth,

gardeners in colder parts of the country can successfully grow crapemyrtles as perennials that they can cut back to the ground each year. Of course, these plants won't show the characteristic ornamental bark that develops on mature crapemyrtles.

She also commented on drastic pruning, which can produce spindly growth and unnatural plant habit. “It's appalling what some people do to their plants, but fortunately, crapemyrtles are very forgiving.” Pruning is best done in late spring when plants start to leaf out and should focus on eliminating dead wood and other minor structural pruning. In the case of miniatures, “sports” (long, aberrant growth) should be pruned so that the plant won't be overwhelmed with reversion growth.



The Arboretum's crapemyrtle introductions are named after Native American tribes, a custom begun by Dr. Pooler's predecessor, Dr. Donald Egolf. Dr. Pooler noted the 30-year staying power of the full-size white-blooming 'Natchez', a nursery favorite, with its beautiful cinnamon-colored exfoliating bark. The red 'Arapaho' and 'Cheyenne' are two other prized Arboretum introductions.

All crapemyrtle introductions may be seen in the Gotelli Conifer Collection, where visitors can enjoy the labelled plants in a landscape setting; some cultivars may be seen in the Introduction Garden around the Administration Building. But for a riot of summer color, visit the research field between Meadow Road and Holly Spring Road. Many of the original cultivars are growing there, including 'Natchez', 'Osage', 'Miami', and 'Pecos'. The long-term growth habits and endurance of these introductions are monitored in the research nurseries, where everyone can savor the enduring impacts of the Arboretum's research. For more information and to view a full listing of the U.S. National Arboretum's many crapemyrtle introductions, visit www.usna.usda.gov. 🌳

ROBERTA GUTMAN is a longtime FONA member and frequent visitor to the Arboretum. The original article is from the Summer 2010 issue and has been updated by Dr. Margaret Pooler.



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Summer at the National Arboretum

- 1** 200 runners, walkers (and dogs!) ran through the blooming cherry trees and magnolias during FONA's spring Cherry Blossom 5k Fun Run
- 2** Many skilled and new gardeners found plants to take home from FONA's Garden Fair & Plant Sale. Arboretum attendance was at an all-time high that beautiful April weekend.
- 3** The 2019 American Public Gardens Association (APGA) conference was held in Washington, DC, in June. The U.S. National Arboretum hosted hundreds of fellow public garden professionals for dinner in the meadow and exploring the collections. *Photo credit: John Winder.*
- 4** FONA welcomed hundreds of visitors to the free Summer Evenings concert series June–August. The evenings of music, picnics, friends, and fun draw people to the Arboretum, those who have never been here before and those who have long loved the Arboretum.
- 5** FONA presented Robert A. Bartlett, Jr. with its first Distinguished Supporter award at the 2019 Dinner Under the Stars. Bartlett has been a long-time FONA Board member and financial supporter. His company, the F. A. Bartlett Tree Expert Co., has donated thousands of hours of service to maintaining the Arboretum's trees. As USNA Director, Dr. Richard Olsen, summed it up "Mr. Bartlett speaks trees!" *Photo credit: Nancy Kleck*
- 6** David Fairchild Society members joined USNA Director Dr. Richard Olsen on a tour of the magnificent flowering cherry trees during peak bloom. *Photo credit: Cathy Kerkam*
- 7** More than 500 people attended the 2019 Dinner Under the Stars, FONA's most important annual fundraiser in support of FONA programs and the U.S. National Arboretum. After dinner, guests strolled up a candle-lit path to the illuminated Capitol Columns where they enjoyed a magical evening view and sampled some delicious desserts. *Photo credit: Nancy Kleck.*

WASHINGTON YOUTH GARDEN

SPROUT

Thea Klein-Mayer

AS GARDEN EDUCATORS, we get a range of questions on a daily basis. During a visit to the Washington Youth Garden’s one-acre demonstration garden, students and their adult chaperones encounter many plants, creatures, and features that they are likely to be unfamiliar with, so the questions can be limitless. With spring being our busiest season, if each youth visitor asked just one question during our programs, that would add up to more than 1,600 questions since April.

“Where’s the king bee?”
“Can we see the frogs again?” “Why is the leaf sour?” “Do you live here?”
“Is this leaf real? Then why does it feel like a blanket?”
“Why is my worm wiggling so much?!” “Can I eat this?”

We hear: “Where’s the king bee?” “Can we see the frogs again?” “Why is the leaf sour?” “Do you live here?” “Is this leaf real? Then why does it feel like a blanket?” “Why is my worm wiggling so much?!” “Can I eat this?” Answering these questions can be tricky, with such a wide range of topics and as many as 60 curious minds whirling during a given field trip.



Asking questions is one of the ways youth learn in the garden.

Sometimes the answers are nuanced, gory, or dark. Nature is full of Game of Thrones-esque situations like the post-mating ritual of a female praying mantis beheading her mate or the selection of a new queen in a honey bee hive which involves multiple queens fighting to the death. One of the best approaches I have found in working here and in farm-based education is to start by inviting questioners to consider possible answers to their own questions with a simple, “What do you think?” This practice isn’t intended to keep folks in the dark, but rather to invite wonder and further curiosity. Sometimes this leads to even more questions or theories much more interesting than the real facts.

The other important lesson in fielding so many questions is to be honest. Responses such as “I don’t know but we can look it up” or “let’s ask one of our gardeners” go a long way. That can mean having guidebooks on hand to flip through or asking our pocket computers—we are all learning (and sometimes relearning)! Why not learn early to rely on each other and the resources around us to deepen our understanding of and relationship with the earth? 🌱

THEA KLEIN-MAYER was the coordinator for Washington Youth Garden’s SPROUT (Science Program Reaching OUT) field trip programs and Family & Visitor Programs.



Nancy and Pierre Moitrier

Summer Garden Tips

Hori-Hori, translated from Japanese as “dig dig.”

AS GARDENERS, WE CONSIDER THE HAND PRUNER to be the most important tool on our belt because it is truly an extension of our hands and helps perform so many important garden grooming tasks. Let us introduce you to another less well known but just as useful tool: the hori-hori or Japanese digging knife.

At 11 inches long, the hori-hori is shaped like a knife but does not have a sharp edge. The knife has a handle and a 6-inch steel blade that is serrated on one side and smooth on the other. The blade is slightly beveled and ends with a tapered tip. This tool slips easily into the back pocket or a leather holster on the belt.

The hori-hori was originally used by Japanese people to dig up wild vegetables, native to the mountainsides, which were an important food source. Centuries later, uses for this simple tool have evolved and the list of garden tasks it can help us with is a long one:

- Dig weeds, even tap-rooted ones like dandelion, poke weed, and dock
- Easily scrape large patches of tiny weed seedlings that appear by the thousands in late spring: maple, cherry, burning bush, and others
- Break up clods of soil when planting
- Divide perennials with the serrated edge
- Loosen tough roots in pot-bound plants
- Excavate excess soil from balled-and-burlapped trees before planting to expose the natural root flair
- Plant market-pack annual plugs
- Transplant seedlings
- Make furrows under string lines to sow straight rows of seeds in the vegetable garden
- Harvest root vegetables like beets, carrots, and parsnips
- Plant small bulbs like crocus and tulip species
- Pack soil after planting with the butt end of the handle
- Open mulch or soil bags
- Pry up bricks or stones
- Check the depth of water percolation in the soil
- Slip plant labels into hard soil
- And many more uses ...like scratching your back!

So, if you didn’t know the hori-hori before, try it and see how it improves the time you spend in your garden. Ultimately, your garden will never be the same. The Japanese digging knife will quickly become the other indispensable tool on your belt! 🌿



NANCY AND PIERRE MOITRIER operate Designs for Greener Gardens, a boutique gardening company that specializes in designing, creating, developing, and maintaining distinctive gardens of all styles. Pierre hails from France and brings the charm of the Old World to their garden creations. Nancy’s 40 years of gardening experience combined with her design knowledge and innate artistic eye add a superior dimension to their garden projects. Follow Designs for Greener Gardens on Facebook.

FRIENDS OF THE NATIONAL ARBORETUM

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HAPPENINGS

For more information, visit usna.usda.gov or fona.org

FULL MOON EXPERIENCES: HIKES OR FOREST BATHING

September 13, 14, 15–7:30pm

October 12, 13, 14–7:00pm

November 11, 12, 13–7:00pm

Sign up and come to the Arboretum after hours for a brisk 2-mile hike with a tour guide or a meditative walk with a Forest Bathing guide. Registration and fee are online at fona.org

FAMILY GARDEN DAYS AT THE WASHINGTON YOUTH GARDEN

September 14, 10:00am–12:00pm

October 12, 10:00am–12:00pm

On the second Saturday of each month, join classes for all members of the community and their families, led by Washington Youth Garden staff in our one-acre fruit and vegetable garden. Pre-registration required at www.washingtonyouthgarden.org/fgd/

OAKTOBERFEST FESTIVAL

October 19

Celebrate fall among the Arboretum's colorful foliage! The festival will have live music, a beer garden, and more. Further details to come this fall on our website.

OAKTOBERFEST 5K FUN RUN

October 20

Runners, walkers, children, and dogs are welcome to register for the morning 5K Fun Run on a course through the Arboretum. Registration will open in September



HELP US TO GO GREEN!

To receive your *ArborFriends* issues via email only, and not in the mail, go to fona.org/greenarborfriends

CYCLE AROUND THE ARBORETUM!

Take a ride on the Arboretum's 9 miles of paved roads. Bring your own bike, or check one out from the Bikeshare station at the R Street entrance.

