DEAR FRIENDS OF THE NATIONAL ARBORETUM:

It may be the lazy days of summer but not for FONA and the U.S. National Arboretum. We are at a point of game-changing transition for both organizations. The new strategic plan has been the catalyst to propel us forward. The Board of FONA has been working hard to transition the organization and grow its capacity to be an effective primary private partner for the Arboretum. We are pleased to announce the hiring of Tom Costello as our new Executive Director. Tom has a wealth of nonprofit leadership and development experience and is well suited to the task of working with the Arboretum to develop new programs and bring in new resources to support them. Tom is joined by April Martin, our new Director of the Washington Youth Garden. April hit the ground running this spring, bringing new talents and energy to the WYG. To learn more, please see the bios of Tom and April in this edition.

Our thanks go to Dr. Colien Hefferan for her leadership in guiding USNA toward a brighter future. Our thanks go to Dr. Colien Hefferan for her leadership in guiding the Arboretum toward a brighter future. With Dr. Hefferan’s retirement, the Arboretum will be looking for a new Director. We are delighted with the appointment of Dr. Richard Olsen and Dr. Margaret Pooler as Interim Director for three months each. They both bring strong management experience, a clear vision, and a strong commitment to the place we all love. In the days to come, you will be hearing more about the exciting future for FONA and the Arboretum and ways in which you can be involved. For now, please turn to Tom Costello’s remarks for a preview.

Thank you.

Barbara Shea
Chair, Board of Directors

ON THE COVER Photo courtesy of Ellen Oberwetter, a participant in FONA’s photo contest.
I am delighted to be joining FONA as its new Executive Director and to be associated with the remarkable National Arboretum. In my first months, I have been doing a great deal of listening, observing, and learning. Meetings with board and staff members from FONA and the Arboretum, meeting new colleagues at the American Public Garden Association (APGA) annual meeting, driving and walking around the Arboretum, and beginning to get to know the Arboretum’s Northeast Washington neighborhood . . . all have increased my understanding of the Arboretum as an extraordinary resource for our own community and for the nation.

The Arboretum is a living, breathing experiment for growing and sustaining plant life in our world. We humans cannot survive without plants to purify the air we breathe, hold the soils of the earth together, and provide many of the foods we eat. At the heart of this very big responsibility is preserving the Arboretum’s collection of germplasm, which you will hear more about elsewhere in Arbor Friends, and which is essential for our nation’s and our planet’s future. At the same time, engaging the community is absolutely essential, and the Washington Youth Garden is exemplary as the vanguard of community outreach and education by the Arboretum through this major FONA program.

FONA’s work in support of the Arboretum is not possible without the involvement of individuals, institutional partners, and donors like you. I look forward to getting to know you and to articulating a clear set of initiatives, programs, and partnerships to support the Arboretum’s excellent new strategic plan. It will mean changes in FONA and in its working relationship with the Arboretum, and I am confident we can count on your help. I certainly look forward to involving you in the future of the Arboretum. Please feel free to contact me if you would like to discuss how you can help.

Warm regards,

Thomas M. Costello, Executive Director
Friends of the National Arboretum

In the months to come, I look forward to getting to know you better as well as being able to articulate a clear set of initiatives, programs and partnerships to support the Arboretum’s strategic plan.

May we introduce…

TOM COSTELLO,
FONA’s new Executive Director

Tom has worked as a senior manager at numerous cultural and historical institutions. FONA Board Chair Barbara Shea noted that “Tom brings a rich and diverse set of experiences and skills in fundraising, marketing, and management—from serving as director of development at the John F. Kennedy Center for the Performing Arts to serving for nearly a decade as president of the Springfield Library and Museums Association—that will be of enormous value at this critical time in the life of the Arboretum.”

Costello’s arrival is an important step for FONA in its support of the Arboretum’s new five-year plan, which outlines how to sustain and further develop its research program, improve the visitor experience, and attract a larger audience. FONA’s fundraising efforts will focus on supporting these goals.

APRIL MARTIN,
new Director of the Washington Youth Garden

April attended Notre Dame of Maryland University. After completing her bachelor’s degree in international business, she continued on at Johns Hopkins University for a master’s degree in liberal arts. Her interests in education, advocacy, and youth development stem from working in east Baltimore for AmeriCorps. She comes to us with experience at Martha’s Table and the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation. April’s life is busy all around; she is mother to 5-year-old boy/girl twins!

—KATHY HORAN

Warm regards,

Thomas M. Costello, Executive Director
Friends of the National Arboretum

In the months to come, I look forward to getting to know you better as well as being able to articulate a clear set of initiatives, programs and partnerships to support the Arboretum’s strategic plan.

Choose your descriptor for the lilies (Lycoris) that are in bloom at the U.S. National Arboretum. A pink swath of Lycoris squamigera greets visitors on their approach to the Administration Building, a delightful surprise coming months after the normal bulb-rush of spring. Like magic, Lycoris flowers come forth in late summer on naked stalks, completely out of sync with their spring crops of foliage. This yearly resurrection occurs without fail and reawakens and rekindles the spirits of gardeners of all ages and skills.

Surprise. Magic. Resurrection. Choose your descriptor for the National Arboretum. This summer, we were surprised by the retirement of Dr. Colien Hefferan, who for more than three years guided the Arboretum through its strategic planning process, infrastructure overhauls, the unpleasantness of sequester, and the building of new initiatives and agreements with our stakeholders, most importantly the Friends of the National Arboretum. Perhaps it was fortuitous, that the Arboretum had Dr. Hefferan at the helm, where her experience guiding the National Institute for Agriculture (NIFA)—a sister agency to the Agricultural Research Service (ARS)—for nearly two decades would serve the Arboretum well during this frenzied period. Her knowledge of the inner workings of the USDA, her profound wisdom, and her daily guidance will be missed. Thank you, Colien.

Magic. To paraphrase Colin Craven from the classic children’s book The Secret Garden by F. H. Burnett, the Arboretum uses science to try to understand the magic of a garden so that we can inspire ourselves and others to lead fuller lives through plants. Our science programs begin and end with our plant genetic resources, and they form the core of our new Strategic Plan. Beginning with the systematic collecting and documentation of germplasm, to its planting and evaluation and, ultimately, distribution and preservation, our living collections form the basis of all that we do at the Arboretum. That we do this in an aesthetically pleasing form and relate these stories through education and outreach allows us to marry the art and science of horticulture in an approachable, if not magical format.

Resurrection. Since 2010, the Arboretum has been in a near constant state of construction as the Administration Building has undergone a complete renovation, beginning with the interior and ending with a complete overhaul of our iconic koi pond. To this, add the soon-to-open new exhibit, Grass Roots; the Arboretum looks forward to getting these past four years of construction behind us. We are emerging revitalized with a renewed sense of optimism for the future of the Arboretum. Like Colin Craven, we have been touched by the magic of the garden. This sees us through the surprises and inspires us to resurrect dormant dreams for the future of the Arboretum. The next several months will have tremendous bearing on our future. Your involvement is critical, and I look forward to doing my part to continue the legacy of your National Arboretum.✨

All the best,

Richard T. Olsen
Interim Director, USNA

Editors Note: The U.S. National Arboretum announced…

Dr. Joseph Spence, Beltsville Area Director of ARS announced that a search would begin immediately for the next Director of the Arboretum. In the interim, Drs. Richard Olsen and Margaret Pooler agreed to serve as acting directors for 120 days each.

Richard Olsen has a bachelor’s degree in landscape design from N.C. State University, a master’s degree in horticulture from the University of Georgia, and a doctorate in horticultural science from N.C. State University. He joined USDA-ARS in 2006 as a research geneticist and lead scientist for the urban tree breeding program in the Floral and Nursery Plant Research Unit at the Arboretum. His research in tree breeding focuses on the development of superior landscape trees that are not invasive and have pest and disease resistance. He also serves as the lead scientist for the USNA germplasm program. He lives in Greenbelt, MD, with his wife and two sons. His term as acting director will end on October 4, 2014.

Margaret Pooler is a native of North Carolina and received her undergraduate training at the University of North Carolina and completed her graduate work in plant breeding at the University of Wisconsin. She has been with the National Arboretum for 18 years overseeing the shrub breeding program and more recently serving as Director of Research. She lives in Howard County, MD, with her family. Margaret will begin her term as the acting director in October.✨
The results for the 2014 FONA-Sponsored Photo Competition are in!
The competition showcased the natural beauty of the Arboretum. Contestants were asked to submit up to three nature shots taken at the Arboretum during 2014.

The judging panel consisted of Rindy O’Brien, a Capitol Hill photographer and former writer of the Hill Gardener column for the Capital Community News, and Elizabeth Eby, a Capitol Hill garden designer and multimedia artist. The judging was anonymous, meaning the panel did not know which entrant was responsible for each photo. The first-place winner received $250, second-place, $100, and third-place, $50.

FIRST PLACE—MIKE SHERLOCK, WILLOW OAK: The photo was wonderfully composed and had depth of field that brought you right into the picture and the moment by emphasizing the threatening skies and the power of the tree. The detail of the tree branches against the deep blue and white clouds made it hauntingly beautiful.

SECOND PLACE—MIKE SHERLOCK, PEELING BARK: Mike captures the color and texture of the tree, and the brilliant use of light on the curved bark made it a wonderful photograph.

THIRD PLACE—ELLEN OBERWETTER, BEE AND BLUE CROCUS: The photo was well composed, using the contrast of blue and orange against the gray background, and seeing the bee’s face was unusual.

HONORABLE MENTION—KATHY JENTZ for the muted colors in her photograph of budding cherry blossoms in the rain.
This page: The Pergola located in the Asian Collections. Photo courtesy of the US National Arboretum.

Facing page: Magnolia ashei, ash magnolia. Photo courtesy of Ron Miller.
AS WE SEE CHANGES IN CLIMATE, loss of native habitats, and new invasive species resulting from urbanization, the conservation of plant genetic resources becomes more critical in order to preserve ecosystems, prevent species extinction, and provide plant breeders with the genetic material to create better plants to improve our environmental quality. There are many examples of events that have caused us to realize the critical role of germplasm conservation. Most recently, the invasion of the emerald ash borer has killed tens of millions of ash (Fraxinus) trees across the eastern half of the United States and threatens the survival of the 16 species of Fraxinus native to this country. This pest has garnered attention not only for its devastating impact on the environment but also for its potential impact on the baseball bat industry. Looking back, germplasm saved the day in the 1920s when spinach growers in Virginia faced a blight that threatened to wipe out the entire crop. Fortunately, a little-known species of Manchurian spinach, collected by the USDA in 1900, turned out to be resistant to this disease. Recognizing the value of plant germplasm to the security of America’s crops, the USDA maintains a well-established system of 32 germplasm repositories, known as the National Plant Germplasm System, dedicated to preserving the genetic diversity of crop plants. In the late 1980s, the Arboretum was tasked with the collection and conservation of woody landscape plants as part of this system. This new mission was assigned to the
Arboretum primarily because of our long and successful history of collecting, evaluating, and distributing woody landscape plants from around the world. As an example, in the 1950s the Arboretum’s Dr. John Creech brought back a new and interesting species of crapemyrtle (*Lagerstroemia fauriei*) from the islands off the coast of Japan. This relatively unknown species turned out to be completely resistant to powdery mildew, a fungal disease that had plagued crapemyrtles in the southeastern United States for decades. Dr. Donald Egolf, former plant breeder at the Arboretum, quickly recognized the value of this species and created disease-resistant crapemyrtle hybrids—‘Natchez’ and ‘Muskogee’ were the first—which have since become industry standards.

How does the Arboretum’s long and successful history of plant collecting and germplasm conservation play into its programs today and into the future? The Arboretum’s new Strategic Plan and its Collections Policy strengthen the commitment to the principals of what makes germplasm so valuable to scientists and private industry. Those principles include collecting from natural populations or tracing cultivars back to their original source, documenting those collections, and maintaining that documentation on a website accessible to the public. These requirements ensure authenticity of the plants and data that are used by scientists and industry professionals. Arboretum scientists and collections managers are working on projects that exemplify the commitment of USDA to these efforts. For example, as we renovate Springhouse Run, a small stream that runs through the Arboretum all the way to the Anacostia River, the guiding principle in plant materials for this project
is the collection and documentation of plants from natural populations in the Mid-Atlantic region. When it is finished, it will accomplish three important goals: the beautification of the Arboretum, the ecological restoration of a critical watershed for the Anacostia River, and the long-term conservation of regional plant germplasm. The Asian Collections are another example of how germplasm conservation is combined with public garden aesthetics. Created after the devastating winter freeze of 1977, the Asian Collections use the plants (germplasm) collected from trips to Japan, Korea, and China throughout the ’70s, ’80s, and ’90s.

A new collaborative research project also exemplifies the Arboretum’s efforts toward genetic resource conservation. *Magnolia ashei*, or ash magnolia, is a small tree endemic to the Florida panhandle and is considered by most horticulturists to be a garden aristocrat, but it is also listed as endangered by the state of Florida. Although ash magnolia is found in gardens from Maine to Florida, very few cultivated specimens can be traced back to their native site. We also know very little about the genetic diversity of this plant with so small a native range. A challenge when trying to conserve any magnolia is that its seeds are considered recalcitrant—that is, they do not last in storage—so the plants can only be conserved long-term as living specimens. The Arboretum is uniquely qualified to meet these challenges with its staff of scientists to work on understanding the genetic diversity through molecular analysis, horticulturists with years of experience in collecting and documenting germplasm from natural sites, and established collaboration with the American Public Garden Association and its North American Plant Collections Consortium (NAPCC). This collaboration includes 500 public gardens to help establish collections that will enable us to isolate populations of ash magnolia germplasm to ensure long-term survival.

An understanding of genetic diversity could provide clues to help withstand the devastating onslaught of invading diseases and pests. Greater knowledge of the genetic makeup of trees like oaks (Quercus spp.) threatened with sudden oak death, and of hemlock plagued with woolly adelgid infestations, has become essential. A broad base of woody landscape plant germplasm is one essential element in preventing such crop losses. The Arboretum is well positioned to continue its focus on germplasm conservation. Its 446 acres of living specimens and research nurseries, its dedicated staff of scientists and horticulturists, and its collaboration with nurseries, universities, botanic gardens, and other stakeholders ensure that our collections will continue to be one of our core commitments and strengths.

KEVIN CONRAD is currently the Curator of the Woody Landscape Plant Germplasm Repository and has enjoyed working in the Gardens, Education, and Research Units of the National Arboretum over the last 22 years. His home is a 30-acre organic farm in central Virginia.

ROBERTA GUTMAN is a contributing writer, gardener, and frequent visitor to the Arboretum. She is an avid cyclist who also volunteers for the U.S. Botanic Garden and Casey Trees.
CELEBRATING THE ARBORETUM AT FONA’S ANNUAL COOKOUT

As the setting sun gilded the treetops on June 17, guests strolled into the National Arboretum for the annual FONA Cookout, this year honoring Missouri.

The 550 attendees included Arboretum staff; corporate leaders; members of the Missouri delegation, including Senator Roy Blunt, Congresswoman Vicky Hartzler, and Congressmen William ‘Lacy’ Clay, Emmanuel Cleaver, Billy Long, and Jason Smith; and DC Councilman for Ward 5 Kenyan McDuffie.

FONA Board Chair Barbara Shea and Michael Dykes of Monsanto—this year’s lead sponsor—offered remarks. Former Arboretum Director Colien Hefferan then awarded Dr. Peter Raven, who was president and director of the Missouri Botanic Garden for 40 years, the Arboretum’s Medal of Excellence for his dedication to horticulture, conservation, and biodiversity. Dr. Raven urged protection and preservation of treasures like the Arboretum for the sake of education, science, and research.

It was truly was a sparkling evening. Thanks to all who supported it. Photos by Jackie Presutti and Joe Carabeo.

1 Robert Thompson (left) with John and Melissa Pflieger (center) and Ann Thompson (right) 2 Michael Dykes of Monsanto with Dr. Peter Raven 3 Cookout Chair, Tuckie Westfall (left) with Senator Roy Blunt and his wife, Abby (center) and Cal Dooley, American Chemistry Council (right) 4 Missouri Congressman, Emmanuel Cleaver (center) surrounded by the staff of DuPont Pioneer 5 Ward 5 DC Councilman Kenyan McDuffie and his wife, Princess 6 The Cookout tent in the meadow at sunset 7 Arboretum Director, Colien Hefferan
The Friends of the National Arboretum is an independent, nonprofit organization established to enhance, through public and private sector resources, support for the U.S. National Arboretum.

This newsletter was printed using 80# Sappi Flo, Matte Text and is FSC-certified using 10% post-consumer waste. 100% of the electricity used to manufacture Flo sheets at their Cloquet Mill is generated using Green-e certified renewable energy. Printed by Delmarva Printing, Inc.

HAPPEONINGS

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

EXHIBITS AND DEMONSTRATIONS

Hot New Plants!
September 27, 10 a.m.–noon.
Meet in the Administration Building and walk through the Introduction and Friendship Garden with Brad Evans.
$10, registration required.

CSI: Bonsai
Through October 13 (Friday through Monday only).
10 a.m.–4 p.m.
Free.

Under the Arbor: Chile Peppers
October 11, 1–4 p.m. in the National Herb Garden.
Free.

Autumn Bonsai: The Colors of Nature
October 24–November 10 (Friday through Monday only).
10 a.m.–4 p.m.
Free.

SPECIAL EVENTS

Annual Orchid Show and Sale
October 11–13, 2014. The Orchid Show and Sale will be held at Behnke Nurseries in Beltsville, MD, this year. Please visit www.ncos.us/ncos/ for more information.

National Capital Area Flower Show
October 18, 1–4 p.m.
October 19, 9 a.m.–4 p.m.
Administration Building
Free.

WE WOULD APPRECIATE DONATIONS OF YOUR CAR, TRUCK, OR BOAT...

If your vehicle is no longer of use to you, FONA can benefit. Once you sign up, your car will be picked up free of charge, and FONA will receive a cash donation. Your donation is fully tax-deductible. It’s easy. Just call us at 202.544.8733.