IN THIS ISSUE
3 New Director  4 NCAGC: 60 Years and Counting  8 Plant Alternatives  10 What’s New at the WYG  11 Fall Planting Tips
DEAR FRIENDS OF THE NATIONAL ARBORETUM:

Now into my second year as Executive Director, I have a better feel for the full annual cycle of FONA and the National Arboretum. Our two major annual events—the Garden Fair and Dinner Under the Stars—exceeded our expectations for attendance, and the funds raised surpassed our budget goals. Many thanks to chairs Linda and Spinner Findlay for the Garden Fair and to Jeanne Connelly for the Dinner—and to dozens of other volunteers for making these events so successful.

We were delighted by the appointment in May of Dr. Richard T. Olsen as Director of the National Arboretum. A research scientist at the Arboretum since 2006, Richard is well acquainted with the challenges and opportunities ahead. Welcome, Richard!

New staff at FONA includes Ulises Zatarain, the new program director at the Washington Youth Garden, who brings a rich skill set gained in community development in Chicago to WYG. Nadia Mercer is now site manager of off-site and on-site gardens, Noah Lee is the education coordinator, Jake Dacks is the new garden coordinator, and Clare Sands is development and administrative coordinator. In the FONA office, Jillian Aldebron is our new visitor services and membership assistant.

Perhaps the most significant change in spring 2015 was returning the Arboretum to being open seven days a week. We are in discussions now that should lead to a Capital BikeShare station at the Arboretum in 2016, distribution of Arboretum information on group tour buses, and improved signage directing visitors to the site. Our member evening pilots—Bayer-supported family lawn games in the Arboretum’s GrassRoots exhibit (with scoops from Ben & Jerry’s climate initiative), a jazz concert on the Great Meadow (that drew 250 people), and an upcoming Bike Night (plus craft beer at Atlas Brewery) in September with retailer REI—will help us develop the know-how to offer more in 2016.

However, the cost associated with the Arboretum being open seven days a week that is borne by FONA: $280,000 for the first three years. Commitments to date total approximately $60,000. We have received some substantial individual gifts that have helped get us started, but these alone will not sustain open hours. When you are asked, I hope you will respond generously to our request for support.

Please stop by the FONA office to say hello when you visit to partake of the Arboretum’s fall foliage.

Warm regards,

Thomas M. Costello, Executive Director
Friends of the National Arboretum
tcostello@fona.org
202.544.8733

ON THE COVER Metasequoia Grove near Gotelli Collection, photo courtesy of Amanda Kleinman.
AFTER AN EXTENSIVE SEARCH, the Arboretum found its new permanent director, but it didn’t have to look far. Dr. Richard T. Olsen, who served as acting director in 2014 following Dr. Colien Hefferan’s temporary 3-year leadership, began his tenure at the Arboretum as a research plant geneticist in 2006. He has been active in research, planning, outreach, and so much more, both at the USDA’s Agricultural Research Service facility in Beltsville, MD, and on-site at the Arboretum.

Dr. Hefferan worked diligently to produce the admirable Five-Year Plan (see “Rediscover the National Arboretum: Where Science Meets Beauty” in the winter 2014 issue of Arbor Friends). Dr. Olsen said, “My job now is to do some very creative thinking to implement the plan using whatever tools are available.” He added that, in implementing the plan, it will be imperative to reach out to the public through educational and other initiatives that will build support, to promote the Arboretum as a venue for scientific research, to work with researchers in academia and industry on challenges that affect them and the general public, and to work closely with FONA and other support groups to “achieve our objectives.”

It is a happy coincidence that his May appointment coincided with the Arboretum’s being reopened for seven days a week as of April. “Increased public access is essential for cultivating appreciation and support for this open green space in the center of our nation’s capital”—an island of calm and beauty in the vortex of our democracy.

The challenges are numerous and complex; among them are unmet building, hardscape, and other infrastructure needs, an aging workforce, the paucity of trained horticulturists, and above all, a stringent budget that is unlikely to increase to meet the Arboretum’s many and growing needs. “We depend greatly on the Friends of the National Arboretum to help fund projects that would otherwise go unmet, to bring attention to this 446-acre island of horticultural display and research, and to help work with outside partners,” Dr. Olsen said. Acting in concert with numerous horticultural organizations, the Arboretum has recently focused on, among other things, building its reputation as one of the world’s premier germplasm sites, with its extensive database on plant sourcing and breeding for beauty, disease resistance and, increasingly, climate change.

Working with old friends and potential new sources of support provides opportunities. “We’ve discussed increasing Arboretum exposure by holding more horticultural and agricultural meetings on the premises, hosting more public garden–related events, even opening the Arboretum to such uses as weddings and other celebrations,” although the Arboretum has limited support facilities for the latter. “FONA can do what the government can’t,” he emphasized, and will continue to be essential in the future of the Arboretum. With development along the nearby H Street corridor and New York Avenue, “we also should be reaching out to developers and others to meet mutual needs and to increase the Arboretum’s appeal to our new neighbors,” he said.

Dr. Olsen noted that “Our location is inherently advantageous.” The Arboretum straddles northern and southern growing zones and thus can build on and broaden its traditional plant research base in ornamental woodies. He added that “landscaping and agriculture are in the same continuum, and we should capitalize on this.” Food plants are increasingly found among the flowers in ornamental gardens, and the Arboretum can work with plant breeders, industry, and horticultural groups to increase this creative momentum. “It helps that the Arboretum is within the administrative and funding structure of the Agricultural Research Service of the U.S. Department of Agriculture,” he said.

There is no doubt that Dr. Olsen has his work cut out for him. It is equally clear that he has the energy, the knowledge, the creative thinking ability, and the leadership qualities to bring the Arboretum the wider recognition and support it so richly deserves.

ROBERTA GUTMAN, a longtime FONA member and Arboretum booster, writes occasional articles for Arbor Friends. She is a regular volunteer at the U.S. Botanic Garden, where she leads tours, answers horticulture questions and, as a 26-year resident of Washington and regular in-town cyclist, helps visitors get the most out of their visits to this exciting city.
Garden Club members planting in Fern Valley; NCAGC members on current Fern Valley bench.
Fern Valley was started by members of the newly formed National Capital Garden Club League (now National Capital Area Garden Clubs [NCAGC]). During the first few years, hundreds of garden club members donated thousands of hours to plant and maintain the plantings in Fern Valley. The potential of this site was discovered and promoted by Edith Gay Bittinger—fern and wildflower lover, Radcliffe College Class of 1899 graduate, opera singer, mother, award-winning floral designer, and champion of the display of native plants at the Arboretum. She convinced the Director of the Arboretum that a weedy and trash-filled valley in the middle of the Arboretum would be the perfect place for a fern and wildflower garden. Over the next ten years, 52,000 plants were donated by members all over the Central Atlantic Region and planted in the 4½ acre woodland; Fern Valley soon exceeded everyone’s expectations. Arboretum Director Dr. Henry Skinner valued the project so much that he and Maryland State Senator Gilbert Gude convinced Congress to give permission for the NCAGC to have its headquarters at the Arboretum.

The NCAGC renewed its interest in Fern Valley in 1982 under Gene Miller’s presidency. Funding was provided to plant about 4,000 native plants and many bulbs. Another renovation took place from 2007-2009, during President Rilla Crane’s term and was continued by several subsequent presidents. Fern Valley’s 50th Anniversary was celebrated in 2010, and Fern Valley was expanded to include an open meadow and new paths and bridges. And NCAGC monetary and volunteer support continues for this horticultural gem.

The NCAGC members served as volunteers in the gift shop, served as guides, illustrated publications, and produced signage. Another early project was the establishment of the Volunteer Guide Service, begun by Presidents Luce, Powell, and Wolgemuth in the 1950s and ’60s. These guides were the public face of the Arboretum.

Arboretum visitors enjoy buying souvenirs or gifts for family…so when the house of the Grounds Superintendent at the R Street gate became available, the NCAGC moved to Arbor House, which was an ideal location for a gift shop. Arboretum Director Dr. John Creech, after obtaining a memorandum of understanding from the government, gave NCAGC permission to operate the gift shop there and to sell garden-related items and Brooklyn Botanic Garden books. The Arbor House gift shop has been an ongoing business since 1969-1971, and profits from the shop help support the Arboretum. A new manager has recently been hired, and we look forward to some exciting new merchandise on the shelves!

To better serve the public, an audiotape was created that visitors could rent to provide a guided tour as they drove through...
The NCAGC members served as volunteers in the gift shop, served as guides, illustrated publications, and produced signage.

the Arboretum in their cars. With funding provided during President Marion Caldwell’s term, Arboretum Director Dr. Marc Cathey recorded the tour. In 1988, a guide book “The U.S. National Arboretum: America’s Living Museum—A Guide to the Major Gardens and Collections” was written by Arboretum staff member Erik Neumann and published by the NCAGC. The committee that oversaw the project included Helen Reed, Virginia Guild, and Agnes Westbrook.

The “New American Garden” designed by the landscape architecture firm of Oehme, van Sweden & Associates was installed in the mid-1980s at the front of Arbor House, using pest- and disease-resistant plants chosen for low maintenance and year-round interest. National Garden Clubs undertook the project of creating gardens to surround the sides and back of Arbor House, naming their work “Friendship Garden.” Funds were raised by clubs across the country. The areas south and west of the building were planted, following the Oehme, van Sweden principles, and they included an innovative garden shed, two sculptures and eight benches, each representing a US garden club region. Dedication of Friendship Garden was held on April 24, 1991. More recently, two commemorative trees have been planted by National Garden Club presidents. The first, planted in 2002, is the “Freedom Tree,” a tricolor beech that “honors the victims and all who were directly affected by the tragic events of September 11, 2001”; the second is the “Patriotic Tree” planted in 2006, a Persian ironwood that “honors men and women who have served the USA in a patriotic way through their civilian and/or military life.”

Many more projects were undertaken by NCAGC presidents over the years, but we’ll touch on just a few:

- Many trees were destroyed in Fern Valley by a hurricane, and replacement of the trees and other plants was funded during Elizabeth Coffey’s term (1995-1997).
- A Teachers’ Curriculum Guide was completed for the National Herb Garden, sponsored by President Shirley Nicolai.
- 16,000 educational activity booklets were given to children visiting the Big Bugs exhibit (under the direction of President Ellen Spencer), and members sold Big Bugs t-shirts and caps to benefit the Arboretum.

President Betty Mosher (2001-2003) took a special interest in the Washington Youth Garden and began a fund-raising program at a time when funding the WYG was difficult. Local garden
IN MEMORIAM:
Helen P. Reed 1914–2015

When Helen Reed passed away in February of this year at the age of 100, the garden club community lost a dedicated, talented, and dear friend. Born in Roanoke, Virginia, she, with her family, moved to Washington, D.C., in 1924. She was a graduate of State Teachers College at Harrisonburg (now James Madison University), and she also took graduate courses at the University of Maryland. She married in 1940, taught school in Prince Georges County for three years, and then worked as a geographer for the CIA for the next ten years. She resigned when her son Bill was born in 1952 and then turned her love of gardening into a life-long career of service in gardening organizations and activities.

She organized and became president of the Cheverly Garden Club in 1954. She took the first Landscape Design Study courses in the D.C. area in the 1960s, and some time after that, she started the Landscape Design Council, served as its president for two separate terms, and became Chairman of the Landscape Design Study Course (a four-part series that she also taught). Additionally, she served on the board of the National Council for Landscape Design and on the board of the Council’s Central Atlantic Region branch. In 1993, she received the Award of Honor from the National Council for contributions to the Landscape Design Program.

When the National Capital Area Garden Club (NCAGC) members were developing Fern Valley at the Arboretum, she established the Wildflower Gardeners who raised $1,000 for the project. Betty Mosher brought the work of the WYG to the attention of many. The Friends of the National Arboretum are forever grateful for her help!

The current project is the construction of five rain gardens located in the R St. parking area and in the circle in front of the Administration Building. Each will have a different theme: Low Maintenance, Coastal Plain, Butterfly, Formal/Traditional, and Xeric. Initiated by President Vickie Godwin (2011-2013), the project has had continuing support from Past President David Healy and Current President Jo Sellers. National Capital Area Garden Clubs and the National Garden Club organization are honored and delighted to have been of service to the Arboretum over the last 60 years…and we look forward to the future! 🌿

AUDRIE WHITNEY has been a Volunteer Guide at the Arboretum since 1975. She is a member of National Capital Area Garden Clubs, currently serving as Fern Valley Chairman.

Clockwise from previous page, top left: Fern Valley information booth; NCAGC members on current Fern Valley bench; Fern Valley pond with dragonfly from Big Bugs exhibit; Arbor House Gift Shop; Friendship Garden; and Plaque on Fern Valley bench.
Clockwise from top left: Catalpa speciosa flowers in the Grove of State Trees, photo courtesy of Chris Upton; Catalpa speciosa foliage and seed pods, photo from Wikimedia; Osmanthus heterophyllus ‘Goshiki’ (false holly), photo courtesy of Far Reaches Farm, Port Townsend, WA; Chionanthus virginicus (fringe tree) at the Missouri Botanical Garden, photo courtesy of James Steakley; foliage and inflorescence of Cotinus coggygria (smokebush or smoketree), photo courtesy of Jillian Aldebron.
CONSIDER YOUR OPTIONS: Interesting Alternatives to Overused Plants

Autumn is one of the best times of the year to plant trees and shrubs. As their buds and shoots go dormant, and as rainfalls increase and temperatures drop, plants require less watering. Because the soil in winter is still warm enough to encourage root growth, trees and shrubs have a chance to become established before dormancy breaks in spring and the hot temperatures return in summer. However, before you run to your local nursery or garden center to buy another crape myrtle or arborvitae, consider these alternatives. They will add some variety to your neighborhood and will create a point of interest in your yard.

Christopher Goulart

Getting its name from the clouds of beautiful fleecy white flowers that hang from the branches in May, Chionanthus virginicus or fringe tree can be an alternative to the dogwood, saucer magnolia, or flowering cherry. Native to the eastern United States, the fringe tree can be grown as either a large shrub or small tree. The flowers are softly fragrant, and female trees (Chionanthus is dioecious, meaning that male and female flowers are on separate trees) will develop dark blue fruits that birds love and that last from August to September. The foliage is a handsome dark green in the summer and ranges from bright yellow to golden in the fall. It is winter hardy and can grow in zones 4 to 9.

A plant that is growing in popularity but is in my opinion surprisingly underused is Osmanthus heterophyllus (false holly). A small deer-resistant evergreen shrub, the Osmanthus can be an excellent replacement for holly or boxwood. The straight species and many cultivars produce hundreds of tiny sweet-smelling flowers in October and November that can be detected hundreds of feet downwind. The foliage is spiny in the plant’s youth and becomes softer as the plant matures making the plant easier to handle. ‘Goshiki’ (which translates to “five colors”) is a particularly attractive, albeit flowerless, cultivar with deep pink new growth that turns to yellow, and then fades to cream with age.

Cotinus coggyria (smokebush) is one of my favorite summer interest plants, and because it grows to a height of 10 to 15 feet, it can be considered a substitute for crape myrtle. The large 6- to 8-inch-long panicles are covered in hair-like structures that go through several color changes from June to early September. At their best, they are a beautiful smoky pink. Cultivars such as ‘Royal Purple’ have foliage with purple hairs that provide a fantastic effect with the inflorescence. Tolerant of extremely hot, dry, and inhospitable conditions, smokebush can work very well in a city setting.

Another tree that does well in a city setting is Catalpa speciosa (cigar tree). A larger tree (40 to 60 feet), it has a narrow open shape that produces filtered shade in the summer and will be a bold presence in your yard. The bell shaped orchid-like flowers, which are white with yellow and purple spotting, are particularly stunning. In the summer, the flowers give way to long green seedpods that will eventually turn brown and persist throughout the winter. The large heart shaped leaves are a very attractive shade of green and will turn to yellow in the fall.

Christopher Goulart is the Administrative Coordinator for the Friends of the National Arboretum. He is a horticulturist and a former nurseryman and former Arboretum intern.

INTERESTED IN LEARNING MORE ABOUT ADDING DIVERSITY TO YOUR GARDEN?
On October 10, the National Arboretum is holding a symposium on how seed saving and gardening with heirloom plants can help benefit plant diversity. For more information visit http://www.usna.usda.gov/Education/events.html.

CHRISTOPHER GOULART
WASHINGTON YOUTH GARDEN'S commitment to the DC community dates back almost 45 years. Beginning as part of the Washington Youth Garden Council's network of youth gardens, our demonstration garden at the US National Arboretum was tended by families and youth from the nearby neighborhood. In 1996, the primary garden caretaker became a WYG Garden Manager hired by FONA to facilitate garden maintenance opportunities for youth, thus ensuring that the space would provide training in horticultural and life skills for youth into the future.

These days, WYG's reach extends well beyond our demonstration garden at the Arboretum. We are expanding rapidly: our school garden program now has five active partners and two alumni schools—DC public and charter schools located in Wards 5 and 8.

WYG recently won the DC Green Festival’s Community Award Competition—a $5,000 grant awarded to one organization through popular vote. Chosen as one of five nominees, WYG faced some amazing locally based DC organizations. With less than two weeks to prepare for the festival, our staff, volunteers, and friends joined forces to spread the word about our nomination and organize a vote-inspiring table spread at the 2015 DC Green Festival.

How have we used this most welcome grant? The beneficiaries of our triumph—nine area high school students—are now in the middle of their program. Accepted into our Green Ambassadors Program, these young people work side-by-side with a committed team of volunteers in the garden, lead students through our SPROUT Field Trip program, participate in educational workshops on the themes of food, sustainability, and community, and meet professionals from other green organizations in the DC area. We are astonished by the many successes of our Ambassadors and look forward to supporting them throughout their future endeavors.

Along with their other field experiences, our Green Ambassadors have traveled several times to three of our school gardens. They have built raised beds, improved garden infrastructure by making paths, and leveling new ground, as well as supporting our Food Corps Service Members near the end of their service-year term. Including our Ambassadors in the creation of new WYG gardens has been an exciting development in our organization's approach and marks growth in our Garden Science Program. With a new partner school added each year, our partner schools are an expanding part of WYG.

NOAH LEE joined FONA as a Washington Youth Garden program staff member in early 2014. Native to Milwaukee, he finds himself surprised by his ability to simultaneously thrive and evaporate in DC’s summer heat. He’s excited to be in his second growing season with WYG.

INVEST IN OUR HELP OUR HARVEST CAMPAIGN!
With your help, we will serve 5,000 DC area residents through all our programs in 2015 and will donate more than 1,200 pounds of produce to area organizations that feed those in need. Washington Youth Garden celebrates its 45th anniversary in 2016. Your continued support will allow us to serve more youth and families as well as the broader community to improve the quality of life for all. Please donate today! washingtonyouthgarden.org
Fall Garden Tips

Nancy and Pierre Moitrier, Designs for Greener Gardens

- **FERTILIZE CONTAINERS WEEKLY** with a liquid feed of fish emulsion or liquid seaweed.
- **PRIMP CONTAINERS** removing any brown leaves and spent flowers to keep them looking great.
- **MAINTENANCE IS KEY** to keep your fall garden looking its best. Stay on top of weeding and removal of brown leaves. A weed in time, saves nine!
- This is the time of year when **WATERING FOR ONE HOUR BETWEEN 6 AND 8 A.M.** is worth 3 hours of watering the rest of the day because of evaporation. A rule of thumb for watering is 1 inch of water a week if not provided by rain. Purchase a rain gauge to get an accurate measurement and remember to empty the rain gauge regularly. It is better to water less frequently, but more deeply, than a light mist every day. It’s easier too!
- On a cooler day, when gentle rain is in the forecast, **FEED YOUR LAWN** by applying ½ inch of compost. Become the envy of the neighborhood by creating a dense green lawn, organically!
- **AERATE COMPACTED AREAS** of your lawn and overseed. Heavy fall dew and gentle rain will encourage seed establishment.
- **PLANT PANSIES EARLY** to establish strong root systems to survive variations in winter weather.
- **DIVIDE AND TRANSPLANT** iris, daylilies, and fall perennials after they finish flowering.
- **SOW A COVER CROP OF WINTER RYE IN VEGETABLE GARDENS** to add nutrients to the soil, prevent erosion, and prevent compaction of bare soil by winter rain and snow.
- **PLANT DECIDUOUS TREES AND SHRUBS** while the earth is still warm to promote root growth and while the plant is not burdened with production of flowers, foliage, or fruit.
- **BEGIN TO DEEPLY WATER ESTABLISHED AND NEWLY PLANTED SHRUBS** in preparation for winter. Drought in October is often overlooked but it is vitally important to supply plants with adequate water while they are going dormant. Good hydration will improve winter hardness.
- As temperatures drop, **CLEAR SUMMER BEDDING AND VEGETABLE PLANTS** by cutting tops and leaving roots to add organic matter to soil and to create tunnels from the rotting of the roots. The tunnels will enable water, air, and roots to easily navigate through the soil next season.
- **INSTALL PHYSICAL BARRIERS AROUND YOUNG TREES** to prevent deer from rutting on young tree trunks.
- **ENJOY A CLEANER HEALTHIER GARDEN THROUGHOUT THE WINTER**. After the first frost, apply your annual ½-inch layer of compost and 1½- to 2-inch layer of mulch.

**BOOK REVIEW**

**CHESAPEAKE GARDENING AND LANDSCAPING: THE ESSENTIAL GREEN GUIDE**

Curated plant lists, expert advice, enticing photographs—these useful pleasures are common in recent gardening books including this one.

The author says: “What if, one step at a time, we could make our gardens and landscapes greener or more earth-friendly? . . . create significant change that improves the overall health of our environment, the quality of our waterways and air, and the diversity of our native flora and fauna?”

This crisply practical book by Barbara Ellis is a guide and companion for the time-pressed gardener who would like to take those steps and who had perhaps never considered that individual personal effort over time could add up to important change. Ellis urges, “think about sustainable gardening as a process, not a destination.”

She emphasizes tweaking, not replacing, one’s garden. No need to plant only native plants or dedicate weekends to finely tuning compost heaps. A helpful chapter details Bay-Friendly Basics, offering six principles to start the process of creating a sustainable landscape: reduce lawn, build plant diversity, grow native plants, manage water runoff, welcome wildlife, and garden wisely.

These principles are expanded upon, and you are walked through possible ways to apply them to your own situation. The photographs are especially helpful. Plant lists and further reading suggestions are not exhaustive, but all are a good resource for the new or experienced gardener who is ready to start the sustainable process now.

MARY GENE MYER, MLA, is a FONA board member and coordinator for FONAbooks—Used and Collectable sold to benefit Arboretum programs.
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.

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

USING FRESH HERBS IN SUMMER COCKTAILS—A GARDENER WALKS INTO A BAR . . .
September 3, 6:00–8:00 p.m. (rain date, September 4, 6:00–8:00 p.m.).
Tour the National Herb Garden with Curator Chrissy Moore and enjoy samples of drinks created by Chantal Tseng of Mockingbird Hill and Tabard Inn fame. Light fare provided by Asian culture and cuisine expert Chef Thomas Park. Fee: $59 ($47 FONA members).
For more details visit www.usna.usda.gov.

A BYOB (BRING YOUR OWN BIKE) TOUR OF THE ARBORETUM
September 24, 5:00–7:00 pm.
FONA is teaming up with REI to offer three different bike tours of the Arboretum: easy, moderate, and challenging. Explore the Arboretum after hours with expert riders and Arboretum interpreters who will stop along the way at points of interest. The evening will end at Atlas Brew Works. Free. Space is limited; please register by emailing lrietkerk@fona.org.

NATIONAL CAPITAL ORCHID SOCIETY’S 68TH ANNUAL SHOW AND SALE
October 10, 11, and 12.
This year, the Orchid Show and Sale will be held at Behnke’s Nursery in Beltsville, MD. Visit www.ncos.us for more details.

EXHIBIT: AUTUMN BONSAI: THE COLORS OF NATURE
October 23–November 8, 10:00 a.m.–4:00 p.m.
 Appreciate the artistry and nature of each unique tree in this formal display featuring those with the most striking fall features, including foliage, fruits, and berries. Free. No registration required.

Strolling Supper for the Washington Youth Garden
Wednesday, Sept. 16th, 2015; 5:00 pm - 8:30pm
Purchase tickets at http://strollingsupper2015.bpt.me/
Location:
Pepco Edison Place Gallery
702 8th St. NW
Washington DC 20068
Annual Fundraising Event
Live Music
Fresh and Local Fare
Photo booth
Silent Auction

Strolling Supper
Annual Fundraising Event
Live Music
Fresh and Local Fare
Photo booth
Silent Auction