IN THIS ISSUE

4 Witch’s Broom  7 ‘Cherry Bomb’ Hollies  8 Fall Highlights  10 What’s New at the WYG  11 Successful Winter Containers
DEAR FRIENDS OF THE NATIONAL ARBORETUM:

As we move toward the close of 2015, we at FONA look back on a year of exciting renewal, experimentation, and growth. In April, the Arboretum returned to a full seven-days-a-week schedule, making it open for many more visitors and school groups and allowing us to become more active in the tourism business. Our new Summer Evenings at the Arboretum program has proved a success, and we will expand the schedule in the coming year by partnering with REI throughout 2016.

Under Dr. Richard Olsen’s leadership as the new Director of the National Arboretum, FONA and the Arboretum are developing a more integrated approach to operations, programs, and events. FONA has helped with environmental projects such as removing impervious surfaces and planning a comprehensive environmental education experience and program for Spring House Run. A new partnership with the Forbush School in Prince George’s County will establish a model program for autistic students to visit the grounds eighteen times a year, the first program of its kind in any public garden or arboretum.

We said farewell to eight FONA board members whose terms were completed and welcomed eight new board members whose talents will help broaden the board’s reach into business and economic development in the District. A strategic planning group of board members will help shape a three to five-year plan that incorporates the Washington Youth Garden.

We are overhauling our members’ annual giving and business support programs and introducing changes to our two major fundraising events—the Garden Fair in April and the Annual Dinner Under the Stars in June.

All of these initiatives are made possible by the generous support of individuals like you, whose annual giving accounts for more than one-third of the total $1.1 million FONA budget. When you receive our year-end appeal, please respond as generously as you can. And if you are not a FONA member or donor, please use the enclosed response envelope, visit our website at www.fona.org, or call FONA’s office (202.544.8733) to make a donation. Be an agent of change. Be a Friend of the National Arboretum with your gift.

Best wishes to you in this holiday season and for the New Year.

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

ON THE COVER Camellia ‘Winter’s Hope’. Visit the newly installed signs in the Asian Valley that tell the story of the Arboretum and Dr. William Ackerman’s work with camellia introductions. Photo courtesy of Lindsey Rietkerk.
LETTER FROM THE DIRECTOR

Your U.S. National Arboretum:
A not so hidden gem

IT IS HARD TO BELIEVE THAT AUTUMN has advanced to a late crescendo of golden hickories, maroon oaks, and sky-blue asters at the National Arboretum. As our esteemed friends, you know well the virtues the Arboretum embraces in its 446 acres of gardens, research collections, and natural areas. However, you aren’t the only friends who have discovered one of DC’s best “hidden gems.”

In the last year, several of our feathered friends have taken up residence in the Arboretum, the most conspicuous being a pair of bald eagles that have returned to their nest on the wooded slopes of Mt. Hamilton. In our meadows, we have observed the return of bobwhites, woodcocks, and wild turkeys, three species not seen here in nearly three decades. We even harbored a stray Bell’s vireo, a species that has never before been recorded in the District. In a recent bird blitz, local birders found more than 100 species in the District, 80 of them found right here in the Arboretum.

Let’s turn the National Arboretum from a hidden gem into the crown jewel that Washington, DC deserves.

Our extensive meadows and accompanying edge habitats along relatively undisturbed mixed woodlands create a varied ecosystem all but absent in the District. According to DC wildlife surveys conducted by our partner, the District’s Department of Energy and Environment, we have the highest level of biodiversity in the city, thanks in part to diverse populations of bats, salamanders, and invertebrates, especially our native pollinators.

Thus, the National Arboretum is a haven for humans, flora, and fauna alike. But we must have more friends than we realize——more to recruit to FONA——considering the continued exaltation in the press of the National Arboretum as one of the District’s best hidden gems. I need your help to turn these vocal supporters into active, engaged members of the Arboretum community. Let’s turn the National Arboretum from a hidden gem into the crown jewel that Washington, DC, deserves.

Richard T. Olsen, Director
The U.S. National Arboretum

FONA BOARD OF DIRECTORS:
FAREWELL AND HELLO

FONA is fortunate to be served by a dedicated Board of Directors, a group that meets quarterly to discuss and set the priorities of Friends of the National Arboretum in partnership with the Arboretum. Our Board commits their various passions and expertise to building the strength of FONA and contributes countless hours to the successful Washington Youth Garden, large environmental projects, the Flowering Tree Walk, Save the Azaleas, and our two largest annual events: the Garden Fair and Dinner under the Stars. This past fall, we said goodbye to eight amazing individuals who served the Board with dedication and distinction. Their tenure added up to 93 years of service. We thank them; they will be missed.

Tené Dolphin
Linda Dooley
Eleanor Kerr
Suzanne (Sukie) Kuser
Mary Eugenia Myer
Bob Schramm
Paul Sweet
Linda (Tuckie) Westfall

In September we welcomed eight new Board Members who bring wonderful talent and a desire to serve the Arboretum: Elizabeth Dugan, MD, dermatology
Chandler Goule, SVP, Programs, National Farmers Union
Jennifer Hatcher, SVP, Government Relations, Food Marketing Institute
Douglas Jemal, Founder and President, Douglas Development Corporation
Kevin McIntosh, PhD, immunology, retired
Louis Slade, First Vice President and Chair, Restoration Committee, Dumbarton Oaks Conservancy
Michael Stevens, President, Capitol Riverfront Business Improvement District
Ann Wrobleski, SVP, Government Relations, International Paper

—KATHY HORAN
The Gotelli Collection of Dwarf and Slow-Growing Conifers at the National Arboretum is a special place. Filled with fantastic specimens of unusual cultivars, it is enough to make any plant enthusiast salivate. While new cultivars of plants can be bred or selected in a variety of ways, many of the dwarf cultivars in this collection are the result of a genetic mutation known as a witch’s broom. Often found high in trees, these growths of densely packed shoots were once believed to be resting places for witches. Today we know there is a more scientific explanation.

Tsuga canadensis witch’s broom near entrance to Dogwood Collection. Photo courtesy of Christopher Goulart.
Tree limbs normally grow from an area at their tip known as the apical meristem. The apical meristem produces the hormone auxin, which inhibits lateral shoot growth. Because auxin can travel only so far, as the limb grows longer, lower lateral branches are eventually able to grow. This process keeps the limbs from growing too close together. In the case of a witch’s broom, however, the auxin pathway is blocked, and all limbs are able to grow at the same rate. This pathway blockage can be caused by a number of different organisms including fungi, viruses, phytoplasmas, insects, and mites, and can occur in many different plant species.

When seeds or cuttings are taken and grown from these areas, the result can be an entirely new cultivar which has the same growth habit as the witch’s broom. The grower can then name their new plant and, if they are lucky, sell it. This pursuit of treasure and new discovery has helped create an army of witch’s broom hunters worldwide who, armed with climbing gear, cherry pickers, saws, and the occasional shotgun (to shoot the broom out of the tree of course) are all trying to find the next new thing.

If you’d like to see witch’s brooms in nature, look no further than the National Arboretum, and if you are having a hard time spotting them, be sure to ask our expert gardeners, many of whom are witch’s broom enthusiasts themselves. While none of the more than 600 National Arboretum Introductions have resulted from witch’s brooms, that doesn’t mean they are not trying. Currently the Arboretum is trialing plants from a broom found in a Magnolia x soulangiana ‘Verbanica’ in the Holly Magnolia Collection and one found in a Catalpa that is located in the Boxwood Collection. What seems so exciting to these broom lovers (and if I admit it, to myself as well) is the idea that you do not need to be a scientist to discover a new plant. Rather you need a trained eye, the desire to find something new, and of course most importantly...you need to look up!

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.
IF YOU ARE A LOVER OF HOLLIES, there is a good chance that you have heard of the Cherry Bomb holly (Ilex ‘Cherry Bomb’). An easy-to-grow cultivar with spineless soft evergreen leaves, large red berries, and a compact round habit, it is a favorite among holly growers in the south. What you may not know is that although it has never been officially recognized, this plant was developed here at the U.S. National Arboretum. Dr. Margaret Pooler, Research Leader at the Arboretum, said that ‘Cherry Bomb’ was a hybrid developed by William Kosar at the USNA that was sent to cooperators for evaluation in the 1980s. “It did well in southern areas, particularly in Texas, and was given the nickname ‘Cherry Bomb’ by the growers. Without further input or recognition from the USNA, this selection has become a fairly common cultivar in the trade.” According to USNA Botanist Stefan Lura, the Arboretum has never adopted the name for the three accessions of the plant that they have growing in the Holly and Magnolia Collections.

While this all may be new to the average homeowner/gardener, according to Dr. Pooler, none of this comes as surprise to those who grow the plant. “The USNA never did an official release of the plant, but it is well accepted in the industry that the plant originated at the USNA.”

—CHRISTOPHER GOULART
Fall Highlights

This fall’s mild temperatures helped the Arboretum transition from a busy summer playground for Washington DC to a beautiful fall stomping ground full of color and activity. Several adventures are profiled below. Check out our other activities on the back of the newsletter to see what’s coming up at the Arboretum!

35th Anniversary of the Installation of the National Herb Garden

Marking the 35th anniversary of the National Herb Garden at the U.S. National Arboretum, the Herb Society of America hosted a two-day event September 11-12 that included workshops, tours, and demonstrations. Holly Shimizu, FONA Board Member and the original curator of the National Herb Garden, said the anniversary provided the chance for many of the people who were involved in the early days of the Herb Garden to come together and celebrate. Founded in 1980, the Herb Garden was created at a time when “herb popularity in America was not so great,” Shimizu said. As a result of the Herb Garden’s establishment, “many people, organizations, and businesses were inspired to do more with herbs—its influence was enormous.” Today, the Herb Garden remains a vibrant part of the Arboretum, offering visitors an unforgettable experience with its extensive collection in which every plant in the Garden, including all of the trees, is an herb. Photo courtesy of John Winder.

A BYOB (Bring Your Own Bike) Tour of the Arboretum Sponsored by REI

On September 24, REI instructors and FONA and Washington Youth Garden staff led an evening bike tour, providing participants a chance to get some exercise and to see the Arboretum after hours! Thirty-five riders explored the Arboretum for ninety minutes, with stops at the Capitol Columns Overlook, the Metasequoia Grove, and Asia Valley. After the ride, participants and instructors finished up with a social hour at Atlas Brew Works, a craft brewery across the street from the Arboretum. The bike tour was part of FONA’s Summer Evening events offered free to FONA members and open to the public. Photo courtesy of Nadia Mercer.
Strolling Supper

Washington Youth Garden’s 3rd Annual Strolling Supper took place September 16 at the Pepco Edison Gallery and was attended by more than 100 people in support of the WYG and its programs. Guests dined on mini garden chive biscuits, peach habanero jam, and fresh salsa from the garden. Green Ambassador representatives spoke about their experiences as interns in the garden, and a silent auction helped raise more than $2,500 to support WYG programming. Live music, tasting stations featuring WYG specialties, and a signature mojito cocktail with mint from the WYG capped off a wonderful evening of celebration. Join us in 2016 as we celebrate the Garden’s 45th year! Photo courtesy of Aistray Productions.

Rolling Down the River

FONA and the Anacostia Watershed Society teamed up on October 15 to offer a boat tour of the Anacostia River that launched from the Arboretum’s dock. The Arboretum’s dock offers access to the Anacostia River year round from 8:30 a.m. to 4:30 p.m. Participants on the boat tour included members of Garden Clubs of America-DC Region and members of the National Capitol Area Garden Clubs. They explored the riverfront and learned about the different projects taking place along the Anacostia, including the extensive trail and bike path currently under construction. The Anacostia Watershed Society hopes to make the river swimmable and fishable by 2025 and promotes educational tours of the river as a way to encourage accessibility and familiarity with the waterway. Photo courtesy of Lindsey Rietkerk.
REGARDLESS OF THE SEASON, the Washington Youth Garden continues to be an amazing resource in the Washington, DC, area. This summer, we hosted the most students ever for our SPROUT Program and watched nine young people grow, develop, and evolve as part of this year’s Green Ambassadors Program. Now, we have the opportunity to reflect on our past year’s accomplishments and ask ourselves what other positive moments we at WYG can expect for the remainder of 2015 and into 2016.

Like the communities we serve, we strive to evolve and continually look for new ways to bring WYG’s mission, vision, and values to life. This fall brought with it many changes: a different way of celebrating the Strolling Supper, our annual fundraiser, and brainstorming other events that we could incorporate into the year for outreach, family-friendly fun, and garden-oriented activities. We also ushered in a unique pilot program for special needs youth at Forbush School (part of the Sheppard Pratt Health System) in Prince George’s County and have a new school participating in our Garden Science program for the 2015-2016 school year. Finally, we celebrated this year’s garden harvest on October 31 with our 4th Annual Garlic Planting party; community members and supporters joined us in preparing the Garden for the next crop of garlic and other garden activities.

The leaves are changing in an explosion of color at the National Arboretum, and similarly, while the WYG will continue to be a strong symbol of community outreach and empowerment, environmental stewardship, and grassroots sustainability, we are looking for ways to expand our mission without losing the very essence of what makes this organization so unique and amazing.

MORRI SANDS joined FONA as Washington Youth Garden’s Development and Administration Coordinator in late July 2015. A lover of food and DIY projects, the Northern Virginia native continues to be inspired by her work to save the world one leafy green at a time.

MORRI SANDS joined FONA as Washington Youth Garden’s Development and Administration Coordinator in late July 2015. A lover of food and DIY projects, the Northern Virginia native continues to be inspired by her work to save the world one leafy green at a time.

ROBERT CHRISTIAN SPEAKER “Butterfly Bob”

If you have strolled through the Washington Youth Garden in the summer, you may have discovered the Butterfly Garden. This magical place exists because of the single-handed efforts of Robert Christian Speaker (1942-2015) aka “Butterfly Bob.” He devoted fifteen years of volunteer service to the WYG by cultivating a gloriously fun maze for children and adults in which to discover the joys of secret paths and, of course, butterflies. He was recognized by WETA as a “Hometown Hero” for his work on this garden.

I’ve discovered that the WYG was just one of Bob’s projects...he had an uncanny knack for persuading people to collaborate. For example, he initiated a project with his grandson, Christian, to restore a portion of the Ma & Pa trail in Harford County, MD to a native habitat with a focus on plants attractive to butterflies. This newly created habitat is now designated as an official partner of the Baltimore Checkerspot Recovery Team and thus, a potential site for the re-introduction of the endangered Baltimore checkerspot butterfly.

“Butterfly Bob” was a memorable person. I feel so lucky to have known him. His gift to the Washington Youth Garden will live on.

—KATHY HORAN

Left: Brady Wheeler, Food Corps Service Member, displays fall produce from the Friendship Woodridge Public Charter Elementary/Middle School; Right: SPROUT participants enjoy WYG’s Demonstration Garden. Photos courtesy of WYG.
FALL IS UPON US and the time has come to empty your contain-
ers and compost all that lush summer growth, but don’t think
that the fun is over until next spring. With proper technique and
plant selection, winter container combinations will continue to
delight all winter long. Follow these simple tips for successful
winter container gardening.

First, hardy winter combinations of plants can be created
with evergreens, evergreen perennials, and pansies. Forget about
summer’s focus on flowers. The winter design goal is to mix
and contrast foliage colors and textures. Flowering will be the
responsibility of the pansies or violas you select.

Second, cold and below-freezing temperatures can be detri-
mental to plant roots in aboveground containers. For hardiest
performance of winter container combinations, select plants that
are at least two hardiness zones colder than your zone.

Third, renew your soil. The light soil-less mixes used to grow
the tropical plants of summer are not an ideal substrate for win-
ter combinations of woody plants and perennials. For maximum
winter success, use a porous, bark-based mixture of three parts
bark or pine fines to one part soil and sand.

Fourth, use fertilizer. A light application of a slow-release fertil-
izer at planting time will maintain a steady supply of nutrients
as the temperatures rise and fall. Whenever temperatures allow
for active growth of pansies and violas, a weekly application of a
liquid fertilizer such as fish emulsion will help promote flowering.

Finally, what about winter watering? Cool temperatures of the
winter season will make watering less of a chore than in sum-
mer, but water is still a critical element for the success of your
container combinations. Never let your plants go into a stretch
of freezing temperatures without water. Water acts as an insulator
for roots. Do not water your containers with warm water once
they are frozen. Your best bet is to stay tuned to your plant’s
needs and water as necessary when the weather is mild. Make
sure that your container has excellent drainage.

PLANT SELECTION IDEAS
When selecting plants for winter container combinations, look
for your centerpiece first. The main plant of the combination
should be an attractive one. There are many selections, forms,
and sizes of boxwood that combine well with many of the
evergreen perennials. The diverse textures and sculptural forms of
dwarf conifers come in cheerful colors of blues, yellows, greens,
and sometimes even orange-y copper.

Next, search for companion plants, evergreen perennials to
complement your centerpiece. It is easy to make a stunning com-
bination by selecting one or a few species of Heuchera or Coral
Bell. There are dozens of cultivars with beautiful broad leaves of
peach, fuchsia, bronze, burgundy, chartreuse, silver, and more!
Finally, choose one or more grasses, large or small, evergreen or
winter-texture brown, unusual or common.

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.
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

FULL MOON HIKES
January 22, 7:00–9:00 p.m., January 23, 7:00–9:00 p.m., January 24, 7:00–9:00 p.m.
This four-mile long, mildly strenuous hike is a magical trip through moonlit gardens, meadows, and woods. Discover how the striking landscape of the Arboretum changes under the moon and stars of the night sky. Winter hikes often have the clearest skies and best views because of the cold, dry air and lack of leaf cover. Your guide will share points of special interest and seasonal highlights. The two-hour walk over hilly and uneven terrain is a brisk hike, not a garden tour. Ages 16 and up. No pets on the hike, please. Fee: $22 ($18 for FONA members). Registration required. To register, visit http://www.usna.usda.gov/Education/registration.html.

A ROCK GARDEN IN A TROUGH WORKSHOP
Saturday, February 13, 2016, 10:00 a.m. – noon
Meet in the Visitor’s Center
The Friends of the National Arboretum invite you to join our instructor Kevin McIntosh and members of the Rock Garden Society to create your own container rock garden. You will receive hands-on instruction. All materials will be provided. We suggest that you bring small decorative items like stones, pieces of wood, etc., to add the final touches to your creation. Pre-registration required. Fee: $65 (FONA members $52). Register at http://rockgarden.bpt.me

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

Stumped for gift ideas this holiday season?

FONA memberships are perfect stocking stuffers for garden lovers and travelers.

A FONA membership card gives you access to nearly 300 gardens throughout North America and the Cayman Islands as part of the American Horticultural Society Reciprocal Admissions Program. From free or reduced entry, to parking privileges, and even discounts on special events, a FONA membership card travels well beyond the gates of the Arboretum (and can pay for itself very quickly!). With the purchase of a FONA membership card, you or a lucky recipient will receive the American Horticulture Society’s Reciprocal Admissions Program Guide, a detailed booklet that gives you an inside look at all the gardens and arboreta that offer reciprocal admission privileges.

READY TO SHOP? Look for the membership insert in this issue of Arbor Friends, visit us online at fona.org/join-or-renew/, or call us at 202.544.8733 to speak to a membership representative.