



A publication of the Friends of the National Arboretum

ARBOR FRIENDS

WINTER 2023



Thank you to our friends and supporters!

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FROM THE BOARD CHAIR & EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

Dear Friends,

As we close out another great year at Friends of the National Arboretum, we are grateful to you for your friendship and continued support. Your investment has fueled FONA's growth, and we appreciate the trust you put in our team and in our partnership with the U.S. National Arboretum.

As FONA grows in strength, so does the Arboretum. With more than 660,000 visitors each year, the Arboretum's 451 acres of greenspace and gardens in northeast Washington are critical to the health and well-being of our community. As the Arboretum's primary private partner, FONA provides important opportunities year-round for people to form a connection with nature and science at the Arboretum.

Some highlights from 2022 include:

- **FONA's Events**—10,000+ people enjoyed FONA's public events such as the Garden Fair, Fall Festival and Bulb Sale, Forest Bathing, ARTboretum children's activities, Movie in the Meadow, and 5K runs.
- **Students and teachers**—7,000+ students and teachers from Title 1 schools got their hands dirty learning about food, nature, and science through our award-winning Washington Youth Garden education programs.
- **Food donations**—7,500+ pounds of fresh vegetables grown in our Washington Youth Garden were donated to local families, providing nourishing meals for many.

As a champion of FONA, your support helps FONA bring joy, health, and happiness to many, many people! Looking ahead to 2023, FONA and the Arboretum are working together on a plan to further enhance and strengthen the Arboretum. Our goal is to ensure that all visitors enjoy an excellent experience while strengthening our community and local economy.

The future is bright at FONA and at the Arboretum, and we are so glad that you are a part of it. We look forward to staying in touch, and we welcome your thoughts, comments, and insights!🌳

Warm wishes,



Michael Stevens
Michael Stevens
FONA Board Chair
mstevens@fona.org



Craven Rand
Craven Rand
FONA Executive Director
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ON THE COVER *Cedrus deodara* in the Gotelli Collection.

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LETTER FROM THE DIRECTOR

“Love your neighbor; yet don’t pull down your hedge.”



PARDON ME FOR TURNING ONE of Benjamin Franklin’s aphorisms into a literal statement. Hedges and fences are necessary components of many

landscapes, such as farmers’ fields, private urban gardens, and federal property.

The physical and mental health benefits of a walk in the woods are obvious. As little as twenty minutes in nature, away from our devices and worldly concerns, has been shown to significantly decrease levels of stress hormones. So ensuring access to a green space like the National Arboretum is essential for a community’s well-being. However, we need to ensure the safety of our public resources. After all, we are first and foremost a collections-based and a science-based public garden. So, we love our neighbors, but we maintain our fences.

This spring we will begin replacing

our ornamental perimeter fence. The original cast-iron fence and knee-wall along M Street, Bladensburg Road, and the R Street–Arboretum neighborhood is showing its age. Compromised by time, accidents, and vandals, the fence will be replaced with a similar, but more affordable and repairable black aluminum fence. The fence will be a minimum of eight feet high, with pickets on four-inch centers to minimize access by deer. The fence will be moved to our actual property line on New York Avenue, and the obsolete gate will be removed. The internal eight-foot buffer will be restored to shield the fence line from encroaching vegetation.

The design for our Bladensburg Road entrance will be finalized this year. The new entrance is a critical need for the Arboretum and our community to direct traffic away from the R Street gate and the Arboretum neighborhood. This will provide a closer entrance for the neighborhoods west of the Arboretum, like Trinidad. Unfortunately, we can’t begin until

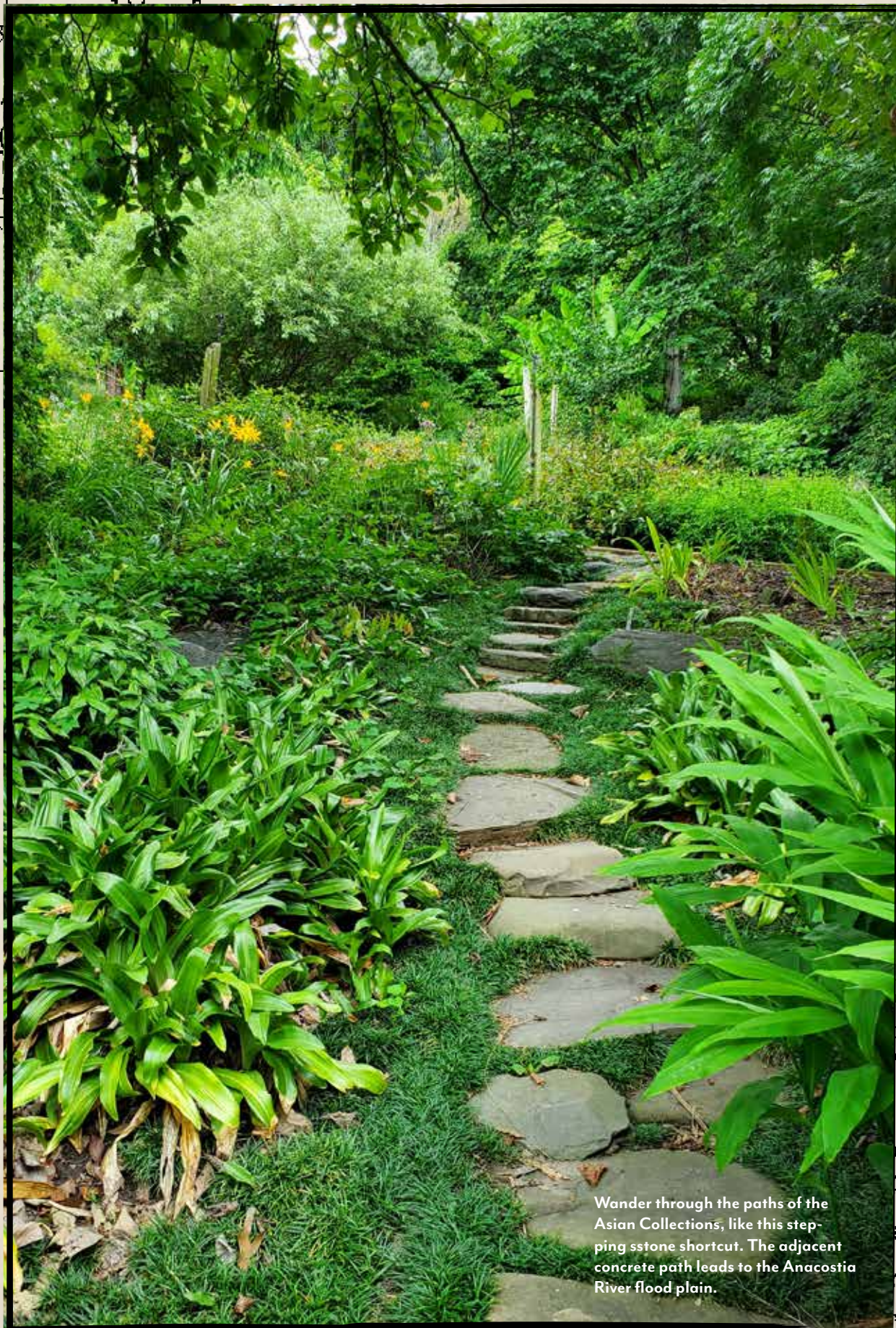
funding is secured for actual construction. Our funding is appropriated by Congress, and only Congress can authorize construction projects of this scope, so for now, this project is on hold.

We love our neighbors, but fences and gates are necessary. We would love to see the R Street gate’s pedestrian access restored and a completely new M Street gate to connect with our friends to the south. This will take significant funding to navigate through Section 106 review, environmental assessments, and review by the Commission of Fine Arts and the National Capital Planning Commission. And additional funding is necessary to operate, staff, and maintain it. We hope you love us too, and recognize that a public treasure like the National Arboretum needs connected and committed friends to champion our efforts.🌳

All the best,
Richard T. Olsen, Director
The United States National Arboretum



FILM WINS AWARD
One of the ways we celebrated the Washington Youth Garden’s 50th anniversary was with a short film. The filmmakers submitted it to The Anthem Awards and we are thrilled to share that it won an award in the “Diversity, Equity & Inclusion—Community Space” category!



Wander through the paths of the Asian Collections, like this stepping stone shortcut. The adjacent concrete path leads to the Anacostia River flood plain.



Karen Zill

The Asian Collections

Beyond the picturesque views of the Anacostia River, the stalwart flowers of camellias blooming in winter, and the endless variety of flowers, leaves, and bark textures, the Asian Collections are a genetic resource. Initially developed in collaboration with the Garden Club of America, they grew over the decades to encompass five gardens—Asian Valley, the Japanese Woodland, China Valley, the Camellia Collection, and the Korean Hillside.



The Garden Club of America (GCA) collaborated with the Arboretum to build the GCA Planting, dedicated in 1950 in commemoration of the 150th Anniversary of the founding of Washington, D.C. with a bronze plaque at the GCA Circle. The collection was initially planted with Cryptomeria, camellias, and ornamental plants from around the world that were rarely found in this region's gardens. As the collection evolved over the decades, it was refocused on Asian plants from the Arboretum's collecting expeditions and expanded, and the GCA Circle became the central hub that unified the various parts of the new Asian Collections.

Asian Valley has a stone-lined watercourse at the bottom of a natural ravine leading down to the Anacostia River and a seep near the top of the valley is planted with bog primroses (*Primula japonica*). Curved benches offer visitors a place to rest with a dramatic view, and the *Stewartia sinensis* planted in the middle of the circle provides interest in every season, with its white flowers with gold tufts of stamens in late spring, vibrant fall foliage, and coppery bark.

Mrs. Dorothy Kidder, a benefactor and steadfast champion of the Asian Collections, often visited to check on the garden's development. She left an estate gift to FONA that will help fund scholarly study of Asian plants. The garden space along the floor of Asian Valley is under redevelopment and will soon serve as a home for newly acquired Asian plants.



Top: Pause on one of the benches in the GCA Circle to admire the garden. Bottom: Botanical illustration of a *Stewartia sinensis*.



East of Asian Valley, the **Japanese Woodland** was developed as a shady place to display the forest flora of Japan, including maples, shrubs, ferns, and iris. Its winding mulched paths offer a cool respite in the heat of summer and delightful woodland flowers in spring, including masses of *Blechnum* orchids. In autumn, chrysanthemums and toad lilies provide splashes of color. In any season, the textural and colorful bark of quince, *Stewartia*, and *Parrotia* trees are worth checking out.



Fall-blooming camellias, a gift of 100 plants from the GCA, were planted in Asian Valley in 1949. In the 1950s, additional donations from the GCA and from Tom Dodd Nurseries, a large commercial wholesaler, completed the **Camellia Collection**. Its early spring-flowering *Camellia japonica* and fall-blooming *C. sasanqua* cultivars bloomed exuberantly until bitter winters in the late 1970s killed most of them back to understock. A few did survive, most notably a large tea-oil camellia, *C. oleifera*, which was obtained from the Lushan Botanical Garden in central China in 1949. Dr. William Ackerman used this and other surviving camellias to breed new camellias with enhanced winter hardiness. His Winter series of camellias—including ‘Snow Flurry’, ‘Winter’s Beauty’, ‘Winter’s Charm’, and others—were planted between the Japanese Woodland and the Dogwood Collection to resurrect the Camellia Collection, with its cold-defying winter blossoms. These camellias have greatly extended the range in which camellias can be planted. Equally hardy is the Arboretum’s newest camellia introduction, the lovely pink spring-blooming *C. japonica* ‘Anacostia’ bred by former Gardens Unit Leader Skip March.

Top left: Toad-lily flowers under shade of canopy trees in the Japanese Woodland. **Top right:** Camellias were bred for winter hardiness. **Bottom left:** with fluttering white leaves, the *Davidia involucreta* is also called doves tree or handkerchief tree. **Bottom right:** The pagoda-style gazebo is a shaded, quiet spot to enjoy the views.

The **Korean Hillside** contains a sampling of the flora of Korea collected from wild populations, including the Korean sweetheart tree, *Euscaphis japonica*. One such tree along the road was collected from the wild on an 1984 Arboretum expedition to Korea. Its white spring flowers give way to heart-shaped pods that turn red and open in late summer revealing shiny black seeds. A striking feature of the garden is an art installation of a collection of *sotdae*, tall bamboo poles with a carved bird at the top of each one. According to Korean folk beliefs, a *sotdae* wards off evil spirits and represents wishes for prosperity and well-being.



Black seeds split through the fruit on a Korean sweetheart tree, *Euscaphis japonica*.

China Valley is the Asian Collections’ most important genetic resource. In 1980 Dr. Theodore Dudley, research scientist at the Arboretum, joined four other distinguished American scientists on the Sino-American Botanical Expedition, the first plant collecting expedition to China since 1948. They brought back live plants, pressed plant specimens and seeds. Some years later, the ravine to the west of Asian Valley was partially filled in and planting began. A group of public gardens formed the North American China Plant Exploration Consortium (NACPEC), and they organized trips to different locations in China every two years. Decades later, trees and shrubs that arose from these collections are now maturing. Because they come from wild sources, they represent a genetic resource with great potential—they may have genes for disease resistance, tolerance to heat and drought, or some ornamental attribute that is special. Their importance is magnified by the fact that wild lands in China face enormous pressure from agriculture, logging, and urbanization. The wild population of plants from which China Valley’s plants were grown may no longer be intact today.

The China Valley path winds down the hillside and ends at a gate that brings visitors to and from the floating boat dock on the Anacostia River. On the ridge between China Valley and Asian Valley is the pagoda-style gazebo, from which visitors can see much of the Asian Collections.

KAREN ZILL is a DC-based freelance writer. Her work includes discussion guides for film and public television programs, memoirs, essays, and nature writing.

MAINTAINING THE COLLECTIONS

Managing such a large and diverse area is a challenge and takes hard work, currently performed by John Shearin, who is the garden technician for the Asian Collections, and a FONA-funded intern during the summer. Kevin Conrad, Acting Supervisory Horticulturist in the Gardens Unit, provides support and technical guidance and sometimes more. As he admits, “I’ve been seen from time to time with pruners in the Collection” giving hands-on support. His permanent position is Curator of the USNA Woody Landscape Plant Germplasm Repository.

Conrad reports that the Asian Collections are at the start of a period of renewal. The first step is a thorough review and inventory of plants. All of the 2022 interns, many of whom were funded by donor support to FONA, split into several teams, and with Conrad’s help and the help of Plant Records Botanist Stefan Lura, they checked the beds to confirm which plants were still alive and well. The next step is a review of inventory to determine whether there are plants whose identity may be in doubt or for which there is no source data. Over time, these plants must be removed to make way for new plants that have reliable source data and a strongly verified identity. “These steps ensure the integrity of the collection. If we don’t tend to this on a regular basis, the scientific value diminishes.”

2022 YEAR IN REVIEW

In 2022, FONA's public events and programs connected thousands of people to nature, science, health, and wellness at the National Arboretum. Our youth education programs connected thousands more children to food, science, and public greenspace both at the Arboretum and in partner schools across Washington, DC. Here are some of the highlights of the year, but we have more detail in our Annual Report on the website



10,000+ PEOPLE ATTENDED COMMUNITY EVENTS. With a variety of events, from a strolling choral performance, to an outdoor movie, to music by the Navy Band, to the annual Garden Fair, FONA drew different audiences and facilitated memorable experiences at the U.S. National Arboretum.



\$104K+ IN REVENUE TO LOCAL VENDORS. FONA's seasonal festivals and plant sales not only brought thousands of people to the Arboretum, but also generated economic development in our region for local nurseries, artists, food trucks, breweries, and other vendors.



7,580 POUNDS OF PRODUCE WERE HARVESTED from the Washington Youth Garden and donated to families.



1,062 RUNNERS AND FOREST BATHERS connected with nature during seasonal 5K runs and meditative gatherings.



26 WEDDINGS resulted in revenue for local small, minority-owned, and women-owned businesses (caterers, florists, and more).



305 GUESTS ATTENDED the Dinner Under the Stars fundraiser in the meadow.



48 FONA FIELD NOTES e-newsletters were sent to **12,000+ PEOPLE WEEKLY.**



8 NATIONAL ARBORETUM INTERNS WERE FUNDED in horticulture and research positions.



1 SHORT FILM was created about the Washington Youth Garden's history, present, and future.



WASHINGTON YOUTH GARDEN CELEBRATED ITS 50TH YEAR, with a family-friendly birthday event and a formal benefit event. Participants, staff, donors, and volunteers came together to share stories and celebrate how WYG has grown and evolved since its founding.



634 STUDENTS VISITED the Washington Youth Garden on field trips.



545 GROW AT HOME KITS WERE SHARED with teachers for hands-on lessons in classrooms.



2022 YEAR IN REVIEW



355 VOLUNTEERS WORKED 1,625 HOURS in the Washington Youth Garden, providing critical support throughout the year. **30 INDIVIDUALS** came regularly week after week to help with maintenance, harvesting, and weeding. **22 VOLUNTEER GROUPS** came to help with large infrastructure projects like making new crop beds and mulching paths.



21 HIGH SCHOOL GREEN AMBASSADORS honed their gardening, leadership, and communication skills over the weeks of their internship



32 EDUCATORS from 13 schools attended professional development at the 5th Annual Summer Institute for Garden-based Teaching



7,642 DC TITLE 1 SCHOOL STUDENTS engaged in hands-on garden education programs—field trips, co-teaching in classes, lessons in school gardens, taste tests, and more.



12 TITLE 1 SCHOOLS had teams of educators and administrators in the Educator Coaching Program (ECP), a year-long professional development program. The schools are in Wards 4, 5, 7, and 8.



Garden Tips

Get Ready to Divide

Nancy and Pierre Moitrier

In the most beautiful perennial gardens, plant populations are managed with regular division. When plants have floppy stems, reduced flowering, a void in the center of the mass, or are spreading out of bounds, it is time to divide.

PLANT POPULATIONS naturally gravitate to the spaces most suitable for them, so it is up to the gardener to guide the aesthetics of nature's processes with insightful reduction or propagation.

Procrastinators do not make good gardeners, so be proactive this growing season. Study your garden plants and plant populations in anticipation of appropriate action this spring or fall.

Division is a propagation technique of separating a plant—crown and roots—into two or more pieces. Division will produce clones of bulbs, herbaceous plants, and some deciduous flowering shrubs. Division will improve plant vigor.

Generally, spring-blooming plants are divided in fall, and fall-blooming plants are divided in spring. Dividing is OK in either spring or fall, but we have reasons to prefer fall division.

- It provides sufficient time when soil is still warm and new roots can form before the onset of winter.
- The rainy fall season encourages new divisions to settle into place.
- It provides an opportunity to see patterns and deficiencies within the garden where planting or relocating divisions will be aesthetically beneficial.

It is easier to visualize the size of your division while the foliage is still attached, which simplifies spacing and designing.

EXCEPTIONS

- Warm season grasses should be divided in the spring after a bit of growth has emerged.
- German bearded iris should be divided in mid to late summer so new roots can develop before fall.
- Bulbs should be divided when foliage begins to yellow.

HOW TO DIVIDE PLANTS

1. Be sure plants are well hydrated. Dig up the plant clump and use a hatchet or sharp spade to make a quick and determined chop through the root mass. Each division should have 3 to 5 healthy buds and sufficient roots. Plants with a tap root cannot be divided easily.
2. Consider the design: do you need a larger or smaller mass to improve balance? Think of foliage first because flowers are fleeting.
3. Plant by massaging soil into and around the roots, and tuck the new division in tightly.
4. Water well as soon as possible. 🌱



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.

2022 DONORS

Thank you!



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The David Fairchild Society, FONA’s highest level of membership, is a group of exceptionally dedicated individuals who support FONA and the U.S. National Arboretum with a minimum gift of \$1,200 annually.

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

GET UPDATES BY EMAIL AND ONLINE

Sign up for the FONA Field Notes email newsletters at FONA.org to get regular updates from the Washington Youth Garden, behind-the-scenes stories, pictures of the Arboretum, and the latest updates regarding events and activities.



FOREST BATHING

Meditative forest bathing sessions are offered several times a month. Register online.

NATIVE PLANT SALE

Saturday, March 25

8:15am–2pm

FONA's annual Native Plant Sale will be held in conjunction with the Arboretum's Lahr Native Plant Symposium.

GARDEN FAIR

Saturday, April 29

Save the date! Join us for the annual Garden Fair & Plant Sale. FONA members have early access.

SUMMER 5K

Saturday, June 3

Whether you're running for speed or walking the course, join our 5K race and enjoy the National Arboretum in its summer splendor. Early-bird registration and pricing available.