



Arboretum Newsletter

Happy New Year to all our "Arb'rs" ... think Spring!

Thought it might ease the winter doldrums to recall our 2011 season. So, put down your Burpee Seed and Brecks Bulb Catalogs, and reminisce with me.

January, while most of us were concerned with keeping our sidewalks and driveways clear of snow, the Arboretum Committee, (AKA ArbCom), was revisiting the idea of a Children's Garden. Our newly minted Reading Public Museum Director and CEO, John Graydon Smith, feels "it is important to have children's experiences in the Arboretum as a part of the larger picture".

February, was pretty well consumed with finalizing plans for the Birch Islands, and the reconstruction plans for the Greenhouse.

March, is "Manic Month". Always exciting, it brings old and new faces together for our annual Arb Assistants Training sessions. Beth Finlay, Berks County Master Gardener Coordinator, did her usual stellar job arranging the sessions, while our "Primo" gastronome, Betty Sustello, insured that no-one left the building hungry.

As if that wasn't enough, Karin Wulkowicz, ArbCom Chair, constrained by a tight budget, busied herself finding suppliers for the Birch Island Project plant material.

April, and the entire planning and fretting roll into a frenzy of activity. The Easter parade officially awakens the Arboretum from its long winter nap, and the clank of trowels planting pansies in the oval heralds the glorious arrival of spring.

ArbCom member & Master Gardener Jim Smoker continues his Tree I.D. Program to identify and catalog every tree in the Arboretum. Jim has already found several "champion" trees that reside on our grounds. They will be listed in the next edition of "Big Trees of Pennsylvania" publication. Copies of this book are available in the Museum Gift Shop.

May, is a continuation of planting, edging, and mulch fluffing. In Trudy's Garden, an irrigation system is being installed. Work has begun on the Greenhouse, and is expected to be complete by mid-June.

June, finds the Birch Island planting completed. And, just in case you forgot, the weather has been terrible and the Sunflower Tunnel planting had to be abandoned because of the rainy weather delays and cancellations.

The Greenhouse Project has experienced several delays, but completion is expected by late July or early August.

July, is hot, and the weeds are doing fine. Wednesday starting time is moved ahead to 8:00am to beat-the-heat, and the number of teams reduced from four to three.

HVAC units are being installed in the Greenhouse and completion is near. We will soon be moving the Arb Office from the garage to the newly renovated Greenhouse.

August, is still hot, and the weeds are still a challenge. The Birch Islands are consuming much of our Wednesday time as we continue to weed, mulch, and stabilize.

September, and the Arb Office is now officially located in the Greenhouse. And, it's hot-as-blazes. Work will soon start to insulate the ceiling.

On the grounds, Weed & Mulch is still the order-of-the-day. We start to divide some of the Hostas and pot-up ferns to be relocated to the Rock Garden area.

October, is a busy month as we prepare to "put the Arb to bed" for the winter. Geraniums up and potted for winter in the Greenhouse. Hostas and ferns have found their new home, and Cannas have made their annual pilgrimage to the storage room in the Greenhouse basement for their winter hibernation.

And, let us not forget the Halloween surprise snowstorm ... caught us all off-guard.

November, could not be complete without our annual Arb's Luncheon ... another gastronomic episode courtesy of Betty Sustello. Sadly, time to say goodbye.

But, wait ... ArbCom member Ken Heiser couldn't let go, and maestro'd a monumental leaf-rake'n Community Fall Cleanup of the Arboretum grounds.

In recognition of all ... we raise our New Year's toast glasses to the pantheon of 80 Master Gardeners and Community Volunteers that dedicate their time to the betterment of the Reading Public Museum Arboretum.

Wonder what's coming for 2012 ... stay tuned for some exciting news.