Harvard University Herbaria Open House

Robert E. Cook, Director

It seemed like an interesting idea for a birthday party, but would anyone come?

Last fall, as we planned activities to celebrate our 125th anniversary in 1997, a staff member suggested that we might have an open house at the Harvard University Herbaria. The Herbaria are the repository of five million plant specimens from around the world that, with its library holdings, constitute the most important resource for Asian botanical research in North America. The Arboretum collections are integrated with those of four other former botanical institutions: the Gray Herbarium, the Oakes Ames Orchid Collection, the Botanical Museum, and the Farlow Herbarium of Cryptogamic Botany. We thought possibly a few people might be interested in what goes on behind the scenes, so we set the date for the evening of May 8, 1997.

The exotic menu of exhibits would include a wide range of posters and presentations such as Molecular Systematics—DNA: How You Get It, How You See It, What It Means; The Baobabs of Madagascar; Clusiaceae and HIV—The Medical Connection; An Interactive Rainforest Key; Botanical Illustrations—Linking Past and Present; The Flora of China and the World Wide Web; Biodiversity Mapping Tools;

Long-time volunteer Bob Reed, right, and friends look on as Jinshuang Ma discusses the distribution and conservation of the flora of his native China.
Mangroves, Figs, and Chocolate. Professor Mike Donoghue, the director of the Harvard University Herbaria, and I would host the evening.

At five in the afternoon the doors opened and more than four hundred friends of botanical studies at Harvard, many of them members of the Arboretum, enjoyed the displays and talks over the next four hours. The staff were astounded at the large numbers and the level of interest shown by all in the more arcane recesses of botanical research. The visitors were enthralled, and many left with the recommendation that we hold an open house every year.

Scientists often underestimate the appetite of the general public for genuine scientific information, especially when it is presented by the researchers themselves, who cannot help but communicate their excitement with the process of discovery. Our 125th Anniversary Open House brought the truth of this home to me again; and we shall indeed find an occasion before long to bring our friends together around the botanical research that is the mission of the Arboretum.

A good friend of the Arboretum, Mrs. F. Stanton Deland, Jr., and Lisa Hastings, Arboretum Director of Development, view botanical prints in the reading room of the Farlow Herbarium.

Best Wishes for a Loyal Friend

Patrick Willoughby, Superintendent of Grounds for the past thirteen years, has left the Arboretum to become Assistant Director of Physical Plant at Wellesley College. With a staff of twenty-one, Patrick will be in charge of maintaining Wellesley’s 300-acre campus, including natural areas, athletic fields, and a nine-hole golf course.

Patrick came to the Arboretum in 1980 as Assistant Superintendent of Grounds. Soon after, he received a Garden Club of America scholarship for study in Great Britain. As Superintendent of Grounds since 1984, he has nurtured the Living Collections through droughts, ice storms, and blizzards, errant visitors and rampant dogs. Patrick’s last month here was spent putting the Arboretum back in order after the Blizzard of ‘97. He’s been a valuable colleague and a good friend; we will sorely miss his wit and good humor.

First Call for the Annual Fall Plant Sale

Mark your calendar for the Arboretum’s Annual Fall Plant Sale, scheduled for Sunday, September 21, 9 a.m., at the Case Estates in Weston. A well-established Arboretum tradition, the fall sale is our largest membership event. Last year, over eight hundred members attended the sale with its live and silent auctions and Plant Society Row. Unusual plants this year will include a new introduction, Syringa x chinensis ‘Lilac Sunday’ (see Jack Alexander’s article), the golden larch (Pseudolarix amabilis), and Cornus kousa ‘Milky Way’.

Arboretum members will be mailed plant sale catalogs in August and vouchers for free plants in early September; members also benefit from special members-only hours and dis-
counts on all purchases made in
the barn on the day of the sale.
Members at the sustaining level
($100) receive an invitation to the
plant sale preview beginning at
8:30 a.m. This year we will be
adding a new feature: thirty-
minute education sessions on
planting, pruning, and overwin-
tering plants. Mark your calendar
for this horticultural happening
and plan to join us!

Storm Recovery Appeal
Lisa Hastings, Director of Development

Response to the special appeal fol-
lowing the dramatic April storm
has been tremendously positive.
We received swift and very strong
support from many loyal members
and donors and also an over-
whelming number of donations
from new supporters. This gener-
os and broad-based support is
most appreciated, especially by
the Living Collections staff.

To date, members and
friends have made gifts totaling
$122,102. All gifts are directed to
the Storm Restoration Fund,
which was established to help
defray immediate costs associated
with the cleanup as well as to sup-
port the long, deliberate process of
rebuilding the Living Collections.

Our spring visitors have also
shown great support for our
cleanup efforts. In the two months
following the storm, nearly $6,000
was collected from the donation
containers located on the grounds.
Beautiful weather and extensive
media coverage brought record
numbers to Lilac Sunday. Special
tables set up to offer information
about the storm’s effects on the
Living Collections increased dona-
tions on the grounds, bringing the
total to $8,400. We were heart-
ened not just by the donations but
also by notes applauding the
Arboretum’s speedy cleanup.

The work associated with
replacing trees that were lost will
continue long after media and
public attention subsides. From
this great natural disturbance,
however, came a show of support
that will motivate and inspire
Arboretum staff for months
to come.

Dogwood Collection
Named for Mrs. Fessenden

Mrs. David L. Ferguson and Mrs.
Karl Riemer, both longtime
members of the Friends of the
Arnold Arboretum, recently made
a very generous gift to endow and
name the Cornus collection in
memory of their mother, Eliza-
thabeth Taylor Fessenden. Mrs.
Fessenden, who died last year at
age 89, graduated from the
Winsor School and served as
trustee of the Women’s Educa-
tional and Industrial Union, presi-
dent of the Chilton Club, and
member of the Ladies Visiting
Committee at Massachusetts
General Hospital. Mrs. Ferguson
commented, “Mother had great
appreciation for the gardens of
Boston; we felt that endowing a
collection at the Arboretum was a
wonderful way to honor her
memory.”

The dogwood collection—
284 plants strong—is one of the
Arboretum’s most attractive
spring features. Unlike most of
the plant collections, the dog-
weds have been sited throughout
the grounds. One of the earliest
harbingers of spring is Cornus mas,
the cornelian cherry, which pro-
duces clusters of small, delicate
yellow flowers along its leafless
branches even before the forsythias

Record numbers of visitors on Lilac Sunday were overwhelmingly
generous.
have begun to bloom. Our oldest and most beautiful specimen stands next to Rehder Pond, across Bussey Hill Road from the forsythia collection; it came to us from France in 1883. Then, when spring in the landscape is no more than a subtle green haze of emerging leaves, the snowy white and salmon pink bracts of our native Cornus florida arrive to enliven it. And just as they are beginning to fade, the pointed white bracts of the Japanese dogwoods begin to open. We are pleased that this special collection will be supported by a generous endowment.

For information about endowment opportunities, contact Lisa M. Hastings, Director of Development, at 617/524-1718 x 145.

### Meeting the Arboretum's Public

Many friends of the Arboretum have already come to know Joseph Melanson, who came to us from Harvard's Natural History Museum. As part of the Arboretum's public programs department, he provides guidance to visitors at the information desk in our new exhibit space. Joe answers inquiries ranging from basic facts about Arboretum history to the location of both collections and specific plants. He also works closely with the membership and adult education departments to ensure that visitors are aware of all that the Arboretum has to offer.

### Programs & Events

The Arboretum’s Education Department offers a wide variety of courses, programs, and lectures in horticulture, botany, and landscape design. A selection of summer courses is shown here. For a complete catalog of programs and events at the Arboretum, please call 617/524-1718 x 162. Note that fees shown in boldface are for Arboretum members. For information about becoming a member, call 617/524-1718 x 165.

**HOR 338 Basic Care for Trees and Shrubs**  
Joseph J. Camilliere III, Consulting Arborist  
Trees and shrubs are key structural elements in the landscape. In three sessions, learn the basic techniques used to care for and enhance woody ornamental trees and shrubs—from identifying stresses to pruning and feeding.  
Fee: $45, $54  
3 Wednesdays, July 9, 16, 23/ 6:30–8:30 pm (CE)

**HOR 182 The Art of Hybridizing Perennials**  
Darrell Probst, Horticultural Consultant and Landscape Designer  
Many of the perennials grown in American gardens are hybrids, created by intentional pollination or selected from observation of suitable species. Using the Case Estates perennial garden, Darrell Probst will demonstrate the basics of perennial plant hybridizing. He will identify flower parts, show what to look for to determine when to pollinate, and speak about helpful tools and record keeping.  
Fee: $20, $24  
Thursday, July 24/ 6:30–8:30 pm (CE)

**HOR 292 Summer Flowering Trees and Shrubs**  
Chris Strand, Outreach Horticulturist, Arnold Arboretum  
After the great burst of bloom in spring, what trees and shrubs delight the viewer’s eye? Such handsome lesser-known horticultural stars as Aesculus parviflora, the bottlebrush buckeye; Albizia julibrissin, the silk tree; Hydrangea quercifolia, the oakleaf hydrangea; Koelreuteria paniculata, the golden rain tree; Oxydendrum arboreum, the sourwood; Clerodendrum trichotomum, the harlequin glory bower—all these are summer standouts. On this walk you will see the trees and shrubs themselves and learn about their natural history, habitat, and landscape uses.  
Fee: $12, $15  
Wednesday, July 30/ 6:30–8:00 pm (DG)