A New Director for a New Arboretum

Robert E. Cook, Director

In January, Dr. Stephen Spongberg, who for twenty-seven years has been the horticultural taxonomist at the Arboretum, announced his retirement at the ripe young age of fifty-five. Steve is not planning to collect sand between his toes on the beaches of St. Barbados. His early retirement was prompted by an offer few could refuse: he has been appointed director of a new botanical organization on Martha’s Vineyard, the Polly Hill Arboretum. Here he will have the opportunity to create a horticultural and educational institution built on the extensive private collections of the legendary and deeply revered horticulturist Polly Hill, who for decades has been establishing a unique landscape of plants around her home in West Tisbury. Visited by thousands of friends and lovers of plants since she began collecting in the 1950s, Barnards Inn Farm became the Polly Hill Arboretum in 1997, with plans to formally open to the public in 1998.

Steve will be greatly missed at the Arboretum, though he will retain a research appointment here and we anticipate calling upon his botanical expertise often. Steve began his career at the Arboretum in 1970 when he worked on the Generic Flora of the Southeastern United States project as a postdoctoral graduate of the University of North Carolina. Over the next two decades he edited and published numerous taxonomic review articles in the Journal of the Arnold Arboretum, now published as part of the Harvard Papers in Botany. He became especially interested in the close evolutionary relationship between the flora of eastern Asia and that of eastern North America, and he developed deep taxonomic expertise in the genera Magnolia and Sorbus. These interests culminated in three great achievements.

In 1980 Steve participated in the first cooperative venture between Chinese and American scientists, the Sino-American Botanical Expedition to western Hubei Province. Among its many collections, this excursion brought back Magnolia zelnii, Heptacodium miconoides, and Sorbus yuana as new introductions to North America. In 1990 Steve published A Reunion of Trees, a rich and detailed history of the search for new botanical species around the world and the critical role of the Arnold Arboretum in discovering the botanical treasures of Asia. Seven years later he was honored by the Royal Horticultural Society with the award of the Gold Veitch Memorial Medal for contributions to horticulture. With this honor he joined previous staff members Ernest Henry Wilson, William Judd, and Donald Wyman, four of only fifteen Americans who have received the distinguished British award.

Steve will be greatly missed at the Arboretum and by his many colleagues and friends at the Harvard University Herbaria. We all wish him the greatest success in this challenging and exciting new endeavor.
Campaign Tops $5 Million

Lisa Hastings, Director of Development

The Campaign for the Arnold Arboretum passed the five-million-dollar mark as of January 31, 1998, a significant milestone in this first major fundraising effort at the Arnold Arboretum since 1927. Total cash and commitments reached $5,140,000 toward the campaign goal of $8 2 million, which was publicly announced last June. The campaign will end when the university-wide campaign concludes on December 31, 1999.

The five-million-dollar figure reflects several large gifts received during the last eighteen months and significant, steady growth in both the membership and annual appeal programs. In the category of gifts over $10,000, the Arboretum has received $1,468,334 from twenty-one donors since July 1, 1997. This compares with $285,000 received from ten donors in FY97 and $330,000 received from seven in FY96. The number of gifts ranging from $1,000 to $10,000 has also increased significantly. In this category, the Arboretum received 49 gifts totaling $120,000 in FY97, an increase of 80 percent over 27 gifts with a total of $67,000 in FY96. To date this year, we have received 36 gifts for a total of $96,861.

Flora of the Lesser Antilles

Copies of the six-volume Flora of the Lesser Antilles, a long-term project of Richard A. Howard, former director of the Arnold Arboretum, are still available in limited quantities.

These six volumes constitute the first comprehensive flora of the area, and the treatments present keys to the genera as well as the species for easy identification. For each genus and species a complete modern description is provided; it includes coloration as well as measurements of floral parts. The descriptions are followed by geographic distribution both within and without the Lesser Antilles. All volumes are abundantly illustrated with line drawings that are botanically correct and highly artistic. All species known in the Lesser Antilles, both native and introduced, are included.

The six volumes are available either individually or as a complete set. For the complete set a special price of $260 is offered that includes shipping and handling within the U.S.A. (Add $5 for shipping outside the U.S.A.) For volumes 4, 5, and 6 only, the special price is $205.

Individual volumes may be purchased at the prices given below, plus $2 per volume for shipping and handling:

- Volume 1: Orchidaceae .................. $20
- Volume 2: Pteridophyta ................. $25
- Volume 3: Monocotyledoneae .......... $35
- Volume 4: Dicotyledoneae 1 ......... $75
- Volume 5: Dicotyledoneae 2 .......... $85
- Volume 6: Dicotyledoneae 3 ........... $85

Checks should be made payable to the Arnold Arboretum, and all orders should be addressed to the attention of Frances Maguire, Arnold Arboretum, 125 Arborway, Jamaica Plain, MA 02130, U.S.A.

ANNUAL APPEAL APPROACHES $100,000

In his annual, year-end letter to members, Director Bob Cook admitted that his appeal—which didn’t ask for money—left the Arboretum’s director of development “turning white.” Nonetheless, the 1997 annual appeal has raised $88,000, an increase of 31 percent over total dollars received at this time last year. The number of gifts has increased 38 percent.

In spite of, or perhaps because of, Bob’s unorthodox approach to fundraising, the 1997 annual appeal has grown in several categories: The most notable growth is in the $100 to $999 bracket, with total dollars up 46 percent and the number of gifts at this level up 28 percent. Like membership dues, annual appeal dollars provide important unrestricted, current-use funds that support the Living Collections and other Arboretum programs and initiatives.

We are much encouraged by these generous responses. Bob Cook said, “The increase in overall giving on the part of both our most loyal members and many new supporters this past year represents a tremendous vote of confidence in the current work of the Arboretum. While the campaign has been a major undertaking, the success of this effort to date reflects a deep interest in the future of this unique institution.”
A New Outlook on Peters Hill

Peter Del Tredici
Director of Living Collections

The drought of 1997 delayed the planting phase of the improvements to Peters Hill that have been underway since last May, but it is at the top of the list for the spring planting season. The plan is to enhance the pastoral character of Peters Hill as a passive public open space in the Olmstedian tradition of “scenery in the natural style.” Following the recommendations in the master plan prepared by the landscape architecture firm of Sasaki Associates in 1992, a series of short- and long-range views will alternate on the approach to the summit, with broad expanses of greensward broken occasionally by groves of trees and islands of mound-forming shrubs. The effect will be naturalistic, consistent with both the Olmsted/Sargent plan for the core area of the Arboretum and with Beatrix Farrand’s unrealized 1949 plan for Peters Hill. The visitor’s experience at the top of the hill, with its views of the Boston skyline and local surrounds, will affirm Olmsted’s goal of a spiritually restorative, “enlarged sense of freedom.”

Three distinct “communities,” or spatial/ecological types that refer to existing natural and planted groupings, will form the structure of the four-acre-plus hilltop. In keeping with Farrand’s recommendation that “no plants should be set out which are incapable of fighting their own battles against wind, cold and drought,” we have chosen a combination of native and imported species for their likely adaptability to the rigorous site conditions. As individual plants thrive or decline over time, dynamic interactions will gradually lead to a blurring of the edges.

- A mixed deciduous forest of trees and understory/edge shrubs will march up the southeast slope from the existing natural forest. Trees will include several species of oak, sassafras, sweet birch, hackberry, American hornbeam, and common persimmon. Some of the root-suckering understory and edge shrubs will be native viburnums, witch hazel, shadblow, meadowsweet, and low- and highbush blueberries.
- Mound-forming shrubs and groundcovers—all sun-loving and stoloniferous or root-suckering—will include sweetfern, bayberry, several sumacs, and bottlebrush buckeye.
- Woody legumes will fill out a savannah of leguminous trees. Among them will be American yellowwoods, Kentucky coffee tree, Amur maackia, and the Japanese pagoda tree.

New England Grows!

The annual convention of New England’s green industry, called New England Grows!, gives Living Collections and other Arboretum staff a welcome break in the midwinter routine. Held near the end of January at the Hines Auditorium in Boston’s Back Bay, it offered three days of lectures, demonstrations, and exhibits. Among this year’s lecturers were Arboretum Senior Propagator Jack Alexander, on lilacs, and Director of Living Collections Peter Del Tredici on “The Radical Underground: The Myths & Realities of Tree Root Systems.” The Membership staff set up a display and, along with other Arboretum staff, dispensed information on the programs of the Arboretum.
Demystifying Bamboos

Bamboos are invasive and not hasty. Or are they? From 7:00 to 8:00 pm on Monday, March 30, Ian Connor of England's Sir Harold Hillier Gardens and Arboretum will demolish the myths surrounding this exotic and undervalued group of plants. His slides will demonstrate how beautiful and varied bamboos are, and Connor will show how they can be grown in your garden without acting the villains that they have been branded. Come be converted by this self-proclaimed bamboo fanatic and learn how to bring this plant group out of isolation and back into the garden.

The fee for members is $10, $12 for nonmembers. To register, call 617/524-1718 x 162. Connor's booklet, A Cultivation Guide for Bamboo, will be available for sale at the lecture.