**Field Studies Are Inspired by the Work of Volunteers**

*Diane Syverson  
Manager of School Programs*

A fourth-grade teacher from the Baker School brought her class to the Arboretum this October for a field study called *Plants in Autumn: How Seeds Travel*. Her response to the question, "What did you like most about your experience at the Arboretum?" was:

I really admire the fact that this program is staffed by volunteers. I think it's important for kids to see people donating their time and energy because they want to. Additionally the atmosphere was inviting, which made the experience that much better.

Volunteer guides who are personally invested in their work create an invigorating learning environment for school classes that come to the Arboretum for Field Study Experiences. Visiting schoolchildren find themselves in a group facilitated by any one of the 25 men and women who guide children on these fall and spring programs. Each guide is trained to support the children’s science learning, as together they examine the plants and habitats within the Arboretum landscape.

As volunteers, the school program guides are dedicated to enriching children's connection with science, nature, and the Arboretum through the Field Study Experience. These volunteers are men and women whose commitment might originate from a personal interest in children's education. They include former teachers, a school librarian, an education graduate student, grandparents, and a person considering a career change to education. Other volunteers come with personal experience and interest in life science: as do a part-time science teacher who saves a day per week to "teach" at the Arboretum, an ex-biology instructor, a retired chemist, a self-employed horticulturist, and many impassioned gardeners. Many of our volunteers know and love the Arboretum from the perspective of neighbor and supporter; it is from this perspective that they invest in sharing its richness with others.

School program guides make a one-year commitment to their job that includes thirty hours of Field Study Experience training; weekly guiding of elementary age children, fall and spring; and attendance at education meetings during the winter months. For more information or to observe a field study program, phone Diane Syverson, manager of school programs, at 617/524-1718 x163.

**No Complaints Here**

*Peter Del Tredici, Director of Living Collections*

Gardeners are notorious for their ability to complain endlessly about the weather. If it's not too wet, then it's certainly too dry; if it's not too hot, it's certainly too cold. The right amount of snow is great, but too little or too much is always a problem. And so on down the line. This tendency in
Former Intern Returns as Putnam Fellow

Laura Brogna, Putnam Fellow

I've been fortunate, as a child of a foreign service family, to travel in Asia, Europe, and the U.S. and to live in very different kinds of places, including suburban northern Virginia, downtown Tokyo, and the rural Northeast Kingdom of Vermont. Somewhere along the way, noticing my surroundings, I became a student of landscapes and landscape history.

I consider my Putnam fellowship an opportunity to continue my investigations into the workings of New England landscapes, which I began officially as a graduate student in landscape architecture at Harvard's Graduate School of Design (GSD). One of my projects here will be the study of planning and land management issues, including development and tourism pressures on working farms and forests. I also will investigate how the Arboretum functions within its three increasingly urbanized watersheds in order to prepare a stormwater maintenance plan for the site. Finally, I will research the land-use history of the area proposed for a new sun-loving shrub and vine collection.

During my tenure as Putnam Fellow, I am dividing my time between the Institute for Cultural Landscape Studies (ICLS) and the Department of Living Collections By straddling departments, I am allowed a wonderful balance in my work. I may spend one day devoted to ICLS in the Widener Library stacks at Harvard, tracking down references to farmland conservation or cultural geography. The next day (after studying USGS topographical maps and poring over city wastewater flow diagrams), I'm out following the course of our own Bussey Brook.

I first joined the Arboretum as a horticultural intern in the summer of 1995. After graduating from the GSD in 1997, I spent one year working in a landscape architecture firm before returning to the Arboretum in September of this year. I'm thrilled to be back and feel happily at home here among the trees.

Farewell to Peter Stevens

The imminent departure of Peter Stevens, professor of biology and a curator of the Arnold Arboretum and Gray Herbaria, represents a serious loss to the Arboretum's group of specialists in Asian botany. Peter will be joining his wife, Dr. Elizabeth Kellogg—known to us all as Toby—on the faculty of the University of Missouri at St. Louis. Toby will hold the E. Desmond Lee Chair in Botanical Studies, Peter will be a professor of biology, and both will also hold adjunct positions at the Missouri Botanical Garden.

Peter joined the staff of the Arnold Arboretum as an assistant curator in 1973 after three years as a botanist in the Papua New Guinea Forest Service, and worked his way up through the ranks: quite a feat at Harvard! He has pursued two groups of interests here. One has been in theoretical aspects of the history and practice of systematics, and particularly how botanists use the characters of plants in classification and to interpret evolution. But Peter may well be remembered most for his elegantly crafted systematic treatments, in the St. John's wort family, Clusiaceae, and especially its large and subtly varying tropical tree genus Calophyllum; in the rhododendron family, Ericaceae; and in various other taxa that have presented interesting problems to him.

Peter has played a seminal part in the teaching of plant systematics at Harvard. His undergraduate course Bio 103, Evolution and Diversification of Flowering Plants, and his graduate course Bio 218, The Families of Flowering Plants, have attracted a growing number of students who found them dense and therefore difficult but, thanks to Peter's ebullient enthusiasm for his subject, immensely stimulating.

We wish Peter and Toby good success in this new phase in their careers and will welcome their future visits here.

Peter Ashton, Director, 1978–1987
gardeners has only been exacerbated over the course of the last ten or twenty years, as weather extremes become the norm and the so-called hundred-year flood seems to happen once a decade. All of which takes me to the point of this article, namely, that the living collections department, which has certainly done its share of complaining about the weather in the past, doesn’t have anything to complain about this year. The winter was mild and the spring was cool and moist. Remarkably, the summer, which was considered very dry over most of the East Coast, was no problem in Boston where we enjoyed adequate rainfall through the treacherous months of July and August. Indeed, nearly every time we talked about watering our newly installed plants, it started raining. And the same is true for the fall. Two weeks never passed without substantial rain.

Taking full advantage of this “anomalous” weather pattern, the grounds crew planted more than 120 conifers in the collections from mid-September through mid-October. It was particularly gratifying to plant these trees, given that the Pinetum area was badly damaged by the blizzard of April 1, 1997. While it requires a certain amount of imagination on the part of the visitor, it is now possible to envision the appearance of the Arboretum twenty years into the future, when the new plantings reach adulthood.

This fall’s planting list was heavily laden with arborvitae (Thuja occidentalis and T. plicata), but we also accessioned many pine, fir, larch, and spruce. As it happened, during the long Columbus Day weekend, and just a few days after we planted our last tree, it rained more than four inches in three days, saturating the ground in a way that no amount of hand watering or irrigation ever could. Remarkably, the universal law of compensation seems to have worked its mysterious magic at the Arboretum, making the problems of the past few years seem like distant memories. Unfortunately, I’m sure that next year will be a completely different story.

Dr. Peter Ashton Receives Honorary Medal

On October 15, the Massachusetts Horticultural Society (MHS) awarded Peter Ashton the Thomas Roland Medal of Honor during the MHS Annual Awards Ceremony at the Boston Harbor Hotel. Dr. Ashton served as director of the Arnold Arboretum from 1978 to 1987 and currently is the Charles Bullard Professor of Forestry at Harvard University.

First bestowed in 1927, the Thomas Roland Medal was awarded in recognition of “exceptional skill in horticulture.” In presenting the award, Dr. John C. Peterson, president of MHS, lauded Dr. Ashton “for his extensive work that has ensured a wonderful public treasure in Boston’s Arnold Arboretum, and for the demonstration of what is without question exemplary skill in the field of horticulture.”

Arnold Arboretum Council members Wendy Pearson, Sarah Jolliffe, and Bob Bartlett prepare to embark on a tour of the living collections following the fall Arboretum Council meeting. Council members serve as advocates for the Arboretum, advise the director in their specialized areas of expertise, and support the institution in a variety of ways. Events of the day included presentations on new initiatives, ongoing projects, and a panel presentation of landscape maintenance issues.
Two Collaborative Projects of the AA/NPS Win ASLA Awards

Both *Fairsted: A Cultural Landscape Report for the Frederick Law Olmsted National Historic Site, Volume 1: Site History and Landscape Explorers: Uncovering the Power of Place* won 1998 Merit Awards from the American Society of Landscape Architects (ASLA). Both publications are the result of collaborations between the Arnold Arboretum and the National Park Service that began in the early 1990s.

*Fairsted*, the Frederick Law Olmsted National Historic Site in Brookline, Massachusetts, was the home and professional office of Frederick Law Olmsted and the subsequent firms headed by his sons and others. The National Park Service acquired the site in 1980. The *Fairsted* Report, produced jointly by the Olmsted Center for Landscape Preservation of the National Park Service and the Arnold Arboretum, includes a detailed history of the landscape of *Fairsted* by the noted Olmsted scholar Cynthia Zaitzevsky and an afterword that describes the horticultural and cultural context of the Olmsted’s work by the garden historian Mac Gnswold. Peter Del Tredici, director of living collections of the Arnold Arboretum, participated in the evaluation of historic documentation of the site and provided valuable expertise in plant identification from historic photographs. This report is an integral part of the restoration process for the *Fairsted* landscape, which began in 1991.

Although the report documents a site of only 1.76 acres, it is (to quote the ASLA) “a fascinating look at Olmsted’s most intimate work: the design, literally, of the master’s own backyard.” Copies of the report have been distributed to libraries nationwide. Individual copies can be purchased through the Eastern National Bookstore at the Frederick Law Olmsted National Historic Site, 99 Warren Street, Brookline, MA 02446. For mail orders, contact Alan Banks at 617/566-1689 x221.

The ASLA calls *Landscape Explorers* “the first—and thus far—the only curriculum designed to teach elementary-school students about the importance of landscape and place in everyone’s lives.” This unit of study invites students to explore the landscape from the perspective of an artist, a historian, or a naturalist. The stated hope that drives the unit is that “children who understand the role of ‘place’ in their evolving sense of self tend to become adults with a commitment to conserving and enhancing their immediate neighborhoods and the larger landscapes of which they are a part.” The authors of this work are Diane Syverson, manager of school programs at the Arboretum, and Liza Stearns, education specialist for the Frederick Law Olmsted National Historic Site. Participating students begin their exploration of place by examining their own schoolyard and learning what it means to “read” a landscape. They then apply those newly learned skills in a visit to the Arboretum, exploring this landscape in one of the three distinct ways described above. For further information about *Landscape Explorers*, contact Diane Syverson at 617/524-1718 x163.

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