

Friends of Oakbourne News

by Tom Bare, President, Friends of Oakbourne

The wet weather theme mentioned in my last article has continued, and we are on track for another year of above normal precipitation. In spite of the wet weather, the Friends of Oakbourne (FoO) finished the installation of four dedicated stone benches on flagstone pads in Oakbourne Mansion's Clock Garden. Each bench was fitted with a plaque showing to whom the bench was dedicated:

- An anonymous donor to Katharine Stambolian for her dedication to Westtown's parks
- The Friends of Oakbourne to the memory of Dr. John K. Stambolian
- Stella & Jay Birkmire to the memory of their parents, Helen & Stephan Rosinski and Mary & Jack Birkmire
- Jennifer Muner and Joanne Cellini to the memory of Denise Kweeder



A dedicated stone bench with plaque in the Clock Garden



Bird's eye view of the Clock Garden at Oakbourne Mansion and the four dedicated stone benches



Friends of Oakbourne and Bartlett Tree Experts at Westtown Day

Friends of Oakbourne had a display table at Westtown Day last October. We informed attendees of our projects and mission, and gave away free river birch tree seedlings. We were also happy to have Harvey Lerman and Jason Pearn from Bartlett Tree Experts field any tree related questions. FoO would especially like to thank Harvey and Jason for their insight on some of Oakbourne's magnificent trees, and their very generous offer to fertilize some of FoO's newly planted trees. Thanks to Bartlett, many of our recently planted trees along the entry drive of the park, as well as some in the Bark Woodlet area along the Gaudenzia border received treatments of slow release fertilizer during the fall.

We constantly struggle to protect our new plantings from deer eating foliage and twig tips, as well as male deer using trees for antler rubbing. We surround newly planted trees with fencing to prevent significant deer damage. After several years, the fencing is removed, and usually deer do not bother these larger trees. However, if there are low branches on the tree, sometimes bucks are attracted to these trees and use the low branches as well as the trunk for rubbing their antlers. To prevent damage to the trunks of these special types of trees, we have wrapped the trunks with plastic hardware cloth to see whether this will discourage antler rubbing on the trunks. Stay tuned to see if this is successful.

I love walking trails in the park during the year and observing seasonal changes. This fall I noticed a strikingly blue flower growing about 20 feet off the trail in the woods. I took a picture of the flower and later tried to identify it on the web. I believe that the flower is monkshood (*Aconitum napellus*, aka wolfbane), which is native to windy mountainous areas of Europe, Asia,

and North America. It is commonly grown as a perennial because of its beautiful blue flower, but I'm glad that I did not touch it, as all parts of this plant are toxic.



Monkshood (Aconitum napellus) in woods at Oakbourne Park.

And, finally, have a look at a picture taken this fall of one of our first dedicated tree plantings (a sugar maple planted over 12 years ago) with the Oakbourne water tower in the background.



INTERESTED IN IMPROVING YOUR BEAUTIFUL TOWNSHIP PARK?

Please join us at the Friends of Oakbourne's upcoming meetings at 7:00 pm on April 18 or July 18, 2019 at Oakbourne mansion. Contact Tom Bare (tmbare@hotmail.com or 610-399-1572) if you are interested in donating a park bench or tree to be planted in Oakbourne Park to honor a special person or loved one or to commemorate an important occasion.