

# Friends of Oakbourne News

by Tom Bare, President, Friends of Oakbourne

In the last Gazette, I mentioned that virtually all of the lavender and roses in Oakbourne Mansion's recently renovated Clock Garden had succumbed over the winter, most likely due to the extremely wet conditions experienced throughout the previous year. The Friends of Oakbourne (FoO) removed all of these plants, and have now replaced them with different, more robust plants that will be more tolerant of both wet and dry conditions. The lavender was substituted with a dwarf fountain grass, *Pennisetum alopecuroides* 'Hameln,' which grows in 2-3' tall clumps and develops showy bottle brush-like flower spikes that arch gracefully out from the grass mound similar to water spraying outward from a fountain. The roses were substituted with gold mound spireas, *Spiraea japonica* 'Gold Mound,' which is a small shrub that has beautiful golden leaves in the spring that turn chartreuse as summer progresses and then a beautiful yellow tinged with orange/red in the fall. Tiny pink flower clusters (corymbs) that attract pollinators appear on this shrub in the spring.



*Clock Garden with Newly Planted Gold Mound Spirea (bottom right) and Fountain Grass (middle left)*

During one of the nasty localized storms we've experienced this spring and summer, one of our dedicated trees (a Carolina silverbell) planted in 2015 was shredded and snapped into multiple pieces by a particularly vicious wind storm. This tree had grown quickly (perhaps too quickly!) into a beautiful specimen; the tree had a very dense round tree canopy and I believe this contributed to its susceptibility to the wind being able to shred this tree while young neighboring trees escaped damage. Keeping this in mind, FoO was able to obtain and plant an alternate cultivar of a Carolina silverbell (*Halesia Carolina* 'Jersey Belle'; GPS: 39.93609440, -75.57218987) that will grow in a more upright or columnar habit and perhaps be a bit more resistant to wind shear than the dense rounded habit of the previous variety.



*Jersey Belle Carolina Silverbell with a Water Bag*

Notice the green plastic bag at the base of the new Jersey Belle Silverbell tree in the picture? That is a watering bag we are using to water all of our newly planted trees this summer. The trees we planted this year were obtained from a nursery that uses the "grow bag" method of growing trees, which results in a relatively smaller root ball than "balled and burlapped" or containerized trees that we previously obtained. Because of the small root ball of these trees, it is important to keep tabs on the moisture content of the root ball to ensure that it does not dry out. The water bags hold up to 20 gallons of water, which is slowly leaked out at the bottom of the grow bag over 5 to 8 hours to thoroughly water the root ball and surrounding area. The bags are filled from a 200 gallon water tank on a utility vehicle that can easily be taken to each tree.

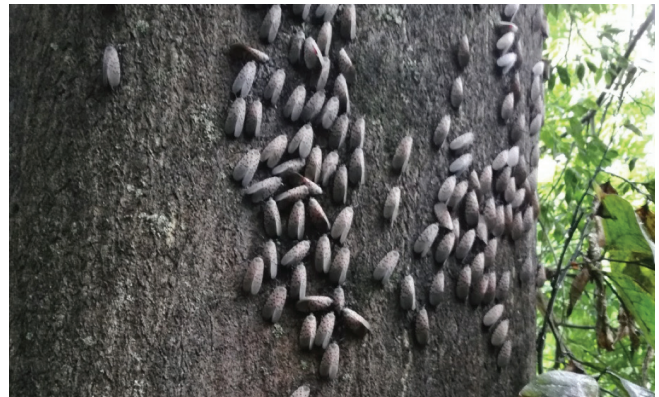
You may recall from the last Gazette that FoO planted three dedicated trees during this spring. All of these trees were obtained from a nursery using the "grow bag" method; since these trees were the first that we have planted that were

produced using this method, we were curious as to how they would thrive at our park. I'm happy to report that all of these trees are doing well as evidenced by the formation of numerous cones on the Blue Atlas Cedar (*Cedrus atlantica* 'Glauca') and the appearance of flowers in late August on the Seven-Sons-Flower tree (*Heptacodium miconioides*).

And finally, I've received numerous calls from concerned park users regarding the presence of the pesky invasive spotted lanternfly (SLF) in the park. People have reported seeing the immature lanternfly nymphs and fully developed adults. So far (9/2/2019) I've personally seen the adult lanternfly in only one area of the park - the wooded area between the playground area and Kerwood Road. In this area, there is a grouping of several large invasive Trees-of-Heaven (*Ailanthus altissima*; FYI, this is the tree featured in the novel "A Tree Grows in Brooklyn"), the preferred host for the SLF. These trees act as magnets for the SLF and there were hundreds, maybe thousands, of them on the trunks of these trees. Chester County is one of 13 Pennsylvania counties under a SLF quarantine. For detailed information on how to manage the SLF go to the link: <https://extension.psu.edu/spotted-lanternfly> . This web site has pictures of the various stages of the SLF's life cycle and provides a summary of methods to control this pest, which threatens Pennsylvania agriculture as well as homeowner's trees and plants.



*Blue Atlas Cedar Cones*



*Spotted Lanternfly on Tree of Heaven at Oakbourne Park*



*Flowers Blooming in Late Summer on Seven Sons Flower Tree*

## Interested in Improving The Arboretum and Surrounding Area in Your Beautiful Township Park?

Please join us at the Friends of Oakbourne's upcoming meetings at 7:00 pm on October 17, 2019 or January 16, 2020 at Oakbourne Mansion. Contact Tom Bare ([tmbare@hotmail.com](mailto: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.