

# Friends of Oakbourne News

By Tom Bare, President, Friends of Oakbourne

After several months of inactivity due to the Covid-19 pandemic, the Friends of Oakbourne (FoO) is back in business catching up on planting dedicated trees that had been ordered in February of this year. Fortunately for us, the Spring, Summer and Fall (so far) were kind to our previous plantings and additional watering was not necessary to keep our plantings thriving.

You'll recall that part of FoO's remit for the arboretum area of the park is to plan our tree plantings not only to enhance the beauty of our park, but also to replace dead and dying trees with similar species to maintain the legacy of previous plantings. A recent example of this was the sudden toppling (on a clear, non-windy day!) of a large white oak tree located in a grove of a variety of oaks that were probably planted about 100 - 150 years ago. This grouping of oaks is located next to the walking trail adjacent to the multi-purpose field. The tree fell across the walking path, but fortunately no one was injured. In planning for plantings in the park, FoO, over 15 years ago, decided that this aging group of oaks, needed to be considered for a legacy planting. To that end, FoO began to plant a variety of oak trees adjacent to the old oak grove, anticipating that in the coming years, the original oak trees would begin to degrade and/or die. In the accompanying photo of the tree stump remaining from the fallen white oak, the replacement oak tree grove of 5 trees can be seen in the background.



Looking across the stump of recently fallen "legacy" oak to the "new" oak tree grove.

Thanks to the assistance provided by Westtown's Public Works Department (Mike, Dave, Joe and, very importantly, a backhoe), FoO was able to plant 5 dedicated trees and a tree donated by FoO in the Oakbourne Park's arboretum area on September 24. The trees planted included:

A Weeping Serbian Spruce (*Picea omorika 'Pendula'*) was planted in memory of Lawrence K Smith. This tree is located in the triangular island between the mansion and carriage house. An evergreen with dark green needles with silver undersides and a strong central leader, the tree has a rounded shape and graceful weeping branches. It may reach a height of 30 feet at maturity.

An Akebono Yoshino Cherry (*Prunus x yedoensis 'Akebono'*) tree was planted in memory of Thomas J. Maiale. It was dedicated by his wife and son, Carolyn and Kyle, and is located next to the walking path in the grove of established cherry trees that you can see while driving by the park on S. Concord Road. In the spring, it will have a beautiful display of large pink semi-double flowers.



Weeping Serbian Spruce

A Nordmann Fir (*Abies Nordmanniana*) was planted on the west side of the park drive just before reaching the mansion in an area containing some mature conifers. This evergreen is native to the Caucasian Mountains and is a dense pyramidal tree with glossy flattened dark green needles that have two white bands underneath. It may reach a height of 50' at maturity.

A Concolor Fir (*Abies concolor*) was planted near the walking path that emerges from the Gaudenzia property near the park entrance. This tree is a native North American evergreen with soft flat blue-green needles that curve outward and upward on their stems and can grow to 50' in height. The tree becomes rounded as it matures and can sometimes form multiple trunks. Both the Nordmann and Concolor Firs were dedicated by Pam and John McGillian to the memory of Paul A. and Carol Ann Rolfe, the parents of Pam McGillian.

An Oriental Spruce (*Picea orientalis* 'Skylands') was planted next to the walking path on the right side of the Park's entry drive just beyond the grove of cherry trees as you enter the park. This spruce is a slow growing evergreen with exterior bright yellow colored needles and green interior needles. In the spring, showy red pollen cones that develop provide an interesting contrast to the yellow needles. This tree is dedicated to the memory of Aram Avesyan by the family of Dr. Sara Bekyan.

A Blue China Fir (*Cunninghamia lanceolate glauca*) was planted on the left side of the park entry road near the two remaining large Copper Beech trees. This tree is native to forested areas of China and Taiwan and the tree's green to blue-green needles are sharply-pointed and finely-toothed. While it may be slow to form a leader, this fir will eventually become an upright cone-shaped tree growing up to 70' in height. This tree was donated by the Friends of Oakbourne to Jon Pennington. Jon recently retired from his job as a Public Works employee with Westtown Township for over 40 years. Jon and his wife lived on the second floor of Oakbourne Mansion. In addition to being the caretaker of the mansion, Jon often assisted FoO in caring for our gardens in the park as well as pruning many of the trees and shrubs that we planted over the years. We wish Jon the best in his retirement!

And finally, you might recall that one of the dedicated trees that FoO planted last year, a Seven-Sons-Flower tree (*Heptacodium miconioides*), blooms with beautiful white flowers in late summer. After the petals from these flowers fall, the remaining pink sepals (modified leaves that encase the developing flower) give the impression that the plant is in flower again. This is a lovely tree that has, in addition to its unusual flowers and sepals, unusual whitish-tan bark that peels in strips. This tree is planted in the Bark Woodlet area of the arboretum which contains trees with striking and unusual bark.



Concolor Fir



Oriental Spruce 'Skylands'



Seven-Sons-Flower tree in mid-October