

Friends of Oakbourne

By Tom Bare, President, Friends of Oakbourne

Finally, with Covid on the decline, the Friends of Oakbourne (FoO) were able to get back to planting during this spring season. Two memorial trees and three replacement trees were planted on a fine spring day in early May. For the past several years, Westtown's Public Works Director, Mark Gross, has generously offered to provide FoO with help from his staff and equipment in planting trees. Because of this help, FoO now has the ability to order and pick up larger trees than were previously possible when we loaded trees into the back of our SUVs for transportation from the nursery to the park. Likewise, digging holes for the trees is no longer a problem when a backhoe and operator are available to do the job, especially in rocky areas or when the ground is as hard as concrete. So, in about 3 hours, five trees (three of which were large with rootballs and trees weighing about 300 - 500 pounds each) were picked up at the tree nursery, transported to the planting sites at Oakbourne Arboretum, placed in their holes, and then backfilled with soil. The next day, FoO mulched and watered all of the trees, and fenced the ones that needed to be protected from deer.

Two dedicated trees were planted in the Bark Woodlet area of the park which is located adjacent to the Gaudenzia property line in the area of the Oakbourne Park walking path. The Bark Woodlet area is specifically for trees that have unique and unusual bark. One of the trees planted was a lacebark pine (*Pinus bungeana*), dedicated by Pam and John McGillian to the memory of Christopher J. Galeone. This pine tree, a native of China, has a somewhat rounded shape and may reach a height of 40 - 50 feet at maturity. A most striking feature of this tree is that at about 10 years of age, the bark begins to peel to reveal patches of purple, white, and green that is most noticeable during the winter months.



Lacebark Pine (Pinus bungeana) dedicated to Christopher J. Galeone

The second dedicated tree, also planted in the Bark Woodlet area, is the first tree planted on the north side of the walking path. This tree is a Lacebark Elm (*Ulmus parvifolia 'ALLEE'*, also called *Chinese elm*), and was dedicated by friends and family to the memory of Cindy Minka. This elm grows to a height of 40 - 50 feet and is reminiscent in its growth habit (vase shaped tree with a rounded crown and long pendulous branching) of the beloved and magnificent American Elm which was decimated by Dutch Elm disease; fortunately, Lacebark Elms are resistant to Dutch Elm disease. Other distinguishing features of this tree are its relatively small dark green glossy leaves and, as it matures into a larger tree, its exfoliating bark that provides a textured look with brown, orange, green, and gray colors.



Lacebark Elm (Ulmus parvifolia 'ALLEE') dedicated to Cindy Minka

Three trees that have been planted in the Oakbourne Arboretum over the past five years have been on FoO's watchlist of trees that were not thriving because of disease or environmental factors. Rather than see these trees continue to struggle, we decided to remove and replace them with similar or identical trees.

To that end, a Scarlet Oak (previously dedicated to Charlie & Hilda Brown) that had become diseased was removed and replaced with a Chinkapin Oak (*Quercus muhlenbergii*), a member of the white oak family. It is a native medium sized tree that will reach 40 - 60 feet in height and has leaves with a dark green glossy upper surface and a pale gray-green or white lower surface. The Chinkapin is a valuable source of food for native birds and mammals as well as many species of butterfly & moth caterpillars and other insects.



Park bench dedicated to Bob & Peg Malkames

Several years ago, in partnership with the Westtown Goshen Rotary Club, FoO planted 19 trees along the entry drive to Oakbourne Park. One of the Chestnut Oaks that was planted for this project has not thrived and has thwarted our best efforts at caring for it. FoO even went as far as consulting with a tree expert to try to stimulate its growth with a fertilization program, but to no avail. This small tree was removed and replaced with a larger Chestnut Oak (*Quercus montana*) that will hopefully thrive and be more in concert size wise with its adjacent companion trees.

And finally, a relatively small Oriental Spruce (*Picea orientalis* 'Skylands') that was planted last year in memory of Aram Avesyan was not thriving and was replaced with an identical vigorous specimen.

A memorial park bench dedicated by the Flurer family to the memory of Bob & Peg Malkames was installed to replace an old deteriorated bench located between the pavilion and the playground area. This bench will undoubtedly get a lot of use since it is located in the shade facing the playground area.



The Oakbourne Mansion & Clock Garden on an early Spring day

FRIENDS OF OAKBOURNE

The Friends of Oakbourne continue to enhance the grounds at Oakbourne Park, and will concentrate their efforts this summer on the west side of the water tower. 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.