

Friends of Oakbourne

by Tom Bare, President, Friends of Oakbourne

The Friends of Oakbourne (FoO) have continued to work on our garden project at the rear entrance to Oakbourne Park's unique water tower. In addition to plantings, we recently installed a path to provide visual interest. While the garden will now undergo a period of rest for the winter, plans for additional plantings are underway for the spring. Before and after pictures of the garden area are shown below.



FoO planted several memorial trees this fall. An unusual and unique Bamboo-leaf Oak (also called Chinese evergreen oak, *Quercus myrsinifolia*) was dedicated "To the memory of Laura Adams by her neighbors. This tree represents the dedicated mom, wife, and grandmother she was, as well as the amazing person we will always remember." The tree was planted in the oak tree grove of the arboretum, which is next to the walking path adjacent to the all-purpose field. While the slender evergreen leaves (these glossy green leaves remain on the tree during the winter!!) resemble the leaves of bamboo, the tree is most assuredly an oak. In the spring, new growth emerges as a purple-bronze color and matures to a dark green on top with a paler underside. Once established, this oak is very drought resistant and can grow to a height of 30 - 60 feet. This tree is a "ring-cupped oak" species which refers to the distinctive, concentric rings on their acorn cups.



Yellow Bird magnolia planted in memory of Jean Oakes

A Yellow Bird magnolia (*Magnolia x brooklynensis*) was planted adjacent to the Arboretum walking path in the Bark Woodlet. This tree was dedicated by the Verdes Family, "in memory of Jean Oakes, loving wife, mother, grandmother, daughter, and sister." The Yellow Bird magnolia is thought of as one of the best yellow-flowered magnolias; the tree blooms in the spring with globlet-shaped lemon-yellow flowers that emerge as the leaves begin to form. The Yellow Bird is a lovely pyramidal shaped tree that can reach up to 40 - 50 feet in height. Leaves were mostly gone from the pictured Yellow Bird since it was planted in the fall.



Bamboo-Leaf Oak planted in memory of Laura Adams



Chinese Fringe tree planted in memory of Anna Henson

A Chinese Fringe tree (*Chionanthus retusus*) was planted in an open area near the large copper beech trees on the left side of the entry drive about halfway into the park. This tree was dedicated by Walter Pavelchek to "honor Anna Henson and to recognize her deep friendship with Emma Pavelchek and the bond shared by both families." The Chinese Fringe tree develops into an elegant rounded, wide-spreading tree that can reach 20 feet in height and width. The tree is spectacular when it blooms in late spring and is covered with beautiful white fringe-like petals that are produced at the ends of branches and hide the tree's leaves. A young fringe tree has papery exfoliating bark, while the mature tree is endowed with tight bark with distinct furrows and ridges that provide winter interest.



Skylands Caucasian spruce with the Blue Atlas Cedar in the background

And finally, FoO replaced a Skylands Caucasian spruce (*Picea orientalis* 'Skylands') that had been severely damaged by deer. This spruce is an important feature in the arboretum in that it was planted strategically to provide a contrast in colors with a neighboring Blue Atlas cedar (*Cedrus atlantica* 'Glauca') planted several years ago as a dedicated tree. The Skylands has wonderfully colored golden needles that will contrast nicely with the blue-green needles of the neighboring cedar. At maturity, the cedar can grow 40 - 60 feet high and 30 - 40 feet wide while the Skylands can reach a height of 35 feet and width of 10 - 12 feet.

Thanks to Mark Gross, Westtown's Director of Public Works, and his crew for help in transporting and planting the trees mentioned in this article. With their help, FoO has been able to transport and plant larger trees than what could be accomplished when we transported trees in our personal vehicles and hand-dug the planting holes.



Owl Prowl at Oakbourne Park

SATURDAY,
JANUARY 14, 2023

Oakbourne Park Pavilion

1014 S. Concord Rd, West Chester, PA 19382

7 PM - 8:30 PM

In conjunction with the Valley Forge Audubon Society, Westtown Parks & Recreation will once again welcome naturalist Lon Myers for a brief talk about owls native to our area, followed by a walk through the woods as Lon calls a variety of owls, with the hope of hearing a response and, if lucky, seeing these elusive creatures. Bring a flashlight, and wear warm clothing and appropriate footwear. The pavilion will provide shelter in the event of rain.

Lon Myers has led a variety of nature walks and talks for nearly 50 years and recently led a walk at Oakbourne Park successfully calling screech owls. Lon is currently the Chairman of the Allegany Nature Pilgrimage, an annual event in its 65th year open to everyone, and sponsored by the Audubon societies of Buffalo, Jamestown, Erie, and Rochester.

PARKS & RECREATION COMMISSION VACANCIES

If you would like to help plan and run programs and events, then consider joining Parks & Rec! Interested residents should submit their resume and a brief letter of interest to jaltshul@westtown.org.