

Friends of Oakbourne

by Tom Bare, Friends of Oakbourne

At the end of October, two memorial trees and a tree donated by one of our suppliers were planted with the help of some members of the Westtown Public Works crew. A grouping of four Heritage River Birch (*Betula nigra* 'Cully') trees was planted in the Bark Woodlet area. This grouping of trees was dedicated to Thomas Lyman by Dean and Kim Beebe, Rick and Debbie Clark, and Rick and Linda Cherashore. The Heritage River birch will be a wonderful addition to the Bark Woodlet since its bark will begin to peel and exfoliate when the diameter of its trunks reaches 2-3 inches. The creamy white and tan bark of this birch peels away from the trunk to expose tan, pink, and cinnamon colors and the tree trunks will have a distinct and interesting "shaggy" look all year long.

The other memorial tree, a Shademaster Honeylocust (*Gleditsia tricanthos inermis* 'Shademaster') was dedicated to the memory of Marilyn Vishnefski Grunberg by John and Pam McGillian. The Shademaster Honeylocust was planted along the walking path that parallels the Gaudenzia property on the south side of the park. This tree has small dark green delicate fern-like leaves that provide light dappled shade during the growing season. In the fall the leaves develop a beautiful yellow color. Because of the small leaves, there is not a substantial leaf drop from this tree and essentially no fall leaf cleanup is necessary, a feature most homeowners really appreciate. Also, the Shademaster does not have thorns and fall seedpods that other varieties of honeylocust trees possess. This tree is a relatively fast grower and will eventually reach a height of 50 feet.



Heritage River Birch



Shademaster Honeylocust

A large Sawtooth Oak (*Quercus acutissima*) donated to Friends of Oakbourne by one of our tree suppliers was planted in our arboretum's Oak Grove area. This oak is a non-native oak (native to Japan, China, and Korea) with dark green glossy oblong finely serrated leaves that have late fall color, starting with tinges of yellow gradually turning tan in late autumn. Most of the leaves remain on the tree during the winter and only fall when the buds begin to swell in the spring. The tree is a heavy acorn producer which is a boon for large birds and many mammals. The Sawtooth's acorn is interesting in that the acorn cap is frilled and covers about half of the acorn.



Sawtooth acorn and its frilled cap

Interested In Donating A Park Bench Or Tree?

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 and Arboretum to honor a special person or loved one or to commemorate an important occasion.

The Benefits of Tree Preservation

by Meghan Hanney, EAC Member

A Lacebark Pine (*Pinus bungeana*) that was planted in 2021 as a memorial tree in the Bark Woodlet (an area containing trees with unique and unusual bark) section of the arboretum failed to thrive and was removed. I believe the spot where this tree was planted may have been too wet for the tree to thrive. We planted a new replacement Lacebark Pine in a different area of the Bark Woodlet that has good drainage. You may recall that this tree, when mature, will have unusual peeling bark that will reveal patches of purple, white, and green.

Fall is a glorious time of the year at Oakbourne and Arboretum. The magnificent Ginkgo and Dawn Redwood were at their peak colors when these pictures were taken on November 18, 2023.



Ginkgo



Dawn Redwood

As Westtown residents, we are fortunate to live in an area with such an abundance of mature trees that no doubt contribute significantly to the beauty of our town. Not only do these trees make Westtown such an attractive place to live, they provide some critical services to our properties and neighborhoods. Let's look at some of the significant benefits that mature trees provide to our community and why we might want to consider making efforts to preserve them on our properties.

- **Soil enrichment** – All those leaves that our mature trees drop in the fall protect the ground through the winter and decompose back into the soil making it more nutrient-dense for growing healthier gardens and plants. Decaying leaves also make great compost and mulch!
- **Shade and cooling** – Mature trees filter sunlight and help to keep our houses cool which can save us money on our energy bills and contribute to energy conservation. Mature trees along our streets can also block sunlight from hitting the paved roads, keeping them cooler and preventing them from warming the air around them.
- **Erosion control** – The extensive root networks of mature trees help hold soil in place and prevent erosion in particularly sensitive areas like stream and river banks and steep slopes.
- **Water absorption** – Mature trees are an amazing natural assist to stormwater management and the bigger they are, the more they help. Mature trees' extensive root systems improve the soil around them making the soil better able to absorb water, while the roots themselves act like a network of straws. As a result, trees can help prevent flooding, water damage to buildings, and overflow of sewer systems.
- **Noise reduction** – Large mature trees absorb noise - their thick trunks and layers of leaves (or needles), help to dampen noise from traffic and construction, and other loud activities.
- **Carbon sequestration** – Trees absorb carbon dioxide from the atmosphere and store it in their trunks, branches, and leaves. And the bigger the tree, the more carbon it can store. In this and many other ways, trees play a crucial role in helping to mitigate climate change.
- **Pollinator/wildlife support** – Every part of a mature native tree provides critical food and/or shelter to our birds, pollinators, and wildlife whose populations and habitats continue to shrink.

Lastly, mature trees add monetary and aesthetic value to our properties, purify our air by absorbing carbon and creating oxygen, and support our overall mental well-being. By making an effort to protect and preserve our mature healthy trees starting here, in our own backyards, we will help them continue to help us.