

Friends of Oakbourne News

By Tom Bare, Friends of Oakbourne

In late April, with the help of several members of the Westtown Public Works crew, the Friends of Oakbourne (FoO) planted four dedicated trees in Oakbourne Park's arboretum. A Chinese Witch Hazel (*Hamamelis mollis* 'Wisely Supreme') was planted as the first of a total of five witch hazels that will eventually be installed in a planned witch hazel garden; this garden will provide an area of fragrant early blooming colors that will give arboretum visitors a taste of spring during late winter. Wisely Supreme is a Chinese witch hazel and is a large open shrub growing to a height and width of 15 feet with a rounded shape. The late winter yellow flowers (tinged with red at the petal base) are noted for their sweet scent and are the most fragrant flowers of all the witch hazels. This witch hazel was dedicated to John Gallagher by his children, Shaun, Ryan, and Kerrilynn. And to further honor their father, the Gallagher family also generously donated a memorial park bench that was installed in a grove of large conifers near the park's mansion.



Wisely Supreme Witch Hazel dedicated to John Gallagher

A Weeping Higan Cherry tree (*Prunus x subhirtella* 'Pendula') was planted in the Cherry Grove along South Concord Road to replace an identical tree that had succumbed to disease; this tree will be part of a grouping of a total of 3 weeping cherry trees. In the spring this tree is especially beautiful when its long, flexible branches weep gracefully and are filled with a profusion of delicate pink flowers. The tree will grow to a height of 15 -25 feet and spread to a width of 15 feet. This tree was dedicated in memory of Pancake, a faithful dog of the StClair family who have many fond memories of their walks together through Oakbourne Park.

To replace a recently removed large tree adjacent to the park's picnic pavilion, a small to medium sized tree was desired. A Japanese Lilac tree (*Syringa reticulata* 'Ivory Silk') seemed to fit the bill nicely since it may reach a height of only 20-30 feet and a width of 15-20 feet; additionally, the tree lacks an aggressive root system and is therefore ideal for planting next to the structures such as the park's pavilion and the adjacent asphalt walkway. In early June this tree will develop panicles of white flowers 5 - 10 inches long which then will transform into seed capsules that stay on the tree throughout the winter and attract birds. This tree was dedicated to Franklin and Jean Flurer by the Flurer family.

A park bench was dedicated to the memory of Edmund and Lydia Vergara by their daughters Susanne Vergara, Kathy Cook, and Stephanie Pricken. The Vergara family lived for many years across the street and up the hill from the pond in the park and they have fond memories of fishing and ice skating on the pond. Their bench is located in a shaded alcove on the north side of the park's pond.



Vergara Memorial bench

Finally, I would like to thank Friends of Oakbourne for a tree that was given to me to honor my 20 years of service to the Friends of Oakbourne. A Kentucky Coffee tree (*Gymnocladus dioica* 'McKBranded' Decaf) was planted along the arboretum's walking path in the Bark Woodlet area adjacent to the Gaudenzia property. The Decaf cultivar is a desirable selection of a native tree that will grow to a height of 50 feet and width of 40 feet and does not possess the messy, leathery seed pods associated with the straight species of this tree. The large deep green colored leaves of this cultivar are fine-textured and turn to a golden-yellow color in the Fall. The bark of this tree is gray-brown and has flakey patterned ridges which contribute to the tree's beautiful winter structure.

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.