



U.S. Department of Agriculture
Agricultural Research Service

U.S. National Arboretum News and Notes

Spring 2006

News and Notes is issued three times a year, in January, May, and September, to stakeholder organizations to keep them informed about recent Arboretum accomplishments and activities. Stakeholders are encouraged to use material from this document in reports to their members. Please send comments to:

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Research Unit Introduces Two New Lilacs

Just in time for spring, the arboretum has released two new lilac cultivars to follow the 2000 release of *Syringa* 'Betsy Ross'. The lilacs, 'Old Glory' and 'Declaration', are the results of long-term ornamental breeding efforts by the arboretum's [Floral and Nursery Plants Research Unit](#). Both plants came from the same controlled hybridization, but have completely different traits. 'Old Glory' was selected for its abundant fragrant bluish-purple flowers, rounded growth habit, and disease-tolerant foliage. It shows good field tolerance to the fungal disease *Cercospora* blight and the bacterial disease caused by *Pseudomonas syringae* in warmer climates where these diseases are a problem. 'Declaration' was selected for its large fragrant striking dark reddish-purple inflorescences and open upright growth habit. It performs best in traditional cooler lilac-growing regions. Both cultivars have been tested by cooperators throughout the U.S. and are currently being propagated by growers for expected retail availability in 2008.



'Old Glory' lilac (left) and 'Declaration' lilac (right).

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China Garden Moves Forward with Site Dedication and Model

Mike Johanns, Secretary of Agriculture, and Madam Jiang Zehui, President of the Chinese Academy of Sciences and Leading Member of the State Forestry Administration of China, headed a site dedication ceremony on January 13, 2006, at the U.S. National Arboretum for the proposed new 12-acre classical Chinese garden. Under Secretary of Agriculture Joseph Jen and Chinese Ambassador Zhou Wenzhong also spoke at the ceremony. Attending the site dedication was a 12-member team of dignitaries from China, Agricultural Research Service officials, donors to the project, and leaders of the Chinese American community.

A three-dimensional scale model of the China Garden arrived in April and will be on display in the arboretum's administration building lobby until May 12th. It will then travel to the Secretary of Agriculture's office, where it will remain until early June, when it returns to the arboretum. The model is based on the conceptual plan already developed for this [collaborative project](#) between the U.S. Department of Agriculture and the State Forestry Administration of the People's Republic of China. The model,



China Garden Site Dedication ceremony with Madam Jiang Zehui, center, flanked by (from left) Dr. Joseph Jen, Dr. Thomas Elias, and Mike Johanns, and Zhon Wenzhong (on right).

measuring five feet by four feet, includes miniature versions of all the buildings, bridges, temples, rockeries, lake, and other features that the complex will contain.

USNA Part of 2006 National Cherry Blossom Festival

The National Arboretum offered a self-guided flowering cherry tour, hosted a tree planting ceremony, and participated in two downtown events during the 2006 National Cherry Blossom Festival, which took place March 25 – April 9. This is the second year that the arboretum has been an official participating organization of this annual D.C. event. During the festival, visitors to the arboretum could take a self-guided tour of 15 different types of flowering cherries (*Prunus* sp. and cultivars) and learn about the arboretum's flowering cherry introductions

and research. On April 6, a delegation from Ise City, Japan, joined National Cherry Blossom Festival board members and their goodwill ambassadors for a tram tour of the arboretum with Director Dr. Thomas Elias. Following the tour, the group helped plant the arboretum's introduction *Prunus* 'Dream Catcher' near the administration building parking lot. The arboretum staffed a booth at the Sakura Matsuri—Cherry Blossom Street Festival—on April 8.



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Despite the chilly and rainy weather, thousands of visitors to the Nation's Capital passed by the 12th and Pennsylvania Avenue street festival, many stopping to watch the on-going bonsai demonstration given by loyal arboretum volunteers at the arboretum's tent. The arboretum's [National Bonsai & Penjing Museum](#) was also represented at the festival's first-ever kick-off event at the National Building Museum on March 25. Bonsai Curator Jim Hughes and [National Bonsai Foundation](#) Executive Director Johann Klodzen responded to visitor questions during this day-long family-oriented event held, which also drew thousands of people.

East Side Master Plan Revisions Underway

The arboretum is working with landscape architecture firm Rhodeside and Harwell to revise its Master Plan to reflect new developments. The revision will include the incorporation of the proposed [China Garden](#), and new parking, tram stop, and restrooms near the [Asian Collections](#). Handicapped accessible paths linking the Flowering Tree Collection, [Holly and Magnolia Collections](#), [Asian Collections](#), [China Garden](#), [Dogwood Collection](#), and [Conifer Collections](#) are also included in the project. The revisions will create a conceptual design

for a more aesthetically pleasing interface with the National Park Service land along the Anacostia River and will ultimately provide for an arrival point for boaters and pedestrians using the riverfront. The Master Plan revisions will be completed this summer.

New Entrance and Path System Design for Native Plant Collections

Planning is underway for a new entrance and a handicapped-accessible path system for the [Fern Valley Native Plant Collection](#). The new entrance will be located to the west of the collection in the vicinity of the Old Field Meadow and will connect the collection to the Flowering Tree Walk. This will be another phase in the effort to link gardens and collections at the arboretum with accessible pedestrian pathways. Railings, benches, and bridges will be reconstructed as part of the project so their appearance throughout the collection is uniform. The new path system will lead visitors through new garden areas in [Fern Valley](#)—a Meadow and Prairie Cultivar Garden and a Woodland Cultivar Garden will be prominent features along the newly designed path. The new path will be the main pedestrian link to the [Conifer Collections](#), [Asian Collections](#), and other destinations on the east side of the arboretum.

Arboretum Partners with National Agricultural Library to Present Botanical Art Exhibit

The [National Arboretum](#) and the [National Agricultural Library](#) (NAL) are the venues for an over 100-piece exhibition of nineteenth century botanical art created by one family. *Inspiration and Translation: Botanical and Horticultural Lithographs of Joseph Prestele and Sons* features original watercolors and lithographic prints by Joseph Prestele (1796-1867), a botanical painter and master lithographer who immigrated to the United States from Bavaria in the 1840s, and his sons—Joseph Jr., Gottlieb and William Henry.

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Diospyros sp.

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The Prestele family produced botanical illustrations for USDA and the Smithsonian Institution, as well as for the nursery and seed trade. The arboretum's exhibit includes plates Joseph prepared between 1849 and 1859 to accompany a *Report on the Forest Trees of North America* by Asa Gray as well as lithographs and watercolors created by William Henry Prestele for the USDA. William Henry (1838-1895) was the first botanical artist hired by the USDA's Division of Pomology, in 1887. The exhibition is the result of an NAL collaboration with the Hunt Institute for Botanical Documentation at Carnegie Mellon University in Pittsburgh, Pa. It draws from the collections of both institutions, along with the Smithsonian, and also includes items from the Amana Heritage Society and Prestele descendent Marcelee Konish. The exhibit lasts through May.

Friends of the National Arboretum Renew Agreement in Support of Asian Collections

The [Friends of the National Arboretum](#) (FONA) recently entered into an agreement to support the Asian Collections with an annual donation of \$100,000 during each of the next five years. This is the second five-year agreement for funding

support of the [Asian Collections](#). The money is used primarily to supplement staff in the [Asian Collections](#). FONA obtains these funds from the Chadwick Trust.



Trees planted along the Flowering Tree Walk.

Arboretum Receives Funds to Hire Camellia Intern

The arboretum received a generous donation from Dr. William Ackerman to fund a summer internship for the [Camellia Collection](#). Dr. Ackerman, who is retired from the arboretum, is best known for his breeding work that led to the development of cold-hardy camellias. Ackerman began his breeding work after a series of bitterly cold winters in the late 1970s and early 80s that wiped out most of the camellia collection, Ackerman began his breeding work. In the mid-1990s, staff began planting Ackerman's arboretum camellia introductions on the north side of the [Asian Collections](#). Dr. Ackerman's donation supports the continued development of the [Camellia Collection](#), including drafting interpretive signage.

Flowering Tree Planting Begins

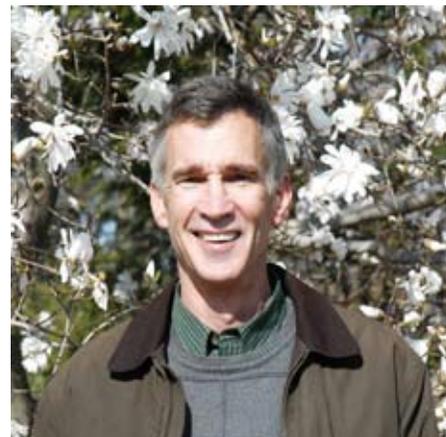
January was warmer than normal,

and arboretum staff took advantage of the mild weather to prepare for the first trees to be planted in the new Flowering Tree Walk. Approximately 160 tons of composted green waste were incorporated into the ground where 35 flowering trees were planted: including five mountain silverbell, *Halesia tetraptera* var. *tetraptera*.

New Staff Join the Gardens Unit

Christopher Carley joined the Gardens Unit staff in early March. Carley most recently served as Operations Manager at Telos Rare Bulbs in Arcata, California.

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Christopher Carley, IPM Specialist.

New York Avenue Beautified with Roses

Commuters using New York Avenue will soon see a splash of color from 145 disease-resistant landscape roses that gardens unit staff planted near the New York Avenue entrance.



New York Avenue before planting.

The Knock Out™ roses, donated by the Conard-Pyle Co., are resistant to black spot and other rose diseases. The rose planting marks the beginning of an effort to beautify the New York Avenue frontage to give passersby a taste of some of the beauty they can see if they venture inside the gates.



New York Avenue after planting.

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He worked as assistant manager wholesale production greenhouse and served as Facilities Manager and Lecturer at California State University. He takes over leadership for the National Arboretum's IPM program, which was formerly managed by Gardens Unit Leader Scott Aker. In addition to overall responsibility for pest management on the grounds, Carley will manage Gardens Unit greenhouse and nursery space.

Kathleen Emerson-Dell arrived in late February as the [National Bonsai & Penjing Museum's](#) Museum Technician. Emerson-Dell spent several years in Japan a taking courses in advanced

language skills. Before coming to the arboretum, she worked at the Walters Art Museum in Baltimore cataloging the Japanese collection and coordinating exhibits and installations. Her primary duties will be the curation of the artifacts and viewing stones as well as of developing and coordinating exhibits in the museum.



Kathleen Emerson-Dell, Museum Technician.



Jo Mercer, Education Programs Specialist.

Education Unit Welcomes New Education Programs Specialist

Dr. Jo Mercer became the Education and Visitor Services Unit's Horticultural Education Programs Specialist in early April. For the past 15 years, Dr. Mercer served as an educator of horticulture and environmental science for the New Castle County, Delaware, cooperative extension. Her accomplishments there were many: she developed and implemented an intensive basic training course for Master Gardener volunteer educators; she developed a gardening consultation/troubleshooting manual to assist volunteers in responding to home lawn, garden, and pest questions from the public; she served as the regional director of a professional horticulture group; and she assisted with a revision of the state pesticide certification manual. Mercer's doctorate is in education; she has a master's degree in biology.

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Her education course work included distance and web-based learning, knowledge that she will use to help create the arboretum's first online courses. She will focus first on scheduling fee-based programs for the remainder of the 2006 season.

Guides Graduate from New Training

The Education and Visitor Services Unit (EVSU) created and conducted a six-week-long training course for its volunteer guides early this year. It was the first time EVSU was responsible for the training. In the past, the [National Capital Area Federation of Garden Clubs \(NCAFGC\)](#) sponsored the training, recruiting new guides from among its members. But this training had not been offered in many years. EVSU's volunteer coordinator, Rose Ann Davis, worked with the unit's interpretive specialist, Nancy Luria, to create sessions that combined presentations on interpretive methods by EVSU with overviews of the collections by curators and scientists. Twenty volunteers attended the course, including six new to the program.

Arboretum Scientists Participate in Technology Showcase

The National Arboretum's [research](#) was featured recently at

a showcase designed to connect [Agricultural Research Service \(ARS\)](#) research with stakeholders who might be interested in commercial applications. The one-day event, held on February 23 in Beltsville, Maryland, included presentations by industry partners who have successfully commercialized ARS products or research, as well as ARS scientists who have products that could benefit from an industry partner. An example of the former is the 20-year partnership between National Arboretum virologists and the company Agdia, which has resulted in the development of diagnostic plant virus test kits used throughout the world. The National Arboretum presented research on non-chemical alternatives to control plant pathogens, and new ornamental landscape plants, both of which are projects that have great commercial application. The event was organized by ARS's

Office of Technology Transfer, the Maryland Technology Development Corporation, and the Tech Council of Maryland.

Arboretum on Display at Local Trade Show

Recent accomplishments of the [Floral and Nursery Plants Research Unit](#) were on display for over 12,000 green industry participants at the Mid-Atlantic Nursery Trade Show (MANTS), held January 11-13, 2006, at the Baltimore Convention Center. The show featured 972 exhibiting companies in 1576 booths. The National Arboretum's booth this year drew attention with its display of the recent ornamental pepper introduction, 'Black Pearl', as well as other plant germplasm-related exhibits.

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FNPRU display at MANTS.

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The annual show is known throughout the country for providing the green industry with a marketplace for finding plants, nursery stock, landscape and garden items, equipment, tools, and other green goods, as well as providing a forum for customers to make contacts, fill orders, greet friends, and see the latest developments and products in the industry.

Invasive Plant Management Team Tackles Renegade Plants

This past December the arboretum convened an Invasive



Intern pulling *Ampelopsis*.

Plant Management Team to track and attack invasive plants on the arboretum grounds. The team is working to make arboretum invasive plant control efforts more effective. Members of the team will develop follow-up control procedures necessitated by the successful completion of a 2005 contract with an invasive plant removal company. The company's workers removed invasive woody plants from four mature woodland sites at the arboretum, totaling 45 acres. Five action sites have been selected for current invasive plant control efforts. The team is comprised of staff from the arboretum's Gardens Unit and Floral and Nursery Plants Research Unit.

Local Arborists Offer a Helping Hand

On the cold winter morning of December 20, 2005, arborists from DTS, Inc. departed from their Suitland, Maryland office equipped with several stump grinders and headed to the National Arboretum. DTS, Inc. had made arrangements to provide a day of service to grind stumps in several prominent locations. Many of the large stumps were on steep slopes, making the job

very difficult. The challenges of these sites presented them with the opportunity to test some new equipment that is equipped with remote control and tracks that enable it to crawl up hills without endangering the operator. The equipment and experienced operators made an extremely difficult job look easy.

Surplus Koi Sale a Success

Over 700 koi—Japanese carp—from the aquatic garden surrounding the [Administration Building](#) were sold in the arboretum's first-ever koi sale on April 22. The fish were offspring of those that have lived in the pool for many years. Members of the ZNA Potomac Koi Club and other volunteers assisted staff the day before the sale in catching the fish and in sorting them by value. Both size and markings give koi value. As the pool was draining, staff and volunteers netted the fish, placing them in large temporary tanks on the terrace. The evaluation of the fish included assessing their overall health—most were in good condition—and in selecting the approximately 150 that would be returned to the pool after it was cleaned and refilled.

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