

NewsLeaf Friends of the Arboretum Newsletter

Building positive relationships between people and the land through support of the UW–Madison Arboretum

Fall 2022

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Laurie Elwell



Friends
of the
Arboretum

Congratulations
to FOA
on its 60th
anniversary!



In 60 years, we've grown from an 8-person to a 15-person board. Here are 9 of us!



Arboretum Photo Collection

May 18, 1963, Dedication of the Jackson Oak. Left to right, Professor Grant Cottam, Chair of the Arboretum Committee; A. W. Peterson, 1st FOA President; Lowell Frautchi, 1st FOA Vice President; Colonel Joseph W. "Bud" Jackson.

FOA Celebrates Sixty Years

Phase 3: Work on the Prairie Continues, the first FOA Meeting and Prairie Dedication

By Frank Court, author of *Pioneers of Ecological Restoration*
This is part 3 of a 3-part series

In 1941, Theodore "Ted" Sperry, the Arboretum's first prairie ecologist was drafted into the Army Air Corps. Commissioned and trained in meteorology, he served with a strategic weather squadron stationed in England that provided pre-flight briefings for bomber pilots. Sperry left behind an impressive record of accomplishments.

By 1939, the worn-out land that Sperry and the CCC had been attempting to restore to the status of a Midwest tallgrass prairie had begun to look like a tallgrass prairie. In September 1939, Colonel Joseph W. "Bud" Jackson, one of the original Arboretum founders, pleased with the results, advised Thomas J. Pattison, secretary of the Wisconsin State Highway Commission, to consider the possibility of seeding highway shoulders with prairie grasses. It was a novel idea in '39 that Jackson noted had originally been suggested by Aldo Leopold owing directly to the ongoing success of Sperry's restoration efforts. The federal government, privy to

Continued on next page

the results of Sperry's accomplishments, given the federal CCC presence at Camp Madison, also began to consider prairie restoration as a possible solution for the nation's pending dust bowl crisis. In spring 1940, commissioners from the Cook County, Illinois, Forest Preserve District, contemplating the possibilities for prairie restoration in forest preserves around Chicago, made a futile effort to "borrow" Sperry for a period long enough to get their own restoration efforts started. And, not surprisingly, years later, Ray Schulenberg, prairie ecologist from Chicago's Morton Arboretum, would acknowledge, in a presentation before the North American Prairie Conference, that "the precedent, inspiration, and basic procedural information" for the Morton Arboretum's own prairie restoration efforts were based almost entirely on early work at the UW Arboretum.

Sperry had left for the service in 1941. In 1942, John Curtis, hired in 1940 in order to share Arboretum directorship research responsibilities with Leopold by assuming the directorship of all Arboretum plant research including the prairie project, was granted a much coveted Guggenheim Fellowship and left the Arboretum in order to study Midwestern forest refuge planting locations. In October 1942, Curtis, as a contribution to the war effort, relocated to Haiti to direct a rubber plantation project experimenting with latex production. With Curtis out of the country, Leopold, in 1943, now once again sole director of all Arboretum research, urged the governing Arboretum Committee to appoint Robert "Bob" McCabe, Leopold's assistant, to direct the stalled prairie restoration effort with the aid of graduate students from Leopold's Game Management Department. In spring 1946, Sperry, discharged from the service, on his way to a new job as botany professor at Kansas State Teachers College, stopped by the Arboretum. He was thrilled with



Arboretum Photo Collection
John Curtis, who first proposed the formation of a protective "Friends" organization, inspects Arboretum prairie growth following a burn.

the progress that McCabe and the graduate students had made in the sixty acre Arboretum prairie during the years of his absence. McCabe had also continued the proven practice of seeding and controlled burns. Sperry would return to the Arboretum for lengthy visits and CCC reunions numerous times in later years, prior to his death in March 1995.

Curtis returned to the Arboretum and to his directorship of plant research in 1946. Unlike Sperry who depended on unskilled CCC workers for labor, Curtis now had the luxury of professional research time and the assistance of enthusiastic graduate students. He accrued volumes of scientific data, carefully recorded it, and made it available to the scientific world. When asked in 1962 if he was disappointed to learn that the prairie was to be dedicated to Curtis, Ted Sperry observed that Curtis, both for his accurate and thorough record keeping and his published research, deserved to have the prairie named after him. Curtis "gets credit for being first," he noted. "He did the work; he kept the records!"

On June 7th, 1961, Curtis died. Sixteen months later, on October 14, 1962, the first FOA meeting was held in conjunction with the dedication of the Prairie to John Curtis. Curtis, appropriately, as the record shows, was also the first senior Arboretum staff member officially to propose the formation of a "Friends" support organization.

Your Donations at Work—Supporting Student Researchers

Thanks in part to support from Friends, the UW–Madison Arboretum has been able to offer Research Fellowships to graduate students on campus over the past 4 years. Awards are given for projects that address our mission and vision and this year we were able to award four fellowships:

Mia Keady,

Leopold Fellowship Award

Roots, litter, deep soil, and microbes—investigating the paradigm shift of soil organic matter persistence

Benjamin Douglas,

Research Fellowship Award

Behavioral test of social norms and messaging in environmental education

Adrianna Gorsky,

Research Fellowship Award

Overlooked and understudied: urban and eutrophic ponds as greenhouse gas hotspots

Michelle Homann,

Research Fellowship Award

The role of climate and priority effects in tallgrass prairie community assembly

Be on the lookout in early 2023 for our annual Research Symposium at the Arboretum's Winter Enrichment Series to hear directly from our fellows and to learn more about their work.

Humble dazzle
Of autumn:
These leaves
On the ground—
Each one a page
In the Book,
A poem that says:
I lived.

I was
A small part
Of the whole
Story—this
Is my song,
This is my glory.

—Gregory Orr, from
How Beautiful the Beloved



Luncheon-Lectures October 2022 – June 2023



Luncheon-Lectures are held from 11:30 a.m. to 1:30 p.m. in the Arboretum Visitor Center Auditorium. Lunch is followed by an educational presentation. This popular series fills up quickly, so register as soon as you can. A registration confirmation will be sent to you. If a program you request is full, you will be contacted promptly. Reservations are transferable. If you give away your reservation, please call us at 608-890-2555 and let us know the name of the attendee. Vegetarian meal requests can be accommodated with at least 2 weeks advance notice. You also may cancel a reservation

and request a refund at least 2 weeks ahead of the event

Important Note: We are proceeding cautiously with registration at this time so please register for the first 2 Luncheon-Lectures ONLY — either online at foamadison.org or by check payable to FOA and sent to Friends of the Arboretum, 1207 Seminole Hwy., Madison, WI 53711. The cost of each of the first 2 Luncheon-Lectures is \$35.00.

Monday, October 10, 2022: Darners and Skimmers and Pondhawks, Oh My! The Life History of Damselflies and Dragonflies – Bob Honig, Biologist and retired environmental consultant

In the presentation, you'll hear about how these insects make their living. You'll learn details of mating and reproduction and find out answers to such questions as: Is it possible to breathe and poop via the same orifice? Can dragonflies prey on birds? What backyard pond features will attract dragonflies and damselflies? You'll get familiar with some of the common species in our area and other intriguing aspects of their lives.

Thursday, November 10, 2021: Climate Change and Wisconsin's Lakes – Hilary Dugan, Assistant Professor, Center for Limnology, UW–Madison

A look at how climate change is affecting freshwaters in Wisconsin. How, why, and where lakes are changing, and what we can do to curtail current trends.

Wednesday, January 18, 2023: The Arboretum's Grady Tract: 200 Acres of History, Restoration, and Research– Michael Hansen, Land Care Manager, UW–Madison Arboretum

Michael will provide an introduction to the Grady Tract, the Arboretum's 200-acre parcel located south of the Beltline Highway. He will discuss the site's history and unique features, early Arboretum restoration projects such as Greene Prairie and current projects being undertaken by the land care crew. He will also highlight some ongoing research projects.

Tuesday, February 14, 2023: Conservation in the 21st Century: Lessons from the Driftless Area to the World – Curt Meine, Senior Fellow, Aldo Leopold Foundation/Center for Human and Nature; Adjunct Associate Professor, UW–Madison

The Driftless Area of the Upper Midwest is distinguished by its unique natural and cultural history. The region's rugged landscape of ridges and valleys has presented special environmental challenges. The region has also fostered important innovations to meet those challenges. From the lifeways of the Native peoples of the Driftless, to early efforts in community-based conservation, to advancing organic agriculture, to enhancing climate resilience, these efforts hold important lessons for the wider world in addressing the critical environmental needs of the 21st century.

Tuesday, March 14, 2023: The Wisconsin Native Plant Garden: Reflections and Resilience – Susan Carpenter, Native Plant Garden Curator, UW–Madison Arboretum

As spring approaches, our dormant garden comes to life. This garden's growth and development provides lessons for creating resilient gardens at our homes and in community spaces. Discover practices and inspiration for starting or enhancing your native plant garden.

Tuesday, April 11, 2023: The Nature Conservancy in Wisconsin: Saving What We Love Together – Elizabeth Koehler, State Director, Nature Conservancy of Wisconsin

From Wisconsin's Northwoods to Door County and the grasslands of southern Wisconsin, The Nature Conservancy has been protecting the lands and water we depend on and cherish for almost 63 years. Wisconsin State Director Elizabeth Koehler will share some conservation highlights from the past year, including TNC's work to protect and manage a resilient network of lands and waters, address climate change, support farmers in improving soil health and protecting clean water, help create more stable and resilient Great Lakes fisheries, and collaborate with communities in Milwaukee to address water quality and flooding issues and increase the quality and quantity of urban green space. She'll also share a little about what's coming up next and how you can get involved.

Tuesday, May 16, 2023: May T. Watts, the Morton Arboretum, and the Origins of the Illinois Prairie Path – William Barnett, Professor of History at North Central College in Naperville, Illinois

May Theilgaard Watts was a beloved naturalist at Chicago's Morton Arboretum and her grassroots campaign established the Illinois Prairie Path in three years. She represented a distinctly Midwestern set of ideas, linking earlier conservationists and 1960s environmentalism with a strong focus on nature study and a deep concern about suburban sprawl and the loss of farms and prairies.

Thursday, June 8, 2023: Everyone Is Listening for Something – Douglas Hill, Emeritus Professor of Music, UW–Madison

Douglas Hill will present and discuss excerpts from four of his original compositions, inspired by the wilderness writings of Leopold, Olson, Derleth or Thoreau...the setting of word rhythms and subtle inferences from the selected language, the application of vocal qualities and instrumental tone colors to suggest images and specific elements of the wilderness, and, ultimately, how these choices work together to celebrate the wonders of the natural world through music.



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I Had No Idea!

by Laurie Elwell, FOA Past President

Way back in 2019, I promised to serve as FOA President beginning in June of 2020 if Kathy Poi agreed to stay in that position for “just” one more year so that I could learn the ropes from her. Like everyone else at that time, I had no idea what was ahead. While the position ended up with more challenges than I anticipated, it also served up more rewards than I ever could have imagined.

Thanks to a remarkable group of committed FOA board and staff, and with the unwavering support of so many members of the Arb staff and Friends, we begin the 2022–23 year ready for just about any contingency. Our ability to move forward and adjust to the times is due in large part to the creation of our online e-commerce site early last year and the launch of our monthly e-newsletter, *The LEAF*. New ways of operating have become feasible.

In 2021, we held a wonderfully successful curbside pick-up only Native Plant Sale, which led to a best-of-both-worlds hybrid tent and curbside pick-up sale in 2022. While we worked on plans for a pandemic-friendly Native Plant Sale, the board formed a workgroup to convert our in-person Luncheon-Lecture Series into a Lunchtime-Lecture Webinar Series. We are grateful to our speakers

for their willingness to switch formats and to former board member Chris Smithka for serving as webmaster for what turned out to be two full seasons of virtual lectures. We are delighted our fall Luncheon-Lectures have returned to the Visitor Center.

We’ve recently begun discussing re-starting our popular day-long educational field trips to locations outside of Madison. In the absence of this option during the pandemic, our Trips Committee put together several top-notch half-day small group tours of the Grady Tract and Longenecker Gardens. We thank Arb staff Michael Hansen and David Stevens for the fascinating programs they led.

In addition to ending the 2021–22 year with versatile plans for each of our events, we’re also wrapping up our responsibilities as sub-grant recipients under the Arboretum’s EPA WATER grant. With our sub-grant, eight rain gardens were installed in and around the Madison area, and educational materials on maintaining gardens were developed and translated into Spanish. This was the first time Friends has served the Arboretum in this capacity.

The most rewarding part of the past two years for me has been, quite simply, the ability to witness the Arboretum in action. As a result, I have developed a deep appreciation for what a vibrant and collaborative place it is. The Arboretum, through its research and education initiatives,

is tackling so many pertinent issues related to the environmental challenges the world is facing. For anyone concerned about these challenges, the Arboretum is the perfect place to devote your time, energy and environmental charitable giving.

I look forward to my final year on the board and to maintaining close ties with the Arboretum. I wish Kate Martin, a long-time dedicated Arboretum volunteer, the very best as she assumes the leadership role with Friends. And finally, I thank you all for your steadfast support of the Arboretum.



Laurie passes the chair to new FOA President Kate Martin.