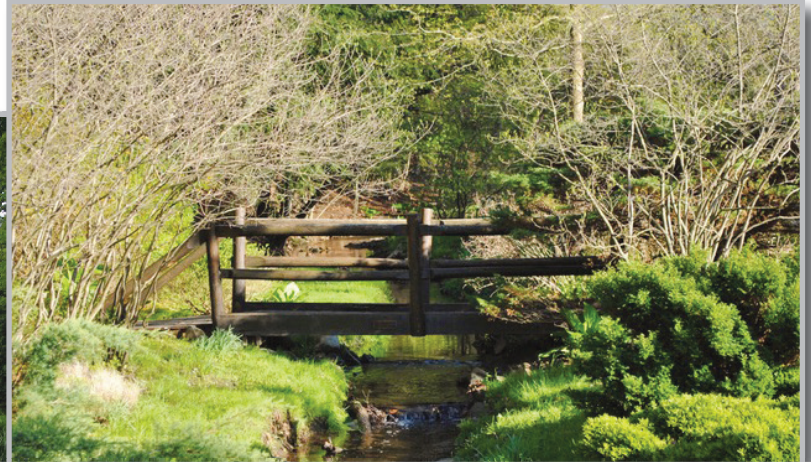


Friends of
Laurelwood Arboretum
Connecting People with Nature



2021 Year in Review



From the President

Dear Friends,

As the world is working its way toward the end of its second pandemic year, it is a comfort to me to look back at our 2021 season. Despite the continued curtailment of many of our activities, there was still much that we were able to do and enjoy together. This Year in Review, my third, reflects on those accomplishments and camaraderie.



My 2020 Year in Review described the successful season we had despite the first year of the pandemic, and ended with some ideas about where we were going to go from there. This year, I'd like to start by discussing how those ideas unfolded.

A *Sculpture Trail* had been taking shape last year even with some setbacks caused by the pandemic. At that time, we had six sculptures installed in the arboretum. I'm happy to report that we now have 14 sculptures and were able to celebrate with a Sneak Peek in June. The culmination of our efforts was the Grand Opening, a very successful two-event weekend in October 2021.

Saturday's *Family, Fun & Food* celebration drew more than 300 people, many of them first-time visitors. Children enjoyed story time, a dance party,

volunteers, including clay sculpting and watercolor painting. Throughout the day, food trucks provided very popular refreshments. It was a lot of fun!

Sunday evening's *Tours, Tunes, Brews and BBQ* brought a lively crowd to the arboretum.



There was a sense of relief in the air that we were able to gather outdoors to finally celebrate A *Sculpture Trail*. And the evening lived up to its billing, with tours by curator Scott Broadfoot and our volunteer docents, entertaining music, and delicious barbecue and local craft beers. We were pleased to welcome Mayor Chris Vergano and his wife Deneen to the arboretum that evening. Several artists whose works are on display in A *Sculpture Trail* attended as well.



magic tricks and giant bubbles in the Sensory Garden and surrounding areas. They also participated in art projects designed by our talented

This celebratory weekend also featured a pop-up gallery of smaller sculptures by our *Sculpture Trail* artists and other unique artworks for sale in the



Knippenberg Center for Education. In December, this gallery became our Holiday Fine Art Boutique. A portion of the proceeds from the sale of these works of art benefitted the arboretum.

The Grand Opening was successful not only as a fundraiser but also in terms of attendance, conviviality, visibility and the good will engendered



in the community and among the volunteers. It is always great to have an event that draws us all together, particularly after the last year and a half. We extend our thanks to Scott Broadfoot, the talented curator of *A Sculpture Trail*, and to volunteers Leslie and Stuart Reiser, the co-chairs of *A Sculpture Trail* Committee. There are many worthy causes to which Leslie and Stu could

have devoted their time and effort, and we are grateful that they chose Laurelwood. Their creativity, hard work and sheer persistence helped make *A Sculpture Trail* a reality.



Last year I reported that the contractor engaged by the Township had just started a project to dredge out the silt in both of our ponds. I'm happy to report that the dredging finished up last spring. All volunteer hands were then called on deck for a cleanup of the perimeter of Laurel Pond. Waders and muck boots were put to good use, as was our rowboat! Small trees and branches that were hanging into



the pond were cut away and staff gardener Eddy Lantigua carted away everything that the volunteers fished out of the pond. Then the area was pruned, weeded and mulched. After that, the ponds were treated for duckweed and are now healthy.



Continuing our work around Laurel Pond, our outdoor staff and several volunteers amended the soil on the slope from Azalea Way down to the pond where the dredged silt was loaded onto trucks to be taken away. Next, they built a

beautiful new retaining wall at the bottom of the slope to contain the amended soil. In the early fall, the azaleas that were moved from the area before the dredging project started were



returned. Two new benches along Azalea Way are the cherry on top. We are very excited to see what Azalea Way will look like this spring when the azaleas bloom, after all that hard work.



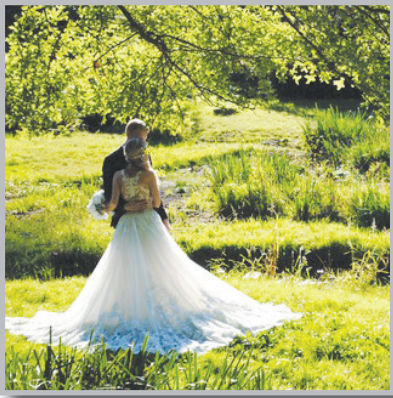
Last year I reported that we applied for a substantial grant from the Stanley Smith Horticultural Trust to upgrade our irrigation system and extend it to new gardens. I'm happy to report that, thanks to volunteer grant writer Joe Di Giacomo, the grant was awarded and the work was done in May and June. We now have irrigation for the gardens along Brook Road, around the South Lawn and in the front of the arboretum, including the South Rock Garden, the Three Corners Garden and the Wetlands Garden. No more hauling hoses and buckets to those areas!

The damage that deer are causing in the arboretum continues to be our number one problem.



We decided to tackle it by establishing a committee to seek solutions. We commissioned a forest health survey, which showed that our understory is severely depleted by the deer. We visited other gardens to learn about their experiences. We met with suppliers to get an idea of costs and materials for various alternatives. Based on all this work, we prepared a detailed proposal for submission to the Township, which persuaded Mayor Vergano and his administration to partner with us, agreeing to provide support on this project. This work is continuing.

Speaking of the Township, the Department of Parks and Recreation and its Director Tim Roetman have done so much for the arboretum this season. They provided shuttle buses for *A Sculpture Trail* events, scheduled the Township's tree and maintenance crews to visit us several times this season, arranged for the dredging and treatment of our ponds, and were very supportive of our efforts and activities. We extend our thanks to Tim, as well as to Mayor Vergano, for their unstinting support.



In terms of community outreach, we continued to host many weddings and photography shoots. We are pleased that we can provide a beautiful backdrop for these happy events.

Another instance of community outreach: We partnered with the Wayne Public Library for several Zoom presentations on topics such as



the rhododendron legacy at Laurelwood, A *Sculpture Trail*, fall gardening and, our favorite, the problems caused by the overabundance of deer. We've also continued to offer our very popular walking and cart tours, walks with herbalist Robin Rose Bennett on the medicinal benefits of common plants, and Girl Scout activities. Laurelwood served as a volunteer and



team-building destination for corporate and community groups, including Columbia Bank, Wyndham Hotels and Resorts and the Leo Club of Wayne Hills High School. We ended our year



of community outreach by once again participating in the Holiday Open House in Skylands Manor at the New Jersey Botanical Garden. The theme this year was "An Artist's Holiday." Featuring the nature photographer Ansel Adams, our decoration of the Central Hallway used natural materials and many examples of his work.



In August, Friends of Laurelwood Arboretum was honored to welcome Mikie Sherrill, the U.S. Representative for New Jersey's eleventh congressional district, to Laurelwood Arboretum. Ms. Sherrill was taken on a tour to view the

gardens and the sculptures that are part of A *Sculpture Trail* and to learn about Friends of Laurelwood Arboretum and its management of the park. Volunteer Clelia De Souter coordinated the Congresswoman's visit.

Our outdoor employees are just the best. We continue to hear that the arboretum has never looked so beautiful. Our heartfelt thanks go to Joan Scott-Miller, Eddy Lantigua, Felix Fernandez and Kay Gardiner. Kay, who spent two summers



interning with us and joined our staff at the end of our 2020 season, is now a full-time seasonal employee with the title Assistant to the Horticultural Manager. Joan deserves special mention for creating a much-needed and very thorough Horticultural Master Plan and a long-overdue tree maintenance and pest containment program. All four are a great team. We also hired a park ambassador, Christian Wantula, who worked weekend afternoons during the season to make sure our visitors were safely enjoying the arboretum.



The beauty of the arboretum is also due to our volunteers, who were so generous with their time again this year. Many volunteers beautified the arboretum by working in the gardens, but many contributed in other important ways. I'd like to mention one volunteer in particular: Georgette Moesch. In addition to being an indefatigable weeder and mulcher, Georgette has become our go-to person for all things related to the physical plant of the arboretum. She tracked down mechanics to make repairs on our woodchipper and aging utility carts, found a mason to refurbish our paver patio, hired workers to install drainpipes on our Propagation Greenhouse and to stain our fence enclosures, and engaged an electrician to replace broken light fixtures, just to name a few of the multitude of tasks that she was able to cross off our to-do list. I can say that, thanks to Georgette, Laurelwood Arboretum runs more like a well-oiled machine than ever before.



Upon completion of our Propagation Greenhouse early last year, we recognized that both of our greenhouses contain complicated pieces of climate control machinery that we, as volunteers, weren't very familiar with. In characteristic fashion, Georgette came to the rescue by arranging for an intensive training session led by a representative of the manufacturer. With ten attendees, we now have a deep bench of knowledgeable people who can run the greenhouse systems. That is a very good thing, as our two greenhouses are full of plants and bustling volunteers.

The Educational Greenhouse has been the locus of much activity geared toward the Annual Plant Sale, which will be held in May again this year.



Volunteer Linda Wescott is already hard at work planning this important fundraiser. Last year, she added an online pre-sale of annuals and broke the record once again for our most successful Plant Sale. This year, she is considering additional enhancements. Her ideas know no bounds!

The Propagation Greenhouse is the center of our rhododendron and azalea propagation efforts, led by Joe Di Giacomo. It is also home to plants from our Tropical Garden during the winter months.

Our Board members continue to devote their time to collaborating on ideas and projects for the benefit of the arboretum. Joining us recently on the Board is Neal Bellet, the retired Business Administrator for the Township of Wayne and an avid photographer.



And let me give a shout-out to Trees Unlimited and Justin Shaw, who donated a whole crew for a day. This crew removed five damaged or dying trees for the safety of everyone in the arboretum.

I am heartened by our progress. I am cheered by the wonderful collegiality of our volunteers, the willingness of our staff to go above and beyond, and the support that we receive from the Township of Wayne, our members and our donors. Their many contributions have been and continue to be the lifeblood of Laurelwood Arboretum. I have mentioned only a few in this report, but there are so many who do so much. To recognize them, I have included a list of our leadership team and staff, as well as a list of volunteers, at the end of this report. We would love to see your name on these lists — you would be most welcome!

It has been a pleasure serving as the President of Laurelwood Arboretum over the last three years. All of us together have done many things that have sustained the arboretum and that have advanced our mission. At the same time, we made good friends and enjoyed each other's company. I look forward to the upcoming season, with the expectation that our many committed volunteers working together will only add to the progress we've made for the benefit of the whole community.

Thank you, and see you in the arboretum!

Linda E. Ransom
President

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