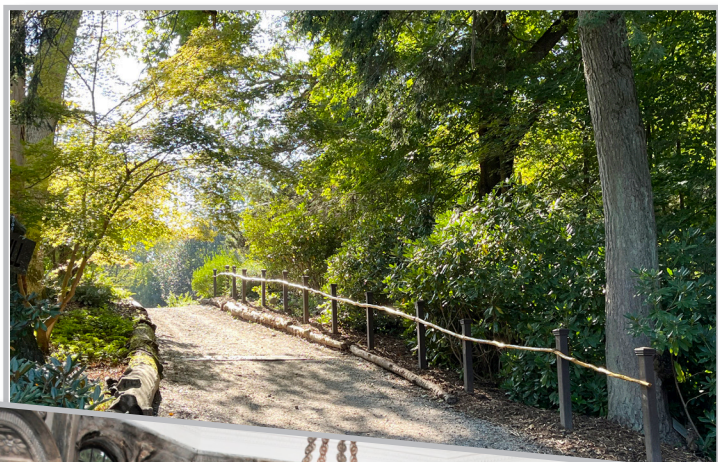


Friends of
Laurelwood Arboretum
Connecting People with Nature



2023 Year in Review



President's Annual Meeting Report – 2023

Our 2023 season at Laurelwood Arboretum began with a flourish, building on the dedication and creativity of our remarkable volunteers and staff. The momentum started in November 2022 with our Skylands Manor Holiday Open House, where the “breakfast room” was transformed into a magical Gnome Haven under the inspired leadership of Ingrid Patois and her hardworking committee. Their talents brought joy to all who visited and set the stage for our first-ever Holiday Boutique fundraiser held in December.

Winter Preparations

Throughout the winter, activity at the Arboretum remained strong. Volunteers tended to plants in the upper and lower greenhouses three days a week. Our site manager, Gary Molan, ensured that the grounds were clean and safe, regularly inspecting for damage and performing crucial repairs.

Spring Awakening

The season officially began with our Welcome Back Party in early April, ushering in a renewed enthusiasm for spring cleanup efforts. A team trip to Edge of the Woods Nursery in Pennsylvania helped secure native plants and shrubs for general landscaping and the development of our new Native Plant Garden, spearheaded by Master Gardener Lourdes Osorio and funded by a Stanley Smith grant.

Earth Day was a highlight in April, coordinated by Bonnie Joachim and

Alice Moskowitz, with enthusiastic participation from our volunteers and a special appearance by Mayor Chris Vergano.

We also launched our Art Appraisal Program, organized by Stuart and Leslie Reiser and Scott Broadfoot, which delighted participants with the surprising value of their items.

A major milestone was the installation of a 12-foot custom bench crafted by David Robinson, beautifully wrapping around the Oak tree at the entrance to the Native Plant Garden. Nearby, Eddy, Felix, Sean, and Gary constructed a rustic trellis using organic materials sourced from our own grounds.

Ongoing Garden and Education Initiatives

The energy continued with our most successful Plant Sale to date, led by Linda Wescott. Following the sale, Joe DiGiacomo, our Rhododendron expert, hosted a well-received educational workshop and tour.

Our guided cart and walking tours began in June, led by Rich Santoro and others, with Ingrid Patois continuing her popular Wayne walking tours. We also enjoyed a fascinating floral design presentation from Gail Bassalino, President of the Pines Lake Garden Club.

The Green Quest Children's Club, created and presented by high school student Aadhi Balaji, offered children ages 6–12 a chance to connect with nature weekly at the KCE.

President's Annual Meeting Report – 2023

Volunteer engagement was at an all-time high this summer. In addition to our regular Wednesday teen group, Columbia Bank sent two large groups of volunteers who helped break ground on the future Environmental Preserve, also funded by a Columbia Bank grant.

In August, we celebrated all our volunteers' birthdays with a delicious brunch and cake, thanking them for their tireless contributions.

Facility Improvements and Events

This year saw key infrastructure upgrades, including the installation of a handrail on Home Hill completed by Gary and gardening staff and the replacement of the gazebo and shed roofs.

Our art and photo exhibits continued to draw visitors to the Knippenberg Center, thanks to the leadership of Alice Moskowitz. Exhibits included work from the Wayne Hills Photo Club, Ridgewood Camera Club, Essex Watercolor Club, and a solo show by Laurelwood volunteer Ritika Ghandi.

We had a strong presence at Wayne Day in October and proudly hosted the Chrysanthemum Society of New Jersey's annual show for the first time at the KCE.

Three stunning new sculptures were installed:

- Squirt by Vivien Collins

- Egrets by Babette Bloch
- Up and Away by Elaine Lorenz

A special highlight was our visit to the Newington-Cropsey Foundation Academy of Art in Hastings-on-Hudson, NY, where we received a generous donation of two fish busts by Greg Wyatt, a world-renowned sculptor. These pieces are now displayed at the KCE.

In preparation for winter, Gary built three new cold frames in the Upper Greenhouse to protect young Rhododendrons. Our Sensory Garden was temporarily dismantled and will be replanted in the spring after wintering in the greenhouse.

We closed the season with our annual Halloween/Thank You/End-of-Year Party, celebrating another successful year.

Membership and Support

Membership grew to 559 this year. We are deeply grateful for the generous support from donors and grantors, including the Ira Rochelle Foundation, Murtano Foundation, Master Gardeners, Columbia Bank, and Stanley Smith Foundation.

In closing, heartfelt thanks go out to each and every one of our volunteers, staff, and supporters. Your passion, creativity, and commitment have made 2023 one of Laurelwood Arboretum's most successful years yet. We look forward to continuing this amazing journey with you all in 2024.