



Newsletter of the W. Gordon Belser Arboretum
Department of Biological Sciences

March 15, 2009

Open House.

The year has been an unusual one, weather wise. January was very dry; February was very cold. The plants in general were greatly delayed in leafing out and blooming, giving quite a wintery appearance to the City. A transformation of the garden scene has occurred in the past week after the deluge of three and a half inches of rain for most of the Columbia area on the February 27-March 1 weekend, followed by 70 degree+ and 80+ daytime temperatures most of the following week. All this promises an exciting Open House on March 15 from 1-4 pm.

New Projects Completed in the past month.

The featured items for the Open House will be three newly finished projects. First of all, the cutting of the ribbon on the New Museum/Library building will take place at 3 pm. Not all the exhibits will be finished, but things of interest for all ages will be in place. We hope you enjoy the new décor of the old tool shed, the lovely donated furniture, and the beginning of the exhibits.

Secondly, the nursery beds have matured during the past two years to the point where we have been able to lift about 300 seedlings in early March and place them in their new permanent homes in the appropriate ecosystems at the Arboretum. Using a new method, we were able to germinate almost 200 buckeye trees; the buckeye is one of the most attractive of the North American flowering small forest trees. About 125 of these have been moved out as understory throughout the Arboretum and will be noticeable by the red marker flag and the protective cage. Please stay on the trail; the seedlings are still very small and fragile! Other new plantings include wild black cherry, silky dogwood, wax myrtle, sycamore, dogwood, sweet bay magnolia, red bay, all spice, wild native azaleas, wild ginger, palmetto, white oak, red oak trees, and many ground cover plants. A new part of this restoration of the ecosystems is a project named Wayside Wildflowers. Understory shrubs and ground covers will be planted along the sides of the trail to provide a pleasant display for trail walks, and to act as a protected nursery for eventual

placement throughout each ecosystem. The project is funded by a generous check from The Rotary Club of Columbia.

Another new and exciting project will be initiated at the Open House with the first meeting of the Sherwood Forest Garden Guild. Valerie Marcil has brain-stormed this project; the first meeting and Plant Exchange will take place at 2 pm at the Arboretum Open House.

Plants in Bloom or New Growth.

A walk around the Lindler Loop Trail will be very rewarding in mid-March. Starting at the Bloomwood Gate, watch for the following developments. In the CANDO Gardens the Spirea is blooming in spectacular, bouffant white clouds, backed by the gold of the yellow jasmine and the red of the cross vine on the fence. In the Horseshoe Garden, many of the plants of the rope-and-post stations are leafing out and a few are in bloom. Note the start of the Wayside Wildflowers by the live oak trees at the Trail Head; the 85 seedlings of the former special plant nursery have been lifted out for planting leaving only a very select group of five of the most beautiful small forest trees: American Holly, Silky Camellia, Snowball Tree, Red Buckeye, and Sweet Bay Magnolia.

Further along, another 50 tree seedlings have been planted in the wetland disturbed by the city sewage line repair. Note the red flags and cage over the red buckeyes along the trailside. As you reach the top of the hill and approach the Wilmot gate, keep your eyes open in the beech forest area for the three handsome southern sugar maple saplings that have just been moved out of the nursery; these have reached 6 feet in height and will be leafing out in the next week or two. Be certain to look closely at the 50 Bald Cypress, which have responded enthusiastically by sprouting the green pearl-like nubbins that will soon open into their needles. On the uphill stretch to the Arboretum House many new seedlings have been planted, especially in the area of the Ice Age Relict Garden. Look for the relict trilliums, the mountain geranium and ginger in bloom, the Paw-Paw patch in bud. Directly in front of the House are the 40 species that will soon constitute an entirely new upland Hardwood Forest; during the past week many of these newly planted seedlings have put out new leaf buds. In the Pine Plantation look for the brilliant Gaillardia or Cover Plant in full bloom with striking red, yellow and orange flowers.

Wish list for the Arboretum.

If you are a native plant grower and can share a small starter cutting or plant for our Wayside Wildflower Project, we will add it immediately to our trailside project. Just bring it to the Arboretum in a pot with its name and a sentence about its preferred habitat. We are also diligently looking for natural stones such as river rocks (anything over 4 inches in diameter and no limit to the upper size; these will be used in April and following to restore the mid-sections of our stream and waterfalls. Every rock will help! Volunteer helpers are also needed to help with the many spring jobs: Wednesday from 7:30am to 2:30pm, and the CANDO work session Saturday, March 14 from 8 to 11 am.

We hope that all these new projects and the burst of spring growth will bring you much joy and peace. We look forward to seeing you at the Arboretum on Sunday.