

VOLUNTEER

July 2023



Morris Arboretum
& Gardens

UNIVERSITY of PENNSYLVANIA

Aesculus parviflora

Volunteer

A newsletter published monthly for
Arboretum volunteers.

Mission of Morris Arboretum & Gardens

The Morris Arboretum of the University of Pennsylvania inspires an understanding of the relationship between plants, people and place through education, research and horticultural display.

Vision for the Future

As an irreplaceable public garden, the Morris provides a place of respite, beauty and learning where the joy and wonder of the natural world inspire all who visit to be enthusiastic ambassadors for plants and our fundamental dependence on them.

A vital part of one of the great research universities in the world, the Morris Arboretum & Gardens is renowned for its science aimed at understanding and conserving plants and ecosystems.

CALL FOR CONTENT!

Do you have an idea for a column or article
for our beloved Volunteer Newsletter? Let us
know!

Contact: Jenny Rajotte
jrajotte@upenn.edu

Information:

(215) 247-5777

www.morrisarboretum.org
100 E. Northwestern Avenue
Philadelphia, PA 19118

Jenny Rajotte, Interim Editor

Contributors: Jim Kohler, Joyce Munro, Deitra
Arena, Bryan Thompson-Nowak

Photos: Jenny Rajotte unless otherwise stated



New pot designs adorn the entrance kiosk

Contents

Letter from the Editor	1
Notes from a Garden Educator	2
Around the Gardens: Updates from Bill Cullina	3-4
Youth & Visitor Education: Envisioning a Future Together	5
From the Archives	6
Calendars	7-8

Letter from the Editor

Summer is in full swing here at the Morris!

All of the tell-tale signs are there: uncountable blooms bursting in the Rose Garden, just in time for Moonlight & Roses and the official reopening after months of construction; young folks in our Nature Explorers and ACLAMO summer camp programs enjoying the abundance of sunshine and plants; and people from all over the region, country, and even world are taking the time to stop and visit all that the Arboretum & Gardens has to offer!

In this issue of Volunteer, we're sharing some exciting updates about new features that have sprung up (and splashed in?!) here in the gardens, so you can learn some interesting facts to know and share with our guests. You'll also hear from Clara Reyes in Youth & Visitor Education about her time this far, and some things to expect in the future.

We're looking forward to spending a lot of time in the coming weeks and months working with you all to plan for our future together here at the Morris. Part of that will be taking a look at this here publication: What do we want and need from our newsletter? I can't possibly answer this question (among many others!) alone, and hope you will consider getting involved in upcoming opportunities to share and learn together.

Stay tuned for more gatherings, inquiries, and invitations to share!

With immense gratitude,

Jenny Rajotte

*Program Coordinator,
Internships & Volunteers*



Guests at Moonlight & Roses were greeted with a lush display of blooms on June 3

Notes from A Garden Educator

Why It's Difficult to Rid Ourselves of Plastic

This spring, I purchased many annuals for my garden and balcony planters, and even though I tried to select plants that were not encased in plastic, I still ended up with more than twenty plastic pots to dispose of... and therein lies my frustration. Years ago, I started bagging groceries in my own cloth bags, and I use mesh cloth bags for transporting produce items and glass storage jars for making bulk purchases. I also avoid buying liquids (juice, cooking oil, dairy, condiments) packaged in plastic and always request paper or foil over plastic takeout containers. The ubiquity of plastic makes it difficult to eliminate entirely. Finding suitable alternatives that can replace plastic without compromising functionality and cost-effectiveness is a tremendous challenge.

The problem with plastics is less about the fact that they are made from fossil fuels, but more about what is done with them at end of life, says Michael Shaver, a British sustainable materials innovator. Most plastic does not get recycled, and it's not because people aren't putting the right thing in trash and recycling bins. "It's because so much of our plastic products just cannot be recycled."

Alternatives to plastic (glass, aluminum and paper) all come with recycling challenges and disadvantages when compared to plastic. Making, transporting, and recycling glass are all energy intensive. In addition, glass is more prone to breakage than plastic, aluminum and paper. While aluminum is lightweight and recyclable, making it involves environmentally destructive mining and an

energy intensive production process. While recycling aluminum saves nearly 95% of the energy required to manufacture new aluminum, aluminum cans are typically lined with a thin plastic coating on the inside that acts as a protective lining. So we're burning the plastic lining when recycling the container. While paper is thought to be the most environmentally sustainable packaging material, recycling paper requires a lot of environmentally damaging chemicals and a lot of energy and water.



While the reduction and elimination of plastic waste seems imperative for a sustainable future, there are no simple solutions to completely eradicate plastic from our lives. And, according to Shaver, it requires a multi-faceted approach involving technological advancements, infrastructure improvements, consumer education and worldwide policy changes. Does it matter if something is recyclable if it's not recycled?

See you in the Arboretum & Gardens!

Jim Kohler, Garden Educator

Koi at Morris Arboretum & Gardens

New residents are making a splash in the Swan Pond!

by William Cullina, F. Otto Haas Executive Director

Koi are colorful, selectively bred carp developed in Japan over the past 200 years. The name koi means love or affection in Japanese, and the more formal name for them, Nishikigoi, means living or swimming jewel. Koi became very popular in the US during the late Victorian era, and John and Lydia Morris kept koi at Compton for many years.

We decided to bring back koi to the Morris this spring to provide enjoyment for our guests. We worked with Hanover Koi Farm, of Hanover, Pennsylvania—one of the largest koi breeders in the US—to select individuals for release into the Swan Pond. Modifications to the pond's outflow were completed in late April so the koi would remain in the pond, and on May 7, fourteen 7- to 9-inch, one-year-old fish were introduced. There are many different varieties of koi that have been developed in Japan. Some of the varieties you will see in the Swan Pond are:

- White and orange—Kohaku
- Yellow Ogon along with a black-scaled, yellow variety—Kin Matsuba
- Black, orange and white—Showa Sanshoku
- Blue with orange below—Asagi
- Orange with black scaled—Matsuba
- White with copper—Kin Kikokuryu



Select breeding adults at Hanover Koi Farm

Curious about koi?

What do koi eat? We provide them with special koi pellets once a day, although they primarily feed on plants and small insects they find in the mud at the pond's bottom.

How big will they get? Koi can grow up to 3 feet. These koi will double in size the first year and reach 2 feet or so by year three. Koi can live 25 to 40 years or more, but growth slows markedly after age 3.

Can koi survive the winter outside? Yes, as long as the pond does not freeze solid, koi are winter hardy.

Will these koi breed? They may breed, although the other fish (bluegills) in the pond will consume the eggs and baby koi.

What about blue herons? Blue herons will readily catch and eat koi, but the swans are very territorial and chase the herons away.

Will you add more koi in the future? The Swan Pond is large enough to accommodate many more koi, but we will likely not add many additional fish.

Around the Gardens: The Willow Wander

by William Cullina, F. Otto Haas Executive Director

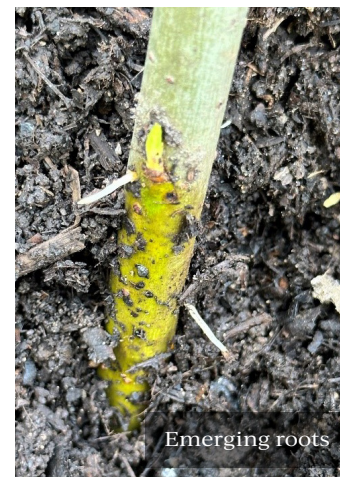
Patrick Dougherty's popular, though temporary, willow structure Loop de Loop had to be taken down because of age in November 2022, so the Morris staff decided to install a new willow exhibit in its place. Unlike the Dougherty sculpture that used dried willow stems, the Morris team decided to adapt an ancient method used to make living fences to create a serpentine live willow tunnel and dome.

Willow stems 10 to 18 feet long were used to construct the project. It is best to harvest the stems in late winter just before they begin to break dormancy. The stems need to be kept damp and protected until planting, so they do not dry out and die. We cut the largest stems



that form the frame of the dome from a flame willow (*Salix x 'Flame'*) across from the Swan Pond. The remaining willow was purchased from the Vermont Willow Nursery <https://vermontwillownursery.com/>, a small nursery in northern Vermont that specializes in living willow fences and structures. They provided us with three selections of purpleosier willow (*Salix purpurea*)—'Dicky Meadows', 'Bleu', and 'Multinervis,' and two selections of the Japanese *Salix miyabeana*—'Winter Green' and 'SX64.'

We used a post hole auger to dig 2-foot holes in a specified pattern, then inserted the butt of the chosen stems before lightly repacking the soil. Willows were woven and tied with jute twine in the chosen shape.



In all, we used 300 willow stems to construct the 35-foot tunnel and 18-foot diameter dome. The willows were planted in late March to early April 2023 and were kept damp using a soaker hose while the stems rooted. Willow bark contains a natural rooting hormone, so within three weeks, roots began to emerge.

We plan on lightly shearing the willow during the growing season to encourage a thick, verdant canopy that retains the original shape.

Updates from Youth & Visitor Education: Envisioning Our Future Together

by Clara Reyes

In April, I hit the ground running with you all as we started a (very!) busy Spring and Summer season of tours and visitor programs! In those early days, I felt very supported by all the Garden Educator Volunteers who kept pushing forward to deliver amazing tours and support visitors in the garden areas during a staff transition. I learned so much from you all about the grounds themselves, as well as your hopes for the future of the volunteers at Morris Arboretum & Gardens. Most of all, I was inspired every day by all of the volunteers' commitment to creating unique and exciting educational opportunities for the young people who visit our campus. It is clear that every single Garden Educator brings their love of nature and education to their shifts every single day. I am so inspired by you all!

Moving forward in the next few months, what I hope to accomplish first is an evaluation of Youth and Visitor Programming. During this process, I want to engage our amazing Garden Educators, who facilitate a majority of the Youth Education programs here. I would like to hear from you all about our programs. You all are an integral part of how they are run and your thoughts are necessary as we bring our programs into the future. I think we are at a crucial moment – we can use this opportunity with new staff and volunteers to ensure that all our programming is responsive, intentional, diverse, and fun. I hope that the next few months can be a time of reflection, evaluation, and planning!

I'm also excited about the opportunity for collaboration between Volunteer sections and staff. There is a wealth of expertise between us all, which means there are unending resources to be utilized in our unique experiences and worldviews. In the future, I (along with Megan and Jenny) will be planning learning opportunities for the volunteers, and facilitated by volunteers! My hope is that we can create unity with all the volunteer groups by learning from each other.

My door is always open to Volunteers. If you have a concern, a question, or a suggestion, please feel free to visit, call, or email me.

As always, thank you for everything! It's an exciting time to be a Volunteer at the Morris Arboretum & Gardens!

Visit me: In Gates Hall, 2nd Floor

Call me: (215) 247-5777 ext. 128

Email me: clarey@upenn.edu

From the Archives

by Joyce H. Munro

Every Object Has a Story: Red Jade Vase

The day John Morris turned sixty-five, his sister Lydia walked into the dining room at Compton for breakfast, wished him a happy birthday and handed him a small box. Inside was a tiny Chinese vase made of red jade. John examined it and declared it was “an exquisite piece of workmanship.” As a knowledgeable collector of Oriental art and antiquities, he knew the vase was unique, so he listed it in his *Catalogue No. 2 of Articles Belonging to John T. & Lydia T. Morris* with a sketch and brief description.



This unusual vase was bought at “the unusual store,” [Vantine & Company](#). Vantine’s Philadelphia store opened in 1906 with newspaper ads touting it as the place to purchase objects “gathered from the old cities and out-of-the-way places of the Far East.” Two years later, when Vantine’s opened their Japanese Tea Room—a retreat from the busy store where shoppers could sip Vantine’s tea from fine china cups—I suspect Lydia may have been one of their first customers. But Vantine’s Philadelphia store was short-lived—it closed soon after Lydia shopped for her brother’s birthday present.

By 1921, all four of Vantine’s stores had closed. Gimbel Brothers bought Vantine’s remaining inventory, valued at a quarter million dollars, and distributed it to their stores. Then they advertised a company-wide sale. At the Philadelphia Gimbel’s, cloisonné, china, teak furniture and kimonos sold at half price. Gimbel’s announced that they were committed to continuing Vantine’s long-running connection to the Orient. But after the stock sold out, the only Vantine products Gimbel’s carried were perfumes, sachets and incense.

John and Lydia purchased several objects of art at Vantine’s, including a large Sumida urn with drip glaze and raised porcelain figures. This piece was so remarkable, they granted it a [place of prominence](#) in the Overlook Garden.

July

Upcoming Events

Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
						1
2	3	4 Bloomin' Bubbles 11 AM	5	6	7	8 Water Features Tour 11 AM
9	10	11 Bloomin' Bubbles 11 AM	12	13	14	15
16	17	18 Bloomin' Bubbles 11 AM	19 July Story Time 10:30 AM	20	21	22
23	24	25 Bloomin' Bubbles 11 AM	26	27	28	29
30	31					

August

Upcoming Events

Sunday Monday Tuesday Wednesday Thursday Friday Saturday

		1	2	3	4	5
6	7	8 Bloomin' Bubbles 11 AM	9	10	11	12 Made in the Shade Tour 11 AM
13	14	15 Bloomin' Bubbles 11 AM	16 August Story Time 10:30 AM	17	18	19
20	21	22 Bloomin' Bubbles 11 AM	23	24	25	26
27	28	29 Bloomin' Bubbles 11 AM	30	31		