

VOLUNTEER

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Morris Arboretum
& Gardens

UNIVERSITY of PENNSYLVANIA

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!

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Be sure to stroll the gardens this month to take in the vast array of scarecrows in the annual contest!

Contents

Letter from the Editor	1
Teen Interns at the Morris	2 - 3
Arborist Update	3
Sunshine & Roses Photo	4 - 5
Highlights	
From the Archives	6 - 7
Employee Spotlight	8
Book Club is Back!	9
Calendars	10 - 11

Letter from the Editor

Dear Volunteers,

I know it's been a while since a newsletter has hit your inbox, and for that I apologize. As we're moving through my second full year at the Morris in this role, I've been learning an abundance of information about the ebb and flow of the seasons, well beyond the bloom calendar.

Last year, I learned that the winter is never as slow as one thinks it will be. This year, I'm learning that spring and fall can be whip-lash inducing at the rapid pace they move within the areas of volunteers and internships, while the business of caring for the plants and visitors continues with vigor. Please, don't be mistaken: these are not complaints!; they're just observations about the unique ecosystem of our 90-year-old organization and all its moving parts. The result is a fairly jam-packed edition of the Volunteer Newsletter this month, since there's quite a bit to share about what's been happening.

The Morris is also enlivened with the start of the school year, bringing buses of children to come and explore the gardens and learn and connect with nature. This year's Scarecrow Contest is under way with truly fantastic creations playing on the theme of "the 1990s," in honor of our 90th Anniversary of becoming a public garden. The pumpkin house, decorated with literal hundreds of gourds, is on display and programmed with activities through the season. And the Harvest Trains in the Railway Garden are chugging, soon to make way for the preparations of the Holiday Garden Railway.

It's all very exciting, and we couldn't do it without you.

With gratitude,

Jenny Rajotte
*Program Coordinator,
Internships & Volunteers*

The Lydia Morris Legacy Society Annual Gathering

Morris Arboretum & Gardens volunteers are cordially invited attend to the annual gathering of the Lydia Morris Legacy Society on Wednesday, November 8, 2023, from 2:00-4:00pm in the Upper Gallery, Widener Visitor Center. The event will feature guest speakers and refreshments will be served.

Robert Vosburgh, Executive Director of Planned Giving for Penn Medicine, University of Pennsylvania, will brief us on new trends in gift planning and as well as updates on tax laws that impact charitable giving. Kindly reserve your attendance by contacting Oanh Nguyen: oanhn@upenn.edu or 215-247-5777 ext. 131.

Teen Interns: What we learn from mentorship

by Jude Thachet, School Outreach Coordinator

A funny thing about mentoring teenagers is that mentors get just as much out of the experience as the youth. Morris staff discovered this firsthand over the course of six weeks this summer. Through Summer Work Ready, a program under the umbrella of Philadelphia Youth Network, Tyja and Malcolm were the first ever teen summer interns at Morris. Both are students at Lankenau High School, Philadelphia's only Environmental Sciences magnet high school and the closest public high school to Morris Arboretum & Gardens. We expected it would be a perfect fit.

Our expectations were accurate when it came to the students having great work ethic, eagerness to learn, and an interest in the world of plant science and public gardens. What staff didn't expect was the level of impact each student would have on the people they worked with.

Maybe it was the fact that both students seemed so shy and inexperienced. Or, perhaps it was seeing them try new things that pushed past their comfort zone. Whatever it was, being a part of helping young people realize their own potential really feeds the soul.

There was the time when Tyja, after she finished assessing all the benches scattered around the gardens, agreed to make phone calls to thank our members. Everyone involved experienced a bit of pride and responsibility for the transformation of this student from

someone whose voice was barely above a whisper, to a young woman who could make cold calls to strangers. Tyja worked in five different departments and described what she learned in each:

"I learned that I'm good at research."
 "I learned that I like working alone."
 "I learned that I don't want a desk job."
 "I love plant propagation."
 "I like things organized."

Clearly her Work Ready experience put Tyja ahead of where many are in terms of self-awareness after one year of high school.

Continued on page 3



Tyja



Malcolm

Teen Interns, continued from page 2

Malcolm, too, changed and grew before our eyes. On a field trip to North Creek Nursery, a large wholesale plant operation, Malcolm asked thoughtful questions while most older and more experienced staff stayed quiet. What he didn't understand from the tour, he looked up in the car on the way home. Imagine our satisfaction when his parents shared that on family walks Malcolm would point out trees that were mulched incorrectly, or gardens that sorely needed some TLC. Like Tyja, Malcolm discovered that he much preferred outside work with the freedom to move around.

It's remarkable, really, how the fresh eyes of youth can help staff see their work in a different way. It's energizing to witness a teenager finding joy in work that has seemed routine, and it's literally awesome to be responsible for the wellbeing of someone else's minor child.



Teen interns were among the Morris group who visited North Creek Nursery in August.

Some of us expected young interns would be sort of a necessary burden to “give back” to the community. Others didn't know what to expect at all. No one who worked with them was untouched by the power of taking a risk, opening up to teens, and really noticing what happens as a result. Thank you, Malcolm and Tyja, for spending your Work Ready hours here at Morris Arboretum & Gardens. We hope you learned at least half as much as we did.

Arborist Update: A Massive Undertaking

It's hard to miss the impact of the recent removal of a massive *Quercus rubra* (red oak) on the corner of Stenton and Northwestern Avenues. Chief Arborist, Peter Fixler, shared that, “We did our best to nurse to better health but it took a steep dive in its health this summer and therefore had to be removed.” The owner of the crane company told him it was a record-breaking 30,000lbs, beating the previous record by 8,000.

“In short, I hope we do not ever have another removal like this,” said Peter. “It is a very sad day to see a tree of that caliber go.”



Photo courtesy of Peter Fixler

2023 Sunshine & Roses: Thank You!



We hope you enjoy these photos from a truly enjoyable evening in the Rose Garden, celebrating the hundreds of volunteers and thousands of hours of service that keep the Morris running each and every year! Cheers to you!



From the Archives

by Joyce H. Munro

Every Object Has a Story: September

“Is your butter melting? Are your vegetables wilted? Has your milk gone sour? If so, you need a Jewett charcoal-filled refrigerator that will keep everything cool and fresh. For goodness sake, don’t deny yourself the comfort of one of our refrigerators when you can get it so cheap and on the installment plan.”

Ads like this appeared in newspapers all over the country in the 1880s. [Jewett](#), a refrigerator maker in Buffalo, boasted that charcoal interlining and zinc-walled boxes kept food colder than other brands lined with cork and walled in wood. Plus, Jewett made a variety of sizes, including a six-door model with an ice chamber that held 3 to 4 huge blocks of ice, similar to the refrigerator pictured above.

The six-door model appealed to John and Lydia Morris and sometime after building Compton, they purchased one, probably from [Strawbridge & Clothier](#) on Market Street.

Why, you may be asking, would John and Lydia need a six-door refrigerator? After all, a refrigerator that large was a waste of money unless it was kept full of food—a lot of food. In fact, the Morris’s refrigerator was certainly jam-packed during the summer season with a riot of produce from their vegetable and fruit gardens, quarts of milk and pounds of butter from their Jersey cows, dozens of eggs from the chickens and maybe bacon or pork chops from their pigs.



[The Cosmopolitan](#), Archive.org.
Accessed July 24, 2023

Not all of this food was for the two of them—there were live-in staff in the Compton mansion, gardeners in the carriage house, a gardener’s family in the farmhouse on Germantown Pike and the head gardener’s family in the cottage. After 1914, more gardeners and their families lived across the road at Bloomfield farm. Perishable produce was likely stored in the Jewett refrigerator, available at token amounts to staff members and their families.

From the Archives

by Joyce H. Munro

Every Object Has a Story: October

Thanks to Arboretum staff in the 1960s, many furnishings and belongings were rescued from the Compton mansion before it was torn down. One of those belongings is the four-volume Atlas of Compton, which, for over five decades, has provided staff important clues about the history of the landscape.

In 1909, when the Morrises hired Pugh & Hubbard, a civil engineering firm in Center City to survey their property, they had no intention of replicating typical small-scale estate maps labeled with a smattering of geographic features. They intended the Atlas of Compton to be a thorough inventory of every aspect of their property and commissioned the firm to walk its length and breadth, mapping every building, garden, folly, pond, sculpture, fountain, tree and shrub as they went. To achieve this level of precision, the engineers sectioned the estate into [276 plats](#) and used an immense scale (200 feet per inch).

As plants were plotted on each map, someone had the task of naming them—in Latin. It is doubtful Pugh & Hubbard had a horticulturalist on staff so we can only speculate who knew the names of every...my money is on John Morris and head gardener Frank Gould. Who better would know that the 5-ring tree symbol in the center of the circular drive at Compton's entrance was a *Fagus Pendula* and the 18-ring tree symbol in the formal garden was a *Castanea*? And close to the log cabin, on each side of the brook were large *Acer Rubra* and alongside the famed flower walk were a dozen varieties of *Chamaecyparis*.



Title page, *Atlas of Compton*, Morris Arboretum Archives (2010.16.14)

Arguably, the Atlas of Compton along with its 1914 companion (commissioned after the Morrises purchased English Park) is the most important horticultural record made of the property. Whoever trudged around the estate naming each plant gave us an invaluable historical resource.

Explore a digital composite of the entire 1909 atlas [here](#).

Employee Spotlight: Meet George Beall!

by Carly Moyer, Horticulture Intern

You may have seen him around the arboretum greeting you or have seen a dressed-up Christmas lover in mid-July, happily cheering, “Merry Christmas in July!” George Beall is his name, a Facilities Assistant at Widener who has been working at the Morris since 2019. He graduated from Springfield Township High School and finished his internship at GSK, a biopharmaceutical company through Project Search, where he developed professional training and work experience.

Long before now, he and his mother would visit the gardens and be awed by the pristine presentation and a child’s favorite, the garden railway. Since childhood, he has enjoyed outdoor activities, which has led to the connection of his childhood memories to his professional career, a career he hopes to stay longer.

Besides working at the Morris, he currently studies Hospitality at Montgomery County Community College and would like to transfer the skillsets he gained at Morris into nature tourism, eco-tourism, and sports tourism.

His duties are not easy, but he has learned to overcome challenges and find efficient and effective methods to get the task done. He maintains facilities for everyone to use and helps set up the technicalities for classes and events. He likes to converse with visitors, members, and employees with his infectious welcome, including a tradition he started in 2021: at the end of July, you can find George wearing Christmas attire and decorations, playing Christmas music. Fellow staff and visitors are amazed by his cheerfulness and feel the presence of joy, including the children at summer camps who called George, “Mr. Elf.”



George is a positive person who is “the life of the party” and would be happy to talk to you if you ever see him around Widener. He has been and continues to be a hard worker and attentive in his schoolwork and at Morris. We appreciate his work.

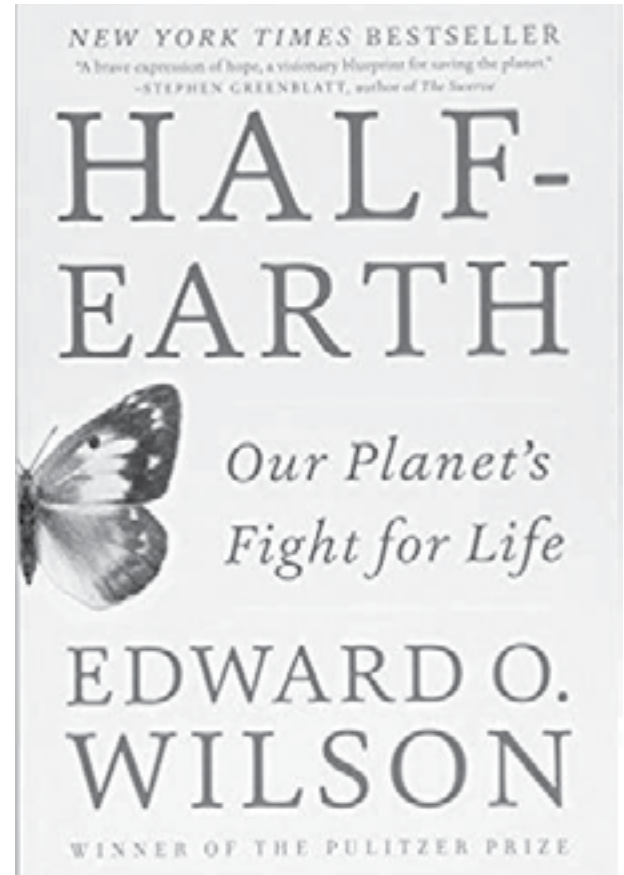
Thank you, George!

Book Club: All Volunteers & Staff Welcome!

Half Earth: Our Planet's Fight for Life by Edward O. Wilson

Oct 6 | 1:00 PM | [Zoom Link](#)

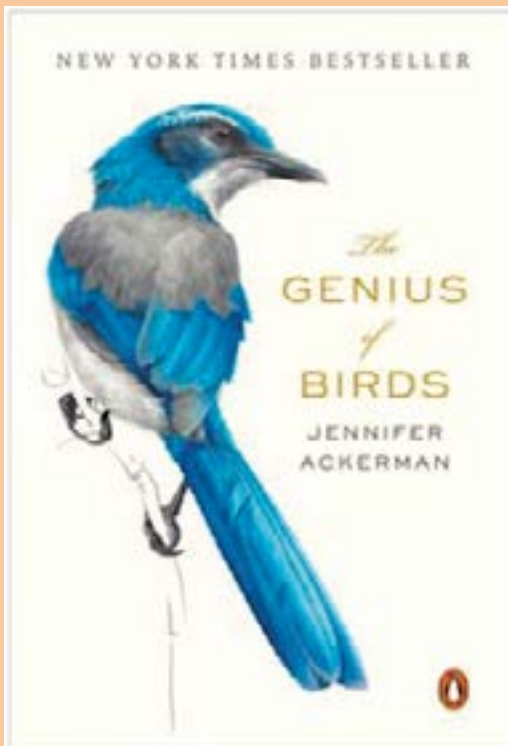
In his most urgent book to date, Pulitzer Prize-winning author and world-renowned biologist Edward O. Wilson states that in order to stave off the mass extinction of species, including our own, we must move swiftly to preserve the biodiversity of our planet. In this “visionary blueprint for saving the planet,” *Half Earth* argues that the situation facing us is too large to be solved piecemeal and proposes a solution commensurate with the magnitude of the problem: dedicate fully half the surface of the Earth to nature. Identifying actual regions of the planet that can still be reclaimed—such as the California redwood forest, the Amazon River basin, and grasslands of the Serengeti, among others—Wilson puts aside the prevailing pessimism of our times and “speaks with a humane eloquence which calls to us all”.



The Genius of Birds by Jennifer Ackerman

Nov 3 | 1:00 PM | [Zoom Link](#)

Birds are astonishingly intelligent creatures. According to revolutionary new research, some birds rival primates and even humans in their remarkable forms of intelligence. In *The Genius of Birds*, acclaimed author Jennifer Ackerman explores their newly discovered brilliance and how it came about. As she travels around the world to the most cutting-edge frontiers of research, Ackerman not only tells the story of the recently uncovered genius of birds but also delves deeply into the latest findings about the bird brain itself that are shifting our view of what it means to be intelligent. At once personal yet scientific, richly informative and beautifully written, *The Genius of Birds* celebrates the triumphs of these surprising and fiercely intelligent creatures.



October

Upcoming Events

Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
1	2	3	4	5	6 Book Club (Zoom) 1 PM	7
8	9 Last Day of Harvest Trains	10	11	12	13 Spooky Jack- O-Lantern Crafts 11 AM	14 Native Trees Tour 11 AM
15	16	17	18 October Story Time 10:30 AM	19 Outdoor Career Symposium 8:30 AM - 2 PM	20	21
22	23	24 ArBOO- Bubbles Dance Party 11 AM	25	26	27 Out of School Day	28 Pumpkin Carving Party 10:30 AM Trick-or- Treat Trail 1 PM
29	30	31				

November

Upcoming Events

Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
			1	2	3 Book Club (Zoom) 1 PM	4 Winter Wellness Walk 10:30 AM
5	6	7 Out of School Day	8	9	10	11 Winter Wellness Walk 10:30 AM Conifers Specialty Tour 11 AM
12	13	14	15	16	17	18 Winter Wellness Walk 10:30 AM
19	20	21	22	23 THANKS- GIVING Gardens Closed	24	25 Winter Wellness Walk 10:30 AM
26	27	28	29	30 Holiday Garden Rail Premiere Member Night		Winter Wellness Walk 10:30 AM