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LANDIS ARBORETUM

THE NEWSLETTER

Reaching Out: **Exploring Social Media at the Arboretum**

—Ambika Sambashyan

**"I don't understand Twitter."
"What is Flickr anyway?"**

If these statements sound familiar, you are not alone. For many who have only recently become comfortable with email, Facebook, Twitter, and Flickr may seem rather daunting. The first question most people ask is: "Why should I engage in social media?"

Websites collectively known as "social media" are online forums where individuals or organizations can send out messages to a group of people and receive feedback almost instantly. Sites such as Facebook and Twitter are quickly becoming the primary mode of communication for many, particularly the young. Reaching out to someone is as simple as "liking" a comment or picture, and instantly a connection is formed between two people. This creates the feeling of having a conversation, adding a social twist to traditional media. What makes this so powerful is the "multiplier effect," the ability for individuals to re-post interesting

messages, thus spreading information and ideas to an ever-growing audience every day.

It is this word-of-mouth promotion that has attracted businesses and non-profits to these forums. The friendly, water cooler chat style can help organizations reach out to new people quickly and cost-effectively. It also helps them to keep in touch with current members or customers on a daily basis. Forward thinking non-profits have used social media to solicit volunteers and donations and to publicize events. The opportunities are endless; social media are now one of the most exciting landscapes in communications today.

Arboreta around the nation are seeing the benefits of adding Facebook, Twitter, and Flickr to their communication mix. Harvard's Arnold Arboretum shares interesting scientific news through a popular Facebook page, while the Morton Arboretum in Illinois runs a successful plant clinic online to respond to queries from the public.

The LA County Arboretum and Botanical Gardens is all about sharing; visitors are encouraged to talk about their experiences on Facebook and upload pictures of their trips on Flickr. Their successes are self-evident. The Morton, for example, has over 10,500 Facebook fans and 2000+ Twitter followers, allowing them to reach out to a large audience every day.

In the past year, Landis has embraced the social movement, with a fledgling presence on Facebook, Twitter, and Flickr. We ask our members to join us online and share their special "Landis moments" with us. We welcome social media enthusiasts to join our team and help us grow. Together we can bring the Arboretum into the "Social Era" and encourage a new generation to appreciate and care for this local treasure. What's not to "like" about that?

Those interested in participating in Landis' social media efforts, please contact: ambika@fruitflyconsulting.com.

Fall Plant & Book Sale
September 15-16
Saturday & Sunday
10 am-4 pm

Pick of the Pots
New for Fall!
Members only
Preview party and
plant sale, Friday,
September 14
5-9 pm



Colchicums at the Fall Plant Sale

—Cindy King

Colchicums are magical! Their rosy purple or white flowers appear suddenly in the fall with almost no warning. A garden miracle! Since the flowers emerge from the ground long after the leaves have died back, colchicums are sometimes called "naked ladies." They are also known as "autumn crocus," but colchicums are a distinct botanical genus. These plants are toxic, and squirrels, deer, and rabbits seem to know this and leave them all to you to enjoy.

Colchicums have heavy, dark green foliage that appears in the spring, about the same time as

tulips. It lasts until early summer, fading to an unsightly brown. Do not remove the leaves, as doing so interferes with flower and bulb development. Hide the dying foliage behind low annuals or perennials, keeping in mind that the flowers are only 6 to 8 inches tall. Since colchicums like drought, try to avoid planting them in a spot that receives a lot of summer irrigation. If planted in a site with good drainage, the bulbs will increase and can be divided in July or August.

Colchicums will be available at this year's Fall Plant Sale. They sold out quickly last year, so gardeners should plan ahead.