



George Landis Arboretum

NEWSLETTER

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April, May, June 1982

LOGO

The Big Oak was recently designated the official logo of the George Landis Arboretum by the Board of Trustees.

The logo is the result of the initiative of the Friends Steering Committee and the artistic talents of Committee Member Connie Blair who sketched the oak and produced the final drawing. The logo appears in this newsletter, on arboretum stationery, and, eventually, will appear on all publications of the arboretum. A poster-size logo identified the arboretum's display at the Spring Plant and Flower Show at Schenectady's Center City, and, in the future, it may be offered to Friends and visitors in poster or bookmark size.

No one, of course, knows more about the arboretum's big oak tree than Fred Lape, who tells the story here.

THE BIG OAK OF THE GEORGE LANDIS ARBORETUM

The Big Oak of the George Landis Arboretum is an Eastern White Oak (*Quercus alba*). The species ranges from Maine to Georgia, but flourishes best in the section from southern Connecticut and Long Island through eastern Pennsylvania where it is often the dominant tree. It is not common in New York State north of the Mohawk Valley.

The Big Oak must have been an outstanding forest tree when the land now the Arboretum was cleared, about 1840, for it was singled out by the first owner to be left standing in the open.

My first memory of the tree dates from about 1910, when I was getting old enough to pay attention to trees. It seems to me now in memory that its trunk was as large then as it is now, but early life memories usually magnify with time. There were already two lightning scars, which wriggled like gigantic snakes down the east and south faces of the trunk, and the traces of which still remain.

It was probably one of the features of the farm which induced my father to buy the property, for he loved far views, and he immediately named the place Oak Nose Farm, and always took visitors to see the views up and down the Schoharie Valley, which one gets from the knoll upon which the oak stands. The knoll itself is part of a glacial moraine that was dumped across the valley during the last glacial retreat.

We have never here at the Arboretum taken borings of the tree to ascertain its age. From comparing the size of trunk and branch spread with that of certain famous oaks in southern New England and on Long Island, whose age is roughly known from certain historic events

which happened near or under them, we guess the Big Oak to be from 350 to 500 years old.

It was a flourishing tree until the year 1940. Then a natural disaster overtook it. That year there was an ice storm. It rained steadily and heavily day and night for three days, the rain freezing as it fell. By the end of the storm, every blade of dead grass in the fields was coated with solid ice to the thickness of a man's thumb, and all the branchlets of trees were equally coated.

I have never lived through a major earthquake nor a tornado nor a hurricane. The last night of the ice storm was the greatest natural disaster I have ever experienced. Few persons on these hills slept that night. From late afternoon of the third day, when the large limbs of trees began to give way, and all through the night to the next morning, there was a constant bombardment from the crashing of limbs as they broke loose from the trees and fell.

On the fourth morning the storm had ended and the sun came out. I walked over toward the Big Oak to see the damage. On the way up to its knoll one looks over a section of the woodlot that had always been the sap bush, with large maple trees that had furnished sap for maple syrup for a hundred years. There was not a single large maple left standing, only the stripped tops of trunks and the mass of fallen branches glistening in the sun. The Big Oak lost all of its branches on the northeast side, about half of its crown.

If I had had at the time either the money or the experience to repair the damage after the storm, the tree could probably have recovered completely, for it was then a vigorously growing tree. I had neither, and did nothing. So in a few years

the open wounds left along the trunk by the pulled out bases of the falling limbs, began to rot inward. Once water was able to reach beyond the growing layer of wood, the rotting inward and down accelerated, and has continued ever since. Coons began to nest inside the hollow trunk.

In the meantime the tree has continued to grow vigorously, but during the last four years large lower branches have broken off without even a high wind or a heavy snow to cause the break, merely the weight of the branches overpowering the now shallow moorings which they have in the trunk.

Whether anything could be done now that is worth doing is doubtful. The very lower section of the trunk still seems solid, but the upper section is completely hollow, and one can look up from lower holes to light in the upper ones.

Even as it stands, the tree may live another hundred years, for the white oak is a vigorous species, but the climax of its life definitely came at the end of three days of freezing rain in the winter of 1940, and from then on its way has been downward. - Fred Lape



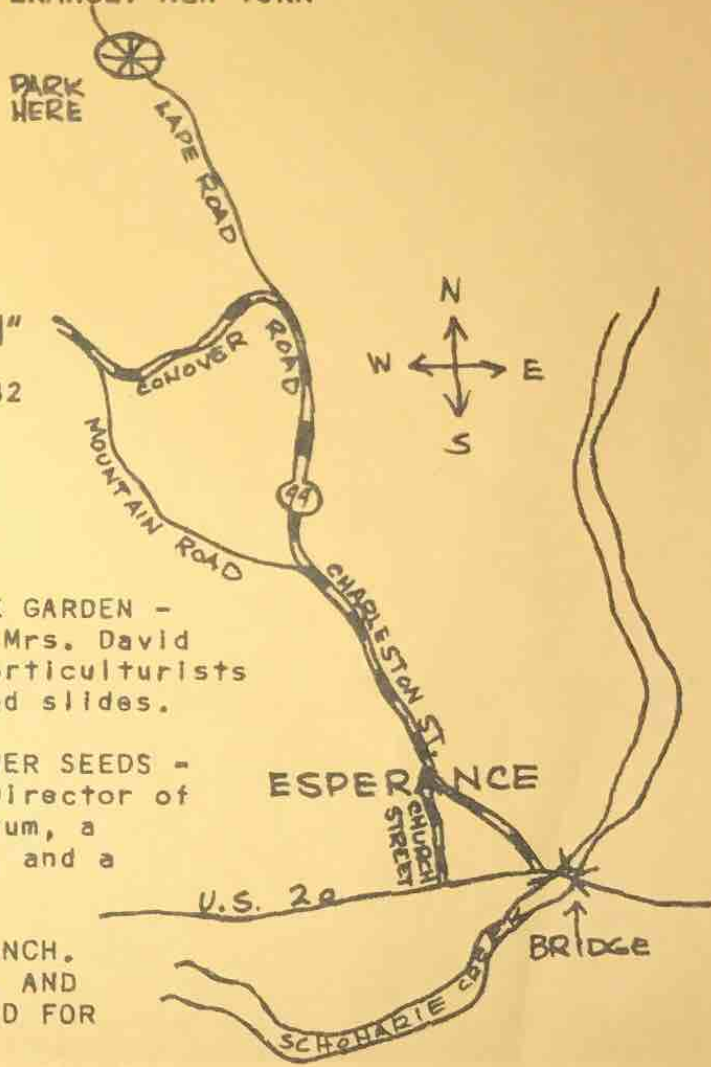
FRIENDS COMMITTEE NEWS

The Trustees of the Landis Arboretum have appointed Forest M. Corbin to serve as an arboretum trustee concurrent with his term as Chairman of the Friends Steering Committee.



GEORGE LANDIS ARBORETUM

ESPERANCE, NEW YORK



"A MID-SUMMER'S GARDEN"

Tuesday, July 20, 1982

- 9 a.m. REGISTRATION AND
 INFORMAL VIEWING OF
 THE GARDENS

- 10-11 a.m. ESTABLISHING THE NEW ROCK GARDEN -
 Mrs. Erastus Corning and Mrs. David
 Lippitt. Two renowned horticulturists
 will present a lecture and slides.

- 11-12 noon YOU CAN COLLECT YOUR FLOWER SEEDS -
 Fred Lape. Mr. Lape is Director of
 the George Landis Arboretum, a
 botanist, horticulturist, and a
 brilliant lecturer.

- 12-1 p.m. LUNCH: BRING YOUR BOX LUNCH.
 SOFT DRINKS WILL BE SOLD, AND
 WHITE WINE WILL BE DONATED FOR
 YOUR PLEASURE.

- 1-2 p.m. THE NEW GEORGE LANDIS ARBORETUM
 STORY - NEW SLIDES AND COMMENTARY - Presented by
 Margaret Law, a Trustee of the Arboretum.

- 2-3 p.m. COLOR AND TEXTURE IN LANDSCAPE DESIGN -
 Edward F. Kleinke III. Mr. Kleinke is a graduate
 of Cornell University, conducts his business as a
 Landscape Design Architect and Environmental
 Planner. Design, municipal planning, and zoning
 laws are his specialties.

NO ADMISSION CHARGE



HELP!

The Landis Arboretum needs volunteers. If you have a few hours, or a day, to give each week, or each month, please check one or more of the following fields of interest.

- _____ Guide training - to lead weekend tours of the arboretum.
- _____ Office - receptionist, phone, typing, clerical
- _____ Horticultural - weeding and garden maintenance in designated areas and under staff direction.

Mail to or leave at: _____ Name
Landis Arboretum _____ Address
Esperance, NY 12066 _____
Att: Doris Gdula _____ Phone

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NOTE: Rare Plant Sale Day, June 5, has been designated as membership renewal time. Renew your membership, encourage a friend to join, give a membership as a gift.

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Friend, \$10-\$25
Sponsor, \$25-\$50
Supporting, \$50-\$100
Patron, \$100 or more

GEORGE LANDIS ARBORETUM Membership Application



Please support the extensive work of the arboretum and make a tax deductible contribution.

Name _____

Address _____

_____ Zip _____

Phone _____

Renewal

THANK YOU!

Amount Enclosed _____

New Member

Members receive a quarterly newsletter, free admission to the lecture series and early admission to the annual rare plant sale. Make your check payable to:

Mail to: GEORGE LANDIS ARBORETUM
Esperance, NY 12066

As a result of the first newsletter, some Friends renewed memberships, a few people joined for the first time, and six of you volunteered your time. It's a good beginning, and we thank those who responded so promptly.

To keep the arboretum thriving, we need support from each of you. Please use the enclosed volunteer and membership forms - now. Friends are appreciated.



When you visit the arboretum you will see a few new signs and trail markers, and additional picnic facilities.



The familiar slide program "Through the Year at the Landis Arboretum" has been given a new look, new sound, and added versatility.

The program is available in two forms, one a 30-slide presentation with an 18 minute narrative taped by well-known former WGY-WRGB personality, Earle Pudney. We are most grateful to Mr. Pudney for making his time and talent available to this program.

"Through the Year" is available, too, as an 80-slide, in-person presentation by Margaret Law, arboretum Trustee.

If your organization would like to use one of the presentations as a program, phone Margaret Law (Mrs. Richard), 463-5256. There is no charge for use of the program.

Hal Beeber and volunteers from the Telephone Pioneers of America erected protective deer fencing around various trees and shrubs last fall, and removed and stored the material this spring. Hal is Environmental Chairman of the 2300-member Albany Council, Telephone Pioneers of America, an organization of more than 500,000 employees and retired employees of the telephone business in the U.S. and Canada.



Four volunteers are needed now to train with Fred Lape to act as arboretum guides. Mr. Lape will undergo cataract surgery this summer, and guides must be available to fill in while he recuperates. Call now to volunteer. (875-6935)



To the Calendar enclosed in your last newsletter add the following: July 17, 10 a.m., "Herbariums and Their Uses," by Michael Froelich, and Esther Jordan will give the bonsai clinic on July 24. The arboretum phone number is incorrect on the calendar; it should be 875-6935.

In June at the arboretum enjoy the end of the rhododendron blooms, the iris, and wildflowers in the field; July brings new growth on conifers and the beginning of the annuals; in August the annuals are at a brilliant peak of color.

WATCH FOR IT!

A 30-second Public Service Announcement for the Landis Arboretum is being produced by WRGB (Channel 6). Film for the PSA was shot at the arboretum during apple and lilac blossom time. The spot will be aired periodically during June on Channel 6. And, the PSA will be provided by WRGB to both WTEN and WNYT. We appreciate the valuable support from WRGB.

Publishing deadlines are the first of February, May, August, and November. You may write or phone me at the address below.

Fran Finkbeiner, Editor
River View at Sugar Hill
RD 2, Box 322
Rexford, NY 12148
(518) 371-9145



GEORGE LANDIS ARBORETUM
Lape Road
P.O. Box 242
Esperance, NY 12066

HERBARIUM GRANT

The Landis Arboretum has received a \$3,000 grant from the Natural Heritage Trust to set up an herbarium. The monies will be applied to salaries and supplies for an assistant director - part-time curator and a technical assistant who will work with Mr. Lape this summer to begin processing and mounting the 500 or so specimens already collected. Eventually all 1500-2000 specimens in the arboretum will be catalogued, and the collection will be housed in a fireproof structure to be built on the grounds beginning this summer.



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