

# The Brooksider

Published by Friends of Brookside Gardens, Inc.



Fall, 2021

## President's Letter

By Kathy Kircher, President

I hope you have been enjoying this tremendous fall season. We've had so many perfect days for being outside. I hope you have many memories of good times with family and friends outdoors at our magnificent park, **Brookside Gardens**.

September was busy this year. Our **annual plant sale** was a big success. Thank you to all our members who came out and bought plants. We sold out very quickly – with more early customers than we have ever had before. It was exciting to be back at a live plant sale. We have already started planning for next year and are looking at ways to have more plants. The sale is only possible due to lots of work by **FOBG** volunteers. Thank you to everyone who made the plant sale a huge success.

The next weekend, **FOBG** volunteered at **Brookside Gardens' Children's Day**, an annual event sponsored by **FOBG**. I loved watching the kids having fun while learning about nature, doing crafts, and planting spider plants to take home. We distributed sidewalk chalk, bubbles, and scavenger hunt maps to every child that came by. It was a perfect weekend – lots of fun and energy, ideal weather and the gardens sparkled with bright colors.

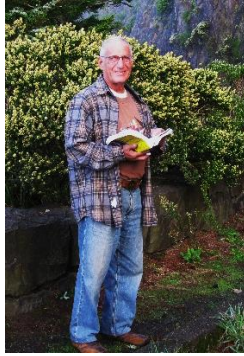
The **Oak Tree Dedication Ceremony** on September 23<sup>rd</sup> was very special. The day started out with rain,

but cleared at noon and everything was perfect for the dedication. Thank you, **Brookside Gardens**, for recognizing our 25-year partnership. We're looking forward to being a part of **Brookside's** future.

**It's membership renewal time!** Every year, **FOBG** memberships end on October 31. By now, you should have received a renewal letter in the mail. Many of you have already renewed and we are off to a good start. If you haven't renewed yet, please do. You can mail us your renewal reply, renew online [here](#) or print a renewal form [here](#) and mail it in. All membership donations go towards direct support of **Brookside Gardens** and what they provide to our community. **Thank you for your support!**

Fall and the holidays remind us to **be thankful** for so many things at **Brookside Gardens**. I am especially thankful this year for the times I have been able to spend walking in the gardens. There have been many times this year when I have been anxious and cranky, but when I walk from the parking lot to the path around the **Gude Garden**, I start feeling happier and I am relaxed and refreshed when it's time to go home. I hope you have had similar experiences. Please visit often and encourage your friends to visit **Brookside Gardens** too.

**See you in the Gardens!**



Please note that the “News from Brookside” and “Garden Guardian” columns will return in the Winter 2022 issue of The Brooksider.



**2021 Plant Sale photo provided by Stephanie Oberle**

# ***FOBG Plant Sale 2021***

by **Nithya Raghavan, FOBG Webmaster**

**FOBG's 25<sup>th</sup> Anniversary Plant Sale** this year was quite an event indeed! To quote the classic Dickensian line "It was the best of times, it was the worst of times...." is a good way to summarize this year's sale! We were still in the grip of the pandemic, but life was slowly inching itself back to normalcy. After a lot of thought and keeping in mind the public health guidelines, **FOBG** decided to do its **25<sup>th</sup> Anniversary Plant Sale** in person this year, unlike the 2020 **Plant Sale** where folks preordered their plants online (sight unseen) and picked them up in a drive-thru setting. That "virtual plant sale" deprived us of the joy of seeing a beautiful plant, picking it out ourselves, and making spur of the moment decisions to add more plants to our shopping list! Additionally, with the knowledgeable **Brookside** staff and **Master Gardeners** on the premises, making sound decisions on plant choices was never easier than at this year's in-person sale.

Back in March when planning started, there were so many unknowns about prospective conditions in the fall. The **Plant Sale** committee, under the aegis of **Joan O' Rourke, Kathy Kircher, Taffy Turner and Nithya Raghavan**, had to make multiple decisions and choices about this year's **Plant Sale** – 1) the types of plants and the numbers of each to purchase, 2) whether the plants could be grown in-house as in years before or to buy mature plants from a wholesale company, and 3) how to plan this sale taking into consideration masking and health procedures! We decided to err on the conservative side and ordered fully grown plants from a wholesaler in order to avoid the necessity of having a large number of our volunteers working closely together in the **Brookside Gardens'** greenhouse over the summer months. An unfortunate side effect of this decision was that fewer plants could be purchased, even though they were more mature and thus larger. We agreed that although fewer sales might affect the fundraising for **Brookside**, we had to consider people's health, the

well-being of the community and also to hedge against a huge loss. Unlike the past, this year we were purchasing fully grown plants and hence the initial monetary outlay was much greater. Therefore, we chose our plants carefully, reduced the numbers, and kept prices as low as possible. Thus, we were able to provide high quality, mature plants in one-gallon pots at a much lower cost than retail, although in fewer numbers than would have been ideal.

The mature plants arrived at **Brookside Gardens** three weeks prior to the sale and were tended by **FOBG** volunteers. This short timeline made the process much simpler since it involved only pruning and watering. The **FOBG** website posted the plant listings, growing details and the cost of each plant prior to the sale so that customers could plan their purchases. The **Brookside Gardens** staff, as usual, were instrumental in transporting the plants to the sales area and the **FOBG** volunteers, spearheaded by **Taffy Turner**, helped with the set a day before to the sale. In the morning of the first day, the sale opened to **FOBG** members two hours prior to the public, as has been done in past years. However, the resultant unprecedented response was both wonderful and overwhelming, and defied anything we had seen before! Lines started forming at 7:30 am for the 8 am opening, at which time there was a total run on the plants. By 10 am, when the sale opened to the public, approximately 90% of the inventory was gone. By 1 pm, the last two plants from an initial inventory of over a thousand plants were purchased. This forced us to cancel the rest of the sale and hurriedly post cancellation notices for the afternoon sale and the planned second day of the sale on the social media sites of **FOBG, Montgomery Parks and Brookside Gardens**. Unfortunately, this disappointed a lot of potential buyers who arrived late or were planning on shopping on the second day. **Our sincere apologies** to those who missed out on the sale. We are at a loss to

understand what happened and why the sale experienced this unprecedented popularity. Perhaps, during these pandemic times, gardening and being one with nature had taken on a whole new meaning and we at **FOBG** got to see it firsthand at this **Plant Sale**. Since we have had to deal with a lot of disappointed and frustrated customers, we will be working hard to figure out how to best strategize for next year's sale. Most likely, we will be ordering more plants assuming there will still be a great interest in gardening and we will set aside some of the inventory for the 10 am and later sales.

This year, we had a selection of 43 different perennials, five types of ferns, three grasses, 13 shrubs and nine trees. At least half of our perennials were native cultivars. We had designated two shrubs as **FOBG's 25<sup>th</sup> Anniversary-featured** plants - *Hypericum kalmianum* 'Blues Festival' (St. John's Wort) for the sun garden and *Hydrangea serrata* 'Tuff Stuff Ah-Ha' (Mountain Hydrangea) for the shade garden. Our gross sales for this year at \$15,885 was lower than last year. Since every dollar made from this sale benefits **Brookside Gardens**, we are happy at the overwhelming success of this sale. We hope to do better next year by increasing the inventory of plants

that both members of **FOBG** and non-members will have equal access to.

Being a member of **FOBG** certainly had its benefits this year with the number of 25<sup>th</sup> Anniversary events planned around this celebration – the **Member Appreciation Event** in April, and early admission to the **Plant Sale** and the **Tree Dedication Event** in late September. **Friends of Brookside Gardens** thrives because of the support of its members who understand the value of how their generosity aids in supporting the mission of **Brookside Gardens**. For those who are not members, we urge you to join so that we can all support and leave a legacy of natural beauty to surround us and future generations in the form of **Brookside Gardens**.

Once again, **FOBG** would like to thank its members and the public/non-members for their overwhelming support, and the **Brookside Gardens** staff and **Montgomery Parks** for their continued support in helping with the **25<sup>th</sup> Anniversary Plant Sale**. We would also like to acknowledge the help and support we received from **Quality Greenhouses and Perennial Farms Inc.** in providing us with a great inventory of plants. **Looking forward to seeing you in 2022!!**



2021 Plant Sale photo provided by Stephanie Oberle

# ***FOBG 25<sup>th</sup> Anniversary Tree Dedication***

by Anne Roland, FOBG Vice President

On September 23, **Brookside Gardens** honored **FOBG** by dedicating a vigorous white oak to **FOBG** to commemorate our 25<sup>th</sup> anniversary. The tree (*Quercus alba*) grew from an acorn at **Brookside** in the 1960s. After a rainy morning, the dedication ceremony took place in bright sunlight. Over 60 **FOBG** members and guests registered for the event, held in the Visitor Center Auditorium.

**FOBG President Kathy Kircher** opened the meeting. She welcomed **Montgomery Parks** representatives **Mike Riley**, Director of Parks, and **David Vismara**, Division Director, Horticulture, Forestry and Environmental Education. **David** was the Director of **Brookside Gardens** when **FOBG** was starting up. Kathy also recognized four of the founding members in attendance: **Joan O'Rourke**, **Carole Galati**, **Coriolana (Coco) Simon**, and **Doug Wolters**.

**Kathy** told guests that members are the roots, branches and leaves of **FOBG**. She said that, like the tree, **FOBG** expects to grow larger and stronger in the next 25 years to keep serving the needs of **Brookside Gardens**.

**Brookside Gardens' Director, Stephanie Oberle**, emphasized that the oak tree stands as a symbol of the enduring partnership between **FOBG** and **Brookside**. She presented a commemorative brick to **Joan O'Rourke** in recognition of her commitment to

**Brookside** and **FOBG**. **Stephanie** also had a surprise for us: a 25<sup>th</sup> anniversary brick presented to **FOBG**. Both bricks have been installed in the **Rose Garden**.

The final speaker was **Phil Normandy**, the recently retired Supervisor of Horticulture Section and Plant Collections Manager. **Phil** is also known as the "tree whisperer" for his vast knowledge of **Brookside's** trees. He suggested the tree ceremony and selected the white oak to be dedicated. In appreciation for all his assistance to our organization, **FOBG** presented **Phil** with a lifelong membership. In his remarks, **Phil** thanked **FOBG** for their support, particularly in purchasing plants for the garden that were not in his **Brookside** budget.

After the presentation, the group went out on the new Bluestone Terrace, where **Stephanie** unveiled the plaque to be placed on the "Friends Tree." The tree stood proudly across the lawn at the edge of the **Azalea Garden**, decorated with a blue ribbon. Refreshments and socializing followed the ceremony.

Thank you to the planning committee: **Anne Roland**, **Kathy Kircher**, **Nithya Raghavan**, and **Barbara Waite-Jaques**, and the many volunteers and attendees who helped make this event special.

*On your next visit to Brookside Gardens, be sure to stop by the **Friends Tree**!*



Photo of FOBG members and Stephanie Oberle provided by TimePoints Photography



*Quercus alba*, the Friends Tree



Photos on this page provided by TimePoints Photography

# *Reminiscing about Brookside Gardens with Phil Normandy*

**By Suzanne Carbone, FOBG Board Member**

On a cool evening on the second day of fall, I sat with **Phil Normandy** on a bench located between two oak trees that he had planted years ago at **Brookside Gardens**. It was an appropriate spot to hear Phil reminisce about the past 42 years he spent helping to make **Brookside Gardens** the premier public garden in Montgomery County and the Metropolitan Washington area.

Born in North Carolina, **Phil** recalled that his mother was an avid gardener and his grandfather lived on a farm. Even as a child, **Phil** loved plants and especially trees. He entered the forestry program at North Carolina State, took a job with the Bartlett Company & Research Arboretum in Charlotte, and after three and a half years he was accepted into graduate school at the University of Delaware, in the Longwood Program. He interned at Longwood Gardens and realized then that he wanted his career path to focus on public horticulture rather than as a commercial venture. He received his Master's Degree in Public Horticulture Administration, a new field at that time.

Our conversation developed easily, reflecting the beautiful spot where we sat and the sense that **Phil** was pleased with what he had accomplished over the years. Here are the questions and **Phil's** replies on that relaxing early evening:

1. What dreams and plans did you have for **Brookside** when you first took the job and have they been realized?

Brookside was established ten years before **Phil** arrived as the curator of collections. He described his job as being an editor rather than as a designer, working to create the backbone of the **Gardens**. Several times during our conversation, **Phil** said he felt blessed because his job allowed him to do what he loves to do. He can look at the oak trees he planted and other areas he and staff developed and is happy about what they've accomplished.

2. What were some of the biggest challenges you faced over the years?

Budgets were always a challenge and in the early years there was no substantial budget, so they "bought small and let them grow up." Then, according to **Phil**, **Friends of Brookside Gardens** and other donors began to help. As the gardens became increasingly beautiful, more donors found joy in giving to the **Gardens**.

Staffing at times was another challenge. When **Phil** began working at **Brookside**, many of the staff were what he described as "old-school dedicated park workers". Over time that has evolved so that gardeners now are professionally trained horticulturists.

Finally, as beautiful as **Brookside Gardens** is, another ongoing challenge is that some areas are aging out, a natural development in an established garden.

3. When and how did you become the "tree whisperer"?

**John Kelley** of the Washington Post came up with the term after interviewing **Phil**. They decided to talk about trees and their stories and the term just happened because Phil had intimate knowledge about each individual tree they discussed.

4. The effects of climate change increasingly are a concern for all of us. Have you noticed that climate change has affected **Brookside Gardens**?

Stating that he is not a climate expert, **Phil** acknowledged that he senses something is happening. In the 1980s they couldn't successfully grow camellias, crepe myrtles or paper bush, but now they can because of the warmer winters. **Brookside** has shifted from a 6B Growing Zone to 7A. Storms are stronger now, often with heavier rainfall, and there is more water in the ground, causing the loss of some trees. In the summer, as temperatures often rise above 100°F, the conservatory has sometimes become too hot for the butterfly show. There are pests that thrive in warmer temperatures, among them the Japanese wax scale. All of these issues reflect the fact that the earth is always changing and any garden needs to adapt and manage new environments.

5. In recent years, **Brookside Gardens** has become more popular than ever. Would you please comment on the changing ways that the community is using this beautiful place?

According to **Phil**, **Brookside** is evolving from being perceived as only a garden to being viewed by some people as a multiuse park.

**Brookside** is part of a regional park system, but for many people, it is also their local park. It is located in an increasingly diverse and densely populated area where English is not the first language and visitors may not see **Brookside** as merely a garden. In 1996, according to a survey asking what best described **Brookside**, a significant number of respondents described it as a wilderness.

Today, more people visit **Brookside** throughout the entire year and there are more who exercise or walk in the **Gardens**, as they look for a place of beauty and peace. During the major part of the pandemic, community use increased 100 per cent. **Phil** described the afternoon of 9/11 when everyone was in a state of shock. The Staff went to the gardens and saw people filtering in, walking alone or in couples, coming to **Brookside** to grieve. He described it then as a societal sanctuary.

To emphasize the healing nature of the **Gardens**, he referred to a recently established program called "Strolls for Well-Being", a self-guided walking program that enlists the beauty of the gardens to support the mental and physical health of residents of the region.

6. Now that you've retired, what do you like to do when you're not gardening or thinking about gardening?

Phil didn't answer this question at length, but suggested that it's nice not to have a strict schedule and that he's still figuring out what it means to be retired. I had the sense that he still enjoys thinking about **Brookside Gardens** and all the years he spent there.

Time passed quickly as **Phil** reminisced about the past and considered the future. I thanked him for sharing his thoughts and memories and for his work and vision in making **Brookside** a beautiful garden and lasting legacy for our community.





**Photo of Phil Normandy with the Friends Tree provided by TimePoints Photography**

# Wheaton Regional Park: Where the Past is Always Present

By Heather Bouslog – Archeologist, Park Planning and Stewardship Division, Montgomery Parks

As we update the 1987 **Wheaton Regional Park Master Plan**, we envision the changes we would like to see in the park. We want to see new soccer fields, mountain biking, better dog parks, food trucks, and better transportation connections. We want the park to reflect the people who live here in the present. Although it is very important to look ahead, it is also important that we understand how we as a community fit into this landscape that became **Wheaton Regional Park** only sixty years ago in 1960.

**Wheaton Regional Park** has a deep history. We can name some of Wheaton's past people while others we can only know through the archaeological material they left. **Wheaton** and many area streets derive their names from the people from **Montgomery County's** past. **Wheaton** was named after beloved commander **Union General Frank Wheaton** who fought off **Confederate Jubal Early's** attempt to take Washington, D.C. at **Fort Stevens** only seven miles down the road. **Shorefield Road**, the western entrance into the park, derives its name from the 18<sup>th</sup> century plantation that was located here named "**Shawfied**". This plantation was later owned by the **Stubbs** family. The 1843 **Stubbs Barn** still remains at



**Wheaton Regional Park** at the **Brookside Gardens** service hill area. During this time, **Montgomery County** was considered

the "upper south" where chattel slavery with all its violence and oppression operated. Enslaved labor worked tobacco fields, then wheat fields as time passed. **Kemp Mill Road** was named after the **Kemp** family who owned a saw and grist mill on **Northwest Branch** from 1857 to 1905 which was still visible through the late 20<sup>th</sup> century.

Archaeological investigations have uncovered evidence of people who lived on **Wheaton Regional Park** land over 5,000 years ago. During this time period, the Late Archaic, temperatures had already warmed, and a more seasonably variable climate had developed. **Montgomery County** was an environmentally diverse area where people used a wide range of resources. They fished, harvested acorns and other nuts, hunted deer, small mammals, turkeys and turtles. People lived around marshes, freshwater streams and estuaries and had short-term camps in the uplands. As the population increased, people tended to live in more sedentary communities. The three archaeological sites identified at **Wheaton Regional Park** are small lithic scatters, probably representing short-term camps. One diagnostic artifact was recovered, a **Lamoka Point**, which is a small



quartz projectile point with a date range of 5500 – 4500 years ago. As we jump forward to the 20<sup>th</sup> century to the present, **Wheaton** transformed from a rural to a suburban community especially after WWII. **Wheaton** doubled its housing from 1950 to 1960 when the **Wheaton Regional Park** was built. Many housing subdivisions, such as **Glenmont Village** and **Kemp Mill Estates**, were built at this time. Different cultural groups were coming into the area. A large Jewish population came into the area in the 1950s spurring synagogues to relocate to the area. Shortly after the park was built, **Mrs. Jacqueline Kennedy** brought her children to ride **Wheaton Regional Park's** train and see the miniature "**Old MacDonald's Farm**".

**LatinX** populations came in the 1950s on, with a large migration in the 1990s. By 2010, **LatinX** made up 40% of the population in **Wheaton** with arrivals from many countries—El Salvador, Honduras, Peru and Guatemala. Other countries that are heavily represented in

the area are China, India, Korea, Ethiopia, Vietnam, and Iran. The park is an important cultural feature and continues to change to meet the ever-evolving needs of the surrounding community.

In this and future issues of *The Brooksider*, we will provide a listing of upcoming **FOBG** sponsored events and **Brookside Gardens** adult programs. The list will be updated as information becomes available. We hope this will be helpful in planning how you can take advantage of all that **Brookside Gardens** has to offer. Additional offerings, such as children’s programs, art exhibits and excursions can be found at: [Cultivate](#).

Date	Brookside Gardens Adult and Children's Programs	Course #
11/3/2021	Chrysanthemum Tour*	127583
11/4/2021	Getting Your Garden Ready for Winter	127653
11/6/2021	Speaker Series: Indigenous Food Sovereignty	127561
11/13/2021	Mixed Winter Container	127657
11/18/2021	Horticulture Fact and Fiction: Debunking Gardening Myths	127654
12/4/2021	Herb and Spice Holiday Gift Workshops*	127043
12/8/2021	Festive Fresh Wreaths	127658
12/9/2021	Festive Fresh Centerpieces	127659
1/22/2022	Layered Sand Terrariums	127660
1/22/2022	Wild About Houseplants	127045
1/28/2022	Brookside Gardens Winter Tour*	127585
2/5/2022	Introduction to Plant Propagation – Tropical Houseplants	127661
2/12/2022	Everything You Wanted to Know About Pruning	127655
2/12/2022	Crafty Valentine’s Heart’s-a-Bustin Workshop	127046
2/18/2022	GreenScapes Symposium 2022	128034

- \* - Program Meets Multiple Days
- \*\* - Program Meets Multiple Times Per Day
- \*\*\* - Early Bird



Suggestions? Ideas? Let us know!

**Friends of Brookside Gardens, Inc. Board of Directors**

1800 Glenallan Avenue, Wheaton, MD 20902  
301-962-1435 (voice mail checked daily)

**Email address:** [friendsofbrooksidegardens@yahoo.com](mailto:friendsofbrooksidegardens@yahoo.com)

**Web address:** [www.friendsofbrooksidegardens.org](http://www.friendsofbrooksidegardens.org)

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Plant Sale photo provided by TimePoints Photography