This February on a lucky Friday the 13th, PHA received amazing news: Our grant application to the Massachusetts Cultural Council was successful! The Council awarded $200,000 in support of our proposed Education Center and Botany Lab. This funding, combined with funds from our fall appeal, will be matched by an earlier award of $500,000 from the Cedar Tree Foundation. In other words: Our dream becomes reality. Construction begins this fall on our new building.

“This new facility is a huge leap forward for our education and research programming,” says Executive Director Tim Boland, “and the realization of a longstanding vision.” He adds, “It’s rewarding to know that, finally, we’ll have laboratory space and a year-round classroom. We will be reaching more people than ever before and realizing our mission to a fuller extent.”

The new building will replace the structure called the Gym that is on its way towards condemnation, but nonetheless served as inspiration for its replacement, to be built in nearly the same spot. West Tisbury draftsman Peter Rodegast is updating the original plans created by Margaret Curtin, who will continue her involvement with interior design specifications. Tucker Hubbell of Rising Sun Construction will serve as the primary building contractor. Tim adds, “We have incredible people working on this project; everyone involved cares deeply for the Vineyard, the Arboretum, and the spirit of the place.”

The logistics are moving along at a swift pace, however the building project will not impact our busy summer season. Construction is scheduled to begin in September, and we expect to be finished by June of 2016. We will keep you updated as we move through the season.

We heartily thank everyone who donated to or supported this collaborative project. We are thrilled and grateful. It is especially rewarding as the funds came from members, friends, a foundation, and now the Commonwealth of Massachusetts. While the building will offer new possibilities, our summer programs and landscape are ever changing. Please plan to join us this year at PHA.
Welcome Summer Interns

PHAs educational program is a fundamental component of our mission. Student internships have been an integral part of that program since our founding in 1998. Then, as now, our summer internships have been majoring in horticulture: Jayne will be a senior at Temple University this fall, and Abby, a junior, at Michigan State University. To say they are enthusiastic about spending a summer in horticulture and feeling that the internship is a pivotal step in that direction. We do too! We are thrilled to have the chance to mentor, share, and inspire future gardeners.

Welcome to the Polly Hill Arboretum 

The Polly Hill Arboretum

The Arboretum Staff

The Polly Hill Arboretum

The Arboretum Staff

This year we welcome Jayne Boccella-Perras and Abby Makowski to the roster of student interns. Both are majoring in horticulture: Jayne will be a senior at Temple University this fall, and Abby, a junior, at Michigan State University. To say they are enthusiastic about spending a summer at the Polly Hill Arboretum in Boston, the Arboretum provides hands-on horticultural experience, exposure to collections curation, and the chance to visit PHA where she learned of our internship program. Lucky for us!

As a PHA management intern she will gain a wide range of experiences and pursue her interests in horticulture, botany, and sustainability. We suspect she will develop a natural affection for her namesake tree, stewartia—medieval tree to our hearts. Welcome to Toby Stewart!

Arboretum Wish List

Herbarium Specimen Framing $500

In an effort to strengthen interpretation in the Visitor Center, we would like to display three framed herbarium specimens behind the desk: the cost of framing, all three would be $300.

If you would like to contribute to our wish list, please call Barbara Conroy or Tim Boland at 508-693-9426. We extend our gratitude to those of you who have responded to our previous requests.

Message from the Director

It is so easy to say we are all looking forward to summer! The intensity of our winter storms combined with the persistent snow had me craving green relief. As I write this the cinnamomeum of our Alocasidas cherries are poised to burst into glorious pink bloom. Spring is finally here!

The first warm days found the greenhouse and landscape alive with activity. We welcomed back several volunteers who had either been away or were waiting for warmer temperatures to end their hibernation. On the grounds, after assessing and taking action to find solutions.

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New Horticulturist Starts Planting

“I can’t believe I get to work here!” is a sentiment Ben Madeiras has shared more than once since beginning employment as the Arboretum’s new full-time Grounds Horticulturist. At the Arboretum we all can relate to this feeling as spring’s arrival makes PHA the world’s most beautiful workplace. Since his first day Ben has been contributing in a variety of ways, from cleaning up after the long winter, to helping in the greenhouse, to working with and learning from Arborist/Horticulturist Ian Jochems, to enthusiastically stepping in to help with the youth education program. Each day he has been assimilating more knowledge about Polly Hill, the Arboretum, its plants, our mission, and the valuable role PHA fills on the Island.

We’re happy to have Ben here and he’s thrilled to be here. In fact since welcoming Ben as PHA Horticulturist, we are reminded daily of our sound decision. “I am so excited to contribute to the growth and forward movement of this place,” says Ben. Indeed, Ben arrives at PHA at a time with momentum—important projects, big and small, abound—all fundamental to fulfilling our mission.

Ben Madeiras

Spring Celebration

In the midst of this particularly snowy and cold winter at the Arboretum, we pined for that sure harbinger of spring on the Vineyard—daffodils. Their sunny blooms for that sure harbinger of spring. On the cold winter at the Arboretum, we pined forward movement of this place,” says Ben. Ben is thrilled to be here. In fact since welcoming Ben as PHA Horticulturist, we are reminded daily of our sound decision. “I am so excited to contribute to the growth and forward movement of this place,” says Ben. Indeed, Ben arrives at PHA at a time with momentum—important projects, big and small, abound—all fundamental to fulfilling our mission.

PHI

Family Programs

Family Book Series

Looking for more family activities? New this season the Arboretum will offer a free book series designed for children and their caregivers. Tuesdays in July and August at 10:30 am, nature-based children’s storybooks will be read aloud, followed by a walk or activity related to the book. Books will be selected for children 3 to 8 years old, though all ages are welcome. Bring a small blanket to sit on. Pack a picnic lunch and extend your visit! (Please note: All children must be accompanied by an adult. In case of rain, we meet in the Far Barn.)

And don’t forget our popular . . .

Family Backpack Tour

The Arboretum is the perfect place for families to discover nature together. Our Family Backpack Tour makes it easy. These fun and informative educational backpacks contain an Arboretum tour map, field guides, magnifying glasses, sketch pads, and other materials to engage the entire family in nature study during their visit.

Vanishing Acts

Developed by the Morton Arboretum, this traveling exhibit (on view through June 28) seeks to increase public awareness of the precarious future of the world’s endangered trees. On a visit to Vanishing Acts students of all ages embark upon a global journey to explore compelling tree stories from around the world. They learn about trees as a resource, why they are threatened in their native habitat, and how they can be conserved. Five of the featured trees are planted on the Arboretum grounds.

In addition to our regularly scheduled spring school fieldtrips, several other classes have taken advantage of this once-time educational opportunity. Interpretative lesson plans and a teacher guide are available.

First Mother’s Day Event

In early May the Acalole cherries bloom, the magnolias break bud, and azaleas are beginning to pop—a lovely setting to honor moms on their special day. This year on Mother’s Day PHA was open for picnicking. Many families lounged on blankets among the flowering trees enjoying time together. A 10:30 tour was offered (later than usual) to let families relax and take in the beautiful morning.

Staff were on hand to take family photos that were then printed and offered as a Mother’s Day gift from the Arboretum. To complete the Mother’s Day package, the Arboretum sold select flowering shrubs and perennials—a welcome present for any mother, or anyone for that matter!
Many of our 2015 summer programs will address themes related to *Fantasizing Arts: Trees Under Threat*, the traveling exhibit displayed at PHA from March through June. We will focus on trees, seeds, natural history, plant conservation, and the benefits of trees to society as well as other topics of horticultural and botanical interest.

We start in June when Curator Tom Clark, Executive Director Tim Boland, and Horticulturist/Arborist Ian Jochens share stories from last year’s collecting trips to the Southeast and the Ozarks in search of seed of endangered plants (and other plants!). Learn why the Arboretum goes abroad to collect, what seeds were collected, and how they will add to our collections.

In August for the David H. Smith Memorial Lecture, we go further afield to learn about collecting rose species in Asia. Bill McNamara, executive director of Quarryhill Botanical Garden, will present his expeditions in search of wild rose species. Quarryhill, located in Glen Ellen, California, has one of the largest collections of species roses in the world.

We also welcome two additional garden directors this summer. Our annual Lisina and Frank W. Hoch lecture features Longwood Gardens’ director, Paul Redman, telling the story of one of the world’s greatest gardens from its heritage of horticultural grandeur to its current focus on research, education, and the arts. And Arnold Arboretum director Ned Friedman will explore how Darwin looked to the world of horticulture to gain insight into his theory of evolution in “Mutants in our Midst: Darwin, Horticulture & Evolution.”

Additional evening speakers include Amherst College professor Ted Mehllo on biopiracy (the robbery of indigenous environmental knowledge and organisms) during the 18th and 19th centuries; Tim Wood from Spring Meadow Nursery explores the world of hydrangeas; and author Richard Horan shares his quest to link trees with great writers.

We are very pleased to welcome Sir Peter Crane, renowned botanist, Dean of the Yale School of Forestry and Environmental Studies, and professor of botany. Sir Peter will share the history and botany of the mysterious and ancient ginkgo tree. Don’t miss this special lecture!

For a study of native Island trees, we welcome back Sheriff’s Meadow Foundation’s director of stewardship Kristen Fautreux and MV Land Bank ecologist Julie Russell for an in-depth ID workshop. For identification on a smaller scale, join naturalist Charley Eiseman for a walk-and-talk as we track the tiny animals covered in his field guide, *Tricks & Signs of Insects and Other Invertebrates*.

We are excited to offer something new this summer for families—a family book series. Every Tuesday morning in July and August a volunteer will share a nature-based children’s book with children and their caregivers. An Arboretum walk or activity related to the book will follow. (See page on p. 5)

Other special programs include our annual Martha’s Vineyard garden tour, a return of Bill O’Callaghan and Robin Tuck’s sculpture and story exhibit, *A Walk through Imagination*, a pruning workshop; making herbal savors; our popular drawing from nature series; and landscape history at PHA.

Looking at plant conservation from a broad perspective, the number of plant species threatened is daunting—an estimated 20 to 25 percent of the world total of nearly 400,000 species. The perils faced by different species comprise a matrix of contributing factors, and the political, regulatory, and social context in which conservation groups are obligated to work is complex.

It’s hard to imagine that a single institution could tackle this crisis single-handedly. Enter Botanic Gardens Conservation International (BGCI) to provide strategic guidance and direction. In 1999 the concept of an international plant conservation initiative was proposed, and after years of international collaboration (in 2012), BGCI published *The Global Strategy for Plant Conservation (GSPC)*. This document establishes five ambitious objectives and 16 specific targets. Hundreds of public gardens around the world have aligned their conservation activities with GSPC, including PHA. GSPC also set a bold, imperative deadline—the year 2020.

So how does a small arboretum on the island of Martha’s Vineyard fit into this big picture? PHA’s foundation is built on its incredible diversity of plants developed through Polly’s philosophy. Our plant

Sciadopitys verticillata
Japanese umbrella pine is a splendid conifer for island landscapes, but is threatened in the wild.
collections and staff, guided by our mission statement and leadership, contribute to PHA’s readiness to substantially contribute to meeting certain targets. For example Target 8:

Protect at least 75 percent of threatened species in ex situ collections, preferably in the country of origin, and make at least 20 percent available for restoration and recovery.

Ex situ conservation is the conservation and maintenance of samples of plants outside their natural habitat in the form of whole plants, seed, pollen, vegetative propagules, tissue or cell cultures. It is the opposite of in situ conservation, the preservation of natural populations inside their native range. For PHA a key aspect of our conservation efforts is focused on the maintenance and development of ex situ plant collections.

But how do we determine which plants are threatened? Don’t we first need to know who’s on first? GSPC Target 2 tackles this. It sets the goal of assessing the conservation status of all plant species as they occur in the wild in order to effectively inform conservation action. This complicated but essential step results in “Red Lists” where each species is categorized in one of seven ranks, ranging from Least Concern to Extinct.

As an example, Vineyard native black oak is of Least Concern according to its Red List. But although the shadbushes (Amelanchier) have yet to be assessed, our native Nantucket shadbush (A. nantucketae) will likely fall into one of the threatened categories. Several recent Red Lists have detailed the conservation status of significant garden plants, including magnolias, rhododendrons, oaks, conifers, and maples—all cornerstone genera at PHA. The foundation of these valuable collections was laid by Polly Hill and she, decades ago, was growing several threatened species in her arboretum, including several species of fit (Abies), Japanese umbrel- l pine (Shiuliptis verticillata), the exquisite Rhododendron makinoi, and even one that is extinct in the wild, the Franklin tree (Frankinia alatamaha).

Have you wondered about PHA’s emphasis on wild-collected seed? Simply having representative specimens of threatened species in our collections is important, but it’s the provenance of those plants that dictates their value. From a curatorial standpoint the most prized plants are those grown from wild-collected seed from well-documented sources in the plant’s native range. Such collections provide the greatest genetic diversity. This is why PHA regularly leads, or participates in, collecting trips to various parts of the world, and why we collect right here on Martha’s Vineyard.

For example, pinkshell azalea (Rhododendron vaseyi): this native of the western North Carolina mountains is listed by the Rhododendron Red List as vulnerable. Plants Polly Hill raised from seed (from her Delaware garden) have flourished here for decades. Our 50-year old specimens are gorgeous, but they offer little in terms of direct conservation value. That’s why I participated in a collecting trip last year to secure seed from its native range to develop a conservation collection of this rhododendron species. As a result, hundreds of genetically diverse pinkshell azalea seedlings are in production and in time (some!) will be planted on the grounds. Others will find their way to peer institutions to enrich their collections and help secure the future of this species.

As PHA continues to evolve we intend to strengthen our relevance to those on the Island, and beyond, who value our work and who turn to us as a resource. How? By following our mission and continuing to develop a collection of plants that engages people with the plant world, offers opportunities to educate students, engenders appreciation for the essential role plants play in our lives, and meaningfully contributes to plant conservation. Failure is not an option.
A Tale of Two Lilies by Erin Hepfner

Observing lilies in the wild elicits a feeling of being blessed by nature. That nature can produce such unique and colorful specimens, diverse yet recognizable, is extraordinary.

Of the roughly 100 lily species worldwide, 22 are native to North America. Only two are native to Martha’s Vineyard. Do you know them?

The first native lily, and the more well-known, is the wood lily (Lilium philadelphicum). Of the native North American lilies, the wood lily has the greatest range, extending from New England to the Great Plains, and meadows of the western mountains. The wood lily grows in various open areas including coastal sandpitas—habitats that are rare along the East Coast and a protected ecosystem on Martha’s Vineyard. In these dry, sandy, open areas, the wood lily produces its characteristic, show-stopping flowers in shades of vivid red/orange.

The wood lily is recognized by its deep orange 6-petaled flowers (technically 3 petals and 3 sepals to be precise) atop a single stem of whorled leaves. Able to grow to 4 to 8 feet in some locations, on Martha’s Vineyard its height is closer to one foot. Severe deer browse has caused the decline of this species as has the successional growth of meadow to shrubland and forest.

The other native lily is the Turk’s-cap lily (L. superbum). Superb in many ways—graceful stalks, 4 to 8 feet tall, bear pendant orange flowers with recurved petals. Naturally occurring from the southern Appalachians to the Northern Atlantic Coastal Plain, Turk’s-cap lily can be found most often, although not exclusively, in thickets, meadows, and open forests with rich, moist soil. Martha’s Vineyard is nearly 3 feet 8 inches (1.13 m) tall, however, obvious differences of the tiger lily include deeper orange petals with darker spots, bulbils in the upper leaf axils, and a sporadic, alternate leaf arrangement. Tiger lily is native to China, but has naturalized as a garden escapee across much of eastern North America.

During Polly Hill’s gardening years, she acquired seed from native populations of Turk’s-cap lily through her association with Island naturalists. She nurtured the seedlings—keeping them in dappled light and fertile soil and protecting them from deer. PHA visitors can see the impressive descendants of those seedlings in our collections today. Polly has inadventurously saved our native Turk’s-cap lily! This highlights an often unrecognized role of arbores and botanic gardens worldwide: plant conservation.

Next time you’re walking in a sunny meadow in July and August, be on the lookout for the bright blossoms of wood lily amidst the grasses and wildflowers of Island meadows and fields. And if you find yourself along a stream, and spot a Turk’s-cap lily, gasp, snap a picture, let us know, but remember neither lily is for picking, they’re for protecting!

When the farm became the Polly Hill Arboretum, Sydell was determined to be a part of the place. And so began her long “career” as a volunteer tour guide. Sydell enjoys the people she meets. She doesn’t mind if visitors know more about botany than she does; she knows her strength is storytelling.

On her tours Sydell shares how Polly grew her plants from a seed and how her practical thinking led to a sense of design for the property. Sydell made her career as a writer and high school English teacher. She can transform the visual into descriptive language with ease. As she leads groups through the grounds, she might suddenly stop, perhaps ardently noting the fern-leaf beech is “nature’s most elegant contribution” or sharing some other exuberant description of the beauty of a tree. Her tours are inspiring.

Over the years Sydell has enjoyed watching the Arboretum grow and change. She appreciates the juxtaposition of the old and the new; noting how one can look from the original, now preserved, tree nursery over to the new Littlefield nursery and greenhouse complex. As for the trees, she finds them more beautiful every year!

This summer join Sydell—being your out-of-town guests—for one of her energetic Tuesday morning tours. Or pursue volunteering and help share the enthusiasm.

We welcome your participation. For more information about volunteering, contact Erin Hepfner at 508-693-9426.
THE POLLY HILL ARBORETUM

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ADMINISTRATIVE OFFICES
The Homestead
809 State Road
West Tisbury, MA 02575

VISITOR CENTER
795 State Road
West Tisbury, MA 02575

ACCESSIBILITY
The Visitor Center is wheelchair accessible.

VISITOR CENTER HOURS
Memorial Day weekend to Columbus Day: 9:30 am–4 pm

ARBORETUM GROUNDS HOURS
Sunrise–sunset, year-round

TOURS
Memorial Day weekend through Columbus Day: 10 am daily

ADMISSION
$5 suggested donation
Free to members and children under 12

FREE PARKING

DRIVING DIRECTIONS
See www.pollyhillarboretum.org

meristem: n. botany. The growing point or area of rapidly dividing cells at the tip of a stem, root, or branch.

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THEN & NOW

Polly’s Japanese Stewartia

Polly Hill received a Japanese stewartia (Stewartia pseudocamellia) seedling from the Brooklyn Botanic Garden in 1961. She planted it in a raised bed along the east wall of the outbuilding known as the Gym. The bed was constructed by George Magnuson and Everett Whiting with stone culled from a rock pile left by the Littlefield family prior to 1924. At the base of the stewartia Polly planted broom crowberry, heather, bird-foot violet, and sempervivum. Though the herbaceous plants have disappeared, the stewartia flourished and has grown into one of the finest specimens in North America.

With the Gym slated for demolition to make way for our new Education Center and Botany Lab, we have made special provisions to protect this exceptional tree. The footprint of the building has been moved six feet to the west to accommodate the stewartia and its future growth.