

# West Tisbury Library and Polly Hill Arboretum: “A great match”

**P**olly Hill Arboretum and the West Tisbury Free Public Library have long enjoyed a convivial and neighborly relationship, but the library's expansion and renovation project has created unprecedented opportunities for collaboration, deepening the partnership between the two groups.

Tim Boland, Executive Director of the Arboretum, joined the library's landscape subcommittee with a view to lending his botanical insight, but soon found himself doing far more than advising on plant selection. He was an early and passionate advocate of the “green” plan for the parking lot which includes permeable pavers (often called pervious pavers in the trade) that allow water to flow through.

Why would an arboretum director care so much about a parking lot? “At the very soul of what we do is to share our knowledge and enthusiasm for plants,” says Mr. Boland. “We all know plants are beautiful; however, most people are unaware that our entire existence is dependent on plants. In this instance we're using plants to help clean pollutants from the parking lot and protect our watershed. We'll demonstrate how plants provide wildlife habitat, support plant pollinators, and contribute to our sense of well-being.”

Mr. Boland's presence has changed the tenor of many a landscape committee meeting. “Working with Tim has been beyond enlightening,” says library director Beth Kramer. “He's a natural teacher. He helped us look out the window and see how this project fits into the natural world, and the importance of doing the right thing with our little piece of it.”

Although the frequent committee meetings add to his already busy schedule, he seems to enjoy the work. “I'm inspired by the group's dedication and the diverse array of talents and perspectives,” says Mr. Boland. “We're all learning together and have a nice balance of focus, hard work, humor, and a general feeling that we are all part of something special. I feel very grateful to be involved with



Tim Boland, Executive Director of Polly Hill Arboretum, shows off some of the native plants that will someday be part of the West Tisbury Library landscape.

such an amazing group of people.”

Mr. Boland's reasoned, well-informed voice eventually prevailed in the often emotionally charged conversation between the library and town leaders about the removal of the existing non-native Norway maples. He created and delivered a Powerpoint presentation to the Historic District Commission that gave a detailed timetable for removing the invasive trees over a period of years and replacing them with carefully selected species that will thrive in this location without crowding out other native plants.

To what degree is this kind of outreach a part of Polly Hill's mission? “I like to think of the Arboretum as not just a beautiful landscape but a place that should contribute to our Island and community's well-being,” says Mr. Boland. “The West Tisbury Library is such an integral part of where we live. It is a place of great depth and learning, and it serves our town well.”

The Arboretum's reputation and relationships with a variety of experts have enabled Mr. Boland to call upon the ex-

pertise of several others, including Laura Coit, a library staff member and professional horticulturist; Cheryl Doble, SUNY emeritus professor of environmental science and forestry; Lil Provence, landscape designer; and Brian Lawlor of The Nature Conservancy's Vineyard Native Habitat Network.

The Polly Hill greenhouses have been pressed into service growing indigenous specimens for the library project, including the bio-retention beds (or rain gardens) surrounding the parking lot. In the back of the library property, Polly Hill Arboretum is working with The Nature Conservancy's Vineyard Habitat Network program on a native plant demonstration garden. All the library plantings will be accompanied by interpretive panels that highlight the benefits of rain gardens and other features of the landscape.

The West Tisbury Library Foundation, Inc. continues to raise funds to implement the library's landscaping plans, and Tim Boland has been generous here as well, speaking to groups of donors at formal and informal gatherings.

“This is a great example of how two non-profits with deep local roots and a similar mission can work together to create something that's greater than the sum of their parts,” says West Tisbury Library Foundation chair Hunter Moorman. “We share many of the same priorities, and it makes perfect sense that we should pool and share our resources. It's a great match.”

Looking ahead, Mr. Boland sees the partnership with the library as full of possibilities. “The landscape design will enable us to host tours of the site as a living laboratory that demonstrates the utility and beauty of plants,” he says. “We'll also have lectures in the new community room that provide ideas and resources so people can use some of our ideas in their own home landscapes. I also think children will love the butterfly and habitat gardens and hopefully develop a sense of stewardship for nature. The opportunities for future collaborations are endless and exciting!”