

# Meristems

The Polly Hill Arboretum  
West Tisbury, Massachusetts

Vol. 21, No. 1, Spring 2019



The stunning blooms of *Rhododendron* 'Hal Bruce'

## Arboretum Herbarium Reaches Milestone

Herbaria, collections of identified, pressed, and dried plants mounted on archival paper, serve multiple roles. Arboreta, botanical gardens, and universities use these reference collections for research, including plant identification, documentation of environmental changes, development of a local flora, and the distribution of rare plants. Polly Hill Arboretum's herbarium has been granted official status as a research collection through Index Herbariorum, a worldwide index administered by the New York Botanical Garden that coordinates over 3,400 herbaria. Our member reference code, PHARB, will be used to identify our collections in research publications. We've come a long way from our modest yet auspicious beginnings: a gift of seaweed specimens made by naturalist and artist Rose Treat in 2003.

Nearly 2,800 of our herbarium specimens

represent the naturally occurring flora of Dukes County, Massachusetts; this includes both native and non-native plants but excludes cultivated plants. Over the last ten years, PHA has added numerous voucher specimens to our herbarium, many of which are from PHA research associate Greg Palermo and his collecting partner, Margaret Curtin. Greg and Margaret have discovered many new county records, a national record (a sedge never before collected in the U.S.), and rediscovered many plants not documented on the Island in over 60 years. In addition, PHA research associate Melissa Cullina has made extensive aquatic plant collections through botanizing in our coastal ponds. Additional collections have been made by members of the Martha's Vineyard Floristic Study Group, a consortium of conservation groups and individuals devoted

to the identification and protection of the flora of Martha's Vineyard.

When you look at an herbarium voucher like those in our storage cabinets, it represents a remarkable thread of work, from field collection, to identification, to finally being placed in the herbarium cabinet. The physical preparation, including artful layout and meticulous gluing of specimens, is carried out by a small group of talented volunteers who meet in the winter months. Currently our dedicated crew includes Dorie Godfrey, Annie Fisher, Barbara Caseau, Martha Hubbell, and Donna Paulnock. Each pressed specimen is a pleasing combination of beauty and utility, almost a botanical work of art. While proud of our outdoor living collections, we are also proud of our pressed plant collections that have enabled us to reach this milestone!

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The mission of the Polly Hill Arboretum is to perpetuate the experimental tradition in horticulture established by Polly Hill by sharing knowledge of plants and scientific procedure through educational programs, research, plant conservation, and exploration. The Arboretum seeks to preserve its meadows and woodlands, to promote an understanding of its collections, and to encourage their utilization for scholarship, observation, and the enjoyment of all.

*Meristems* © The Newsletter of the Polly Hill Arboretum

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The staff of the Polly Hill Arboretum in front of the *Prunus 'Accolade'* (flowering cherry): Back row, from left: Todd Rounsaville, Ian Jochems, Margo Urbany-Joyce, Tim Boland, Oliver Osness, Elizabeth Thomas, and Elliott Bennett. Seated, from left: Ann Quigley, Kendra Buresch, and Bridget Reed. Photo by Phil daRosa.

## Message from the Director

PHA is a place of inspiration and renewal. As I write on a gray, overcast day (of which we've had more than a few this spring), buds are bursting and vibrant daffodils are exploding with color. Our successful spring appeal and the energetic work of our talented staff and volunteers in planting over 20,000 bulbs resulted in the most colorful Daffodil Day & Spring Celebration to date. Thank you to all who were involved for this tremendous effort!

PHA is fortunate to host over 16,000 visitors each year. The diversity of our guests is as varied as our plant collections. Some come seeking beauty and solitude, some to learn about plants, and others are inspired by Polly Hill's remarkable story of growing an arboretum from a seed. Many come to participate in our educational programs or attend our summer lecture series. Children come to track down the monkey puzzle tree, photographers to capture our magical landscape, and almost everyone to marvel at the miraculous Julian Hill magnolia.

What's your reason for visiting?

We value our visitors. It's why we're here.

And while we know our visitors enjoy our beautiful grounds, we would like to know more about them—how they heard about us, impressions from their visit, and how we can make their time at PHA as enjoyable as possible. Visitor input gives us insight and informs ways in which we can make the Arboretum experience more enriching. That's why we are undertaking an audience research study this year. The results of the visitor surveys will be shared with our membership as we advance efforts to inspire our guests this season and into the future. This study will also guide planning initiatives, such as improved signage for orientation and interpretation. You may be asked to participate.

In this issue of *Meristems*, you'll read about our good work inside and outside our stone walls as well as updates on our staff and interns. We look forward to welcoming you and all our visitors to PHA. Please bring your family and friends!

*Timothy M. Boland*

## Recycling Organic Material

At PHA we take a green approach to everything we do. We try our best to recycle and reuse as much material on site as we can. Our horticultural staff produce three useful products from the plant material we collect during daily garden maintenance: compost, wood chip mulch (both new and aged), and leaf mold.

The first product we produce is compost. Our composting operation creates over 40 yards of usable compost each year, and with the help of our volunteer grounds crew we are now a year ahead. This means we always have compost available when needed and our new piles have adequate time to age (slowly decompose). We put herbaceous (green) material along with old leaves, soil, and small sticks (brown) material into the compost pile. The seeds and roots of invasive plants like Oriental bittersweet and garlic mustard, and bulbs such as wild onion are not added to the pile, thereby preventing their establishment back in the garden. Instead, these noxious materials are destroyed or thrown away. Compost has many uses in the garden and is invaluable as a top dressing and soil amendment.

Our wood chip mulch comes from the chipping of branches, twigs, and bark from the garden. We sometimes use fresh, non-composted wood chips, which lasts longer, to create mulched paths in certain parts of the Arboretum. When we plan to use the mulch in planting beds, we age the wood chips for at least six months in order to stimulate the processes of decomposition and nutrient release. Wood chip mulch is an appropriate choice for shrub beds and under trees.

The most valuable product made on site is leaf mold. We make leaf mold out of the leaves we collect from the grounds in the fall. The leaves are ground up and put into a large pile to age for six to twelve months. When used as a mulch, leaf mold helps us keep our carbon-to-nitrogen ratio in balance by making valuable nutrients available to the plants, as well as promoting a rich diversity of beneficial soil microorganisms. Leaf mold makes a great moisture-retentive mulch for perennial gardens.

By recycling organic material on site, PHA is able to improve our sustainability as an organization and reduce our carbon

footprint overall. Another benefit is controlling what goes into our composts and mulches, which helps us prevent the introduction of invasive weeds and detrimental compounds. While the volume of material produced at PHA is large and the composting procedures aided by tractors and machinery, the same processes and results are possible on a smaller scale for home gardeners. If you're interested in learning



**PHA Grounds Manager Ian Jochems with some of our prized leaf mold, aged to a beautiful dark hue**

more about the process of recycling plant waste to reuse in your landscape, check out "Horticulture for the Home Gardener," a class with PHA Grounds Manager Ian Jochems, which will be held on Thursday, June 13, at 1:00pm. Visit [pollyhillarboretum.org](http://pollyhillarboretum.org) for registration information.

## Welcome Summer Interns

Student internships have been an integral part of PHA since our founding in 1998. The Arboretum's summer internship program fulfills a fundamental component of our mission: education. Each year we select two horticultural interns who, in just 12 weeks, learn a phenomenal amount about plants, public gardens, and working together as a team, all while helping us maintain and manage PHA. As always, we are grateful for the continuing and generous support of the Feldman family for their funding of PHA's summer internship program. This summer we are excited to meet Caitlin de Vries, of Evans City, Pennsylvania, and Soleil Kurowski-LaBelle of Narragansett, Rhode Island.

Caitlin attends West Liberty University in West Liberty, West Virginia, where she will return as a senior in the fall to complete her undergraduate degree in biology with an emphasis on environmental stewardship and geography. She is passionate about environmental protection: The summer after her sophomore year, she interned at the Pittsburgh Zoo & PPG Aquarium, and last summer she assisted with a research project at the University of Nebraska on the recovery of juniper plants after prescribed burning for grassland restoration. She was attracted by PHA's mission to promote conservation and is enthused about her summer here on Martha's Vineyard.

Soleil will also be entering her senior year of college this fall. She attends the University of Rhode Island, where she is pursuing a degree in plant sciences with a focus on ornamental horticulture. Her work experience includes gardening for a perennial nursery, working as a landscaper in a private garden, and interning at a florist shop. During her time at PHA she looks forward to expanding her skillset and increasing her familiarity with horticultural techniques. She also looks forward to returning to the Island, where she vacationed with her family during childhood summers. We look forward to working with Caitlin and Soleil. Be sure to say hello to them out on the grounds this season!

## Staff News

In late March, Executive Director Tim Boland gave a presentation, “American Oaks, Diversity and Ecology,” to the Massachusetts Chapter of the American Rhododendron Society at the Massachusetts Horticultural Society’s headquarters, Elm Bank, in Wellesley, Massachusetts. Tim also had a paper published this past May in the *9th International Oak Society Conference Proceedings*. The article, “The Conservator: Conservation Mapping and its Role in Oak Conservation,” details the use of geographic information systems (GIS) mapping in protecting oak forests on Martha’s Vineyard.

In March, Education, Membership, & Outreach Coordinator Ann Quigley participated in the annual Ecological Landscape Alliance conference at UMass Amherst, attending talks on the role of landscape in our global environmental crisis, designing landscapes for learning, and the restoration of native habitat.

In May, Curator Todd Rounsaville attended the annual conference of the Center for Plant Conservation (CPC) held at the Chicago Botanic Garden. The CPC is a collaborative network of over 50 institutions whose goal is to preserve germplasm of imperiled plants in North America. Polly Hill Arboretum became a participating institution in 2018.



International Oaks  
The Journal of the International Oak Society

Proceedings  
9th International Oak Society Conference  
October 21-24, 2018

Issue No. 30 / 2019 / ISSN 1941-2061



Tim Boland joined the International Oak Society’s Board in 2018. His article on conservation mapping tools was published in the 2018 conference proceedings.



Elizabeth Thomas

## Welcome Elizabeth Thomas, Curatorial Intern

Our new curatorial intern Elizabeth (Liz) Thomas began her 9-month internship in March. Her first weeks at PHA were remarkably productive: she learned the IrisBG plant database, conducted garden inventories, produced tags on the laser engraver, and developed signage for the spring bulb display, impressing all of us with her attitude and quality of work.

Liz deferred her admission to graduate school to join the PHA team as our curatorial intern to learn more about plant curation in a public garden. She explains, “Polly Hill Arboretum is a shining example of a small institution with a high degree of professionalism and an effective balance between global connectivity and local impact. In addition to the benefits of working collaboratively with a talented staff, PHA offers me the opportunity to learn plant records software.” She adds that the emphasis on mentorship is invaluable. After completing the PHA internship, Liz will head to the University of Michigan to pursue an MS in natural resources and the environment with a specialization in conservation ecology.

Liz grew up in Florida and earned a BS degree in horticulture from the University of Florida in 2010. Since then she has been exploring horticulture and agriculture across the country, working in Florida, Illinois, Washington, and New York State. Most recently, she was living in Eden, New York, working as a horticulturist for the Buffalo and Erie County Botanical Gardens and volunteering in the Eckert Herbarium at Buffalo State College. She says her time as a horticulturist at Buffalo Botanical Gardens allowed her to envision her career path. She plans to transition her horticultural skills into a career in collections curation and management and/or plant conservation.

Liz will focus on two projects at PHA: the first is a survey of our meadows (the North and West Fields), including a plant species inventory list and diversity measurements. Her report will be used to develop management goals for the meadows. The second project is a comprehensive checklist of *Stewartia* cultivars. We hope to publish the results as a reference for botanists, horticulturists, or anyone interested in *Stewartia*. Introduce yourself to Liz on your next visit to the Arboretum!

# Arboretum Plans Comprehensive Visitor Research Study

This summer PHA will be working with professional audience research firm People, Places, and Design Research to carry out two studies to help us better understand our visitors. The results will allow us to design programming and interpretation on the grounds that aligns more closely with visitor interests. This research will also help staff create more effective marketing and informational content, thus carrying out the Arboretum's mission more effectively.



Jeff Hayward of People, Places and Design Research conducts a visitor interview at the Desert Botanical Garden in Phoenix, Arizona.

The goal of the first study is to better understand the demographics and background of our visitors. Data will be collected on practical visitor demographics (for example, where visitors are from and whether they have previously visited PHA), and will also allow us to document visitor interests and expectations. The second study will gather information about people's experience at the Arboretum. Questions will be targeted to first-time visitors to collect details such as how easily they navigate around the grounds and whether they are having an enjoyable visit. Interviews will be conducted by staff and volunteers—Be on the lookout for familiar faces with clipboards in the parking lot this summer!

# Welcome Elliott Bennett, Youth Educator



Elliott Bennett

The Arboretum is pleased to welcome Elliott Bennett as our new Youth Educator. Elliott will be working with Visitor Services, Volunteer & Youth Education Coordinator Kendra Buresch on our successful kindergarten through 4th grade programming and the development of a new curriculum for middle and high school students. A longtime resident of Martha's Vineyard, Elliott is involved in many facets of Island life. She has lived in Edgartown for the past 20 years, where she raised her two children, Caley and Cooper.

Elliott's qualifications are legion! She has an extensive background in science and education and has taught in the natural sciences for over 30 years. This past fall she retired from Martha's Vineyard Regional High School after 18 years, where she was a biology teacher, head of the science department, and most recently, assistant principal. She has an MS in education from the University of New England as well as a

certificate in advanced educational leadership from Harvard Graduate School of Education. She has always loved botany and she backs that up with a BA in botany from Ohio Wesleyan University, in Delaware, Ohio.

Elliott also has a personal connection to Polly Hill. While an undergraduate, Elliott worked over the summer for the Henry Foundation for Botanical Research, a public garden in Gladwyne, Pennsylvania, that focuses on native plants of North America. Josephine Henry, its founder, and Polly Hill were horticultural peers and compatriots in the Delaware Valley. In addition, Elliott's family had been longtime friends of Polly's family. It was not a big surprise that when Elliott moved to Martha's Vineyard in 1986 (with a glowing recommendation from Ms. Henry!), she ended up gardening for Polly Hill, long before Polly's personal arboretum became a public garden. We are happy to welcome her back!

When she isn't teaching or exploring the botanical world, Elliott also likes to travel, swim, hike, read, and take photographs. She also works part time at the West Tisbury Library. Passionate about both botany and horticulture, she's excited to pass on her love of plants—and PHA—to the next generation. We are thrilled to have Elliott assisting with youth education programming at the Arboretum, and can't imagine anyone more qualified!

# We Need You!

We are grateful beyond measure to our PHA volunteers. Their dedication, quality of work, and generosity amaze us. And by all reports, they have a lot of fun doing it. This year we are seeking additional volunteers in several areas: guiding tours, youth education, staffing the Visitor Center, and working on the volunteer grounds crew. For more information or to apply for the PHA volunteer program, please email Kendra Buresch at [kendra@pollyhillarboretum.org](mailto:kendra@pollyhillarboretum.org).



Original poster artwork by Keiko Satoh

# In Memoriam of Beloved Former Board Members & Friends

## **Lisina M. Hoch** *Arboretum Supporter, Honorary Board Member*

This past February we received the sad news that honorary PHA board member Lisina Hoch had passed away at the age of 89. Elegant, gracious, kind, and thoughtful, Lisina was widely admired by our present and past board of directors, staff members, and all who were fortunate enough to know her. Lisina and her husband, Frank Hoch, were close friends of Polly and Julian Hill. They were involved from our inception, when in 1997, David H. Smith first approached Frank Hoch for support in preserving and establishing the Polly Hill Arboretum. Frank would go on to become PHA's first board chairman. Lisina joined our board in 2005, bringing her enthusiasm, pragmatic nature, and dedication to our scientific mission.

The Hoch family impacted the evolution of the Arboretum with their philanthropy and their unflinching confidence in its future. Lisina and Frank believed in the power of science to solve modern conservation challenges. From the earliest days of PHA and through many of our key initiatives, they worked with our founding board members to ensure quality growth through their generosity and encouragement. This included funding the greenhouse construction, supporting our first capital campaign, and much more. Beyond her involvement with



Lisina and Frank Hoch

PHA, Lisina was a long-term supporter of the Vineyard Conservation Society and the Sheriff's Meadow Foundation. She was a life trustee of the Bhutan Foundation and the Woods Hole Oceanographic Institution, and an honorary life trustee of the Asia Society.

"Lisina was optimistic; she provided encouragement as well as counsel," says PHA Executive Director Tim Boland. "She was so kind to my family, particularly when we were new to the Island and just settling in. I also remember traveling during the off-season to visit her at her home in Irvington,

New York. I treasure this time spent chatting about plants and updating her on the Arboretum's progress. It's a source of pride and enduring memories."

The Hoch family's legacy will remain strong at PHA. In 2009, we established the annual Lisina & Frank W. Hoch lecture in their honor. These lectures on great American gardens feature a public garden leader sharing the evolution of their garden. We are grateful to Lisina for her role in establishing PHA as an internationally, nationally, and locally recognized plant science organization.



Maggie Sibert

## **Maggie Sibert** *Founding Board Member*

This past January the Arboretum lost a longtime friend, Margaret (Maggie) Sibert, at 99 years of age. Maggie and her husband, Edwin, were close friends with Polly and Julian Hill, with whom they shared mutual interests in gardening and birdwatching. Maggie worked with Polly on several horticultural projects that predate PHA's 1998 establishment as a public arboretum. She assisted with plant records and notes for an article on the North Tisbury azaleas that would eventually be published in the journal of the Azalea Society of America. Later, Maggie became a founding member of the PHA Board. She served many roles in our

early development sharing advice, plants, and words of encouragement; as a member of the first Arboretum Review Committee she was a strong advocate for making improvements. She wanted us to do as Polly did: grow plants from seed and give them the best care possible. An expert, ardent, and generous gardener, Maggie tended a remarkably diverse garden in Vineyard Haven. In 2009 when Maggie discovered we had lost Polly's Starfish clematis to a pathogen, she invited staff to dig a large plant from her own garden that she had rooted from a cutting. This act of kindness is just one example of her remarkable generosity to PHA. Today nearly a dozen plant accessions at PHA perpetuate her passionate interest in plants and her enduring connection to the Arboretum.

**Elaine Eugster**  
*PHA Volunteer*

In January of this year we received the sad news that dedicated and beloved PHA volunteer Elaine Eugster had passed away. Elaine was involved with Polly Hill Arboretum from its earliest days. Although she frequently could be found greeting guests in the Visitor Center, she also enjoyed working with children in the youth education program, leading tours, and welcoming attendees to evening lectures.

Elaine had much to offer the Island community in terms of her energy and intellect: she had been the recipient of a master's degree in electrical engineering and computer science and a doctorate in the history of science. She was a longtime professor at Goucher College in Maryland. Widowed at the age of 50, she soon after left for the Seychelles to teach data processing while in the Peace Corps. In 2001, she retired to Martha's Vineyard.



Elaine Eugster at the PHA volunteer party in 2016

She kept very busy in retirement, volunteering for many other Island organizations in addition to PHA. At her memorial service in March, her many admirers filled an easel with the names of all the local nonprofits and community groups she had assisted during her years on Martha's Vineyard.

Elaine was featured in the fall 2005 issue of *Meristems* where she was quoted saying, "I learn something every time I come here, and just as important, it's so beautiful." We learned a lot from Elaine in return, and we remember with admiration and gratitude her dedication to the plants, people, and history of PHA. Elaine's cousin, Judy Lawne, sponsored the construction and dedication of a cedar wood garden chair bearing a memorial plaque in Elaine's honor. It now sits on the Visitor Center's back patio, facing out onto Holly Park. Elaine's smiling face will be sorely missed at the Visitor Center desk this season.

**James Luther**  
*Arboretum Friend*

The Arboretum lost a true friend when James (Jim) Luther, summer resident of Edgartown, passed away in January at the age of 90. Jim was involved in numerous charities on and off Martha's Vineyard. At PHA he worked with Director Emeritus Stephen A. Spongberg to fund a garden in honor of his beloved wife, Hilly Luther. This garden, which can be viewed from the cedar chairs on the Visitor Center's back patio, is one of the first areas visitors encounter upon beginning a tour of the Arboretum. Last summer Jim visited Hilly's Garden with his family one last time. They were pleased to see how mature and attractive the plantings have become. (See "Then and Now" on the back page.) For the delight of thousands of our visitors, we thank Jim and the Luther family for all they have done to make the Arboretum entrance so welcoming and beautiful!



Jim Luther (left) and his son Gray enjoy the view of Hilly's Garden this past summer 2018.

# Arboretum Explorer

We are pleased to introduce an innovative website that allows you to explore PHA's plants in depth: Arboretum Explorer serves as a portal to search for plants in the living collection, view plant locations on an interactive map, and see photographs of plants in flower or fruit. Our recent transition to IrisBG, our plant records database, enables us to record and share information like never before. There are both desktop and mobile-friendly versions of Arboretum Explorer allowing you to access information from your home or with a mobile device while touring the grounds. Access the site at [pollyhill.arboretumexplorer.org](http://pollyhill.arboretumexplorer.org).

Using the search feature, plants can be found using the common or scientific name, plant family, or country of origin. Alternatively, specific sections of PHA can be selected from a drop-down menu to view all the plants in a certain area—for example, Polly's Play Pen. Another exciting component of Arboretum Explorer is dedicated to self-guided tours. Special walking tours will be created allowing visitors to explore specific themes, such as trees native to Martha's Vineyard, deer-resistant shrubs, or our nationally accredited stewartia collection.

Arboretum Explorer has the added benefit of drawing data directly from our collections database on a regular basis, therefore the plant information always remains current. We are eager to hear user feedback.

# Students Gather for Heath Hen Day at Martha's Vineyard Museum



Second-grade students listen to the story of the Heath Hen at the new Martha's Vineyard Museum.

Below: Screenshot of an Arboretum Explorer plant search for *Rhododendron albrechtii*

**Arboretum Explorer**

SEARCH MAP NAMES TAXON

Taxon:

**Rhododendron albrechtii**

Common name: Albrecht Azalea  
 Family: Ericaceae (Heath)  
 Distribution: Japan  
 IUCN Red List: Least concern  
 Hardiness: -10 - 0 F  
 Life form: Shrub/sub-shrub

Locations

1: Container (C) • Accession: 2015-001 • Origin: Japan • Provenance: Wild  
 2: Holly Park 4 (I-I) • Accession: 1998-159\*G • Provenance: Wild  
 3: Holly Park 4 (I-I) • Accession: 1998-159\*H • Provenance: Wild  
 4: Holly Park 4 (I-I) • Accession: 1998-159\*A • Provenance: Wild

Back

Google

Area Individual

Just before the official opening of the new Martha's Vineyard Museum (MVM) on a blustery day in January, the entire second grade of the Oak Bluffs School arrived for Heath Hen Day! Students explored stations throughout the museum to learn the story of the heath hen's extinction, its unusual behaviors, and the Island habitats it once called home. Over the past two years, educators from MVM and Polly Hill Arboretum have partnered to engage second-grade students in the key environmental issues impacting our Island. The sad story of the irrevocable loss of the heath hen sparks children's interest to prevent this from happening to other organisms, which they learn is called conservation stewardship. Second-graders from the Oak Bluffs and Edgartown Schools will be rounding out their heath hen unit with a PHA field trip this spring to investigate native plants that grow in the sandplain grassland habitat once inhabited by the heath hen.



# Summer Program Preview

This summer we are offering an exciting selection of lectures, classes, exhibits, and workshops. For dates, details, and our complete summer schedule, look for our summer/fall program guide mailing or visit our programs calendar at [pollyhillarboretum.org](http://pollyhillarboretum.org). Our summer lecture series, which takes place in our historic Far Barn, will begin in late June with a lecture by botanical artist for the New York Botanical Garden and the Arnold Arboretum, Bobbi Angell, titled “Drawn to Plants: The Art and Science of Botany.” The next day, she will offer a one-day workshop for the artistically inclined (or curious) called “Capturing the Life of Plants.”

In July, we look forward to welcoming Bill Brumback, recently retired conservation director of the Native Plant Trust (formerly New England Wild Flower Society) in Framingham, Massachusetts, as the featured speaker at our annual Lisina and Frank W. Hoch memorial lecture. Later, in mid-July, we welcome horticulturist Harnek Singh from Wave Hill, a private estate turned public garden located along the Hudson River in the Bronx. Harnek will give a photographic tour of Wave Hill’s Flower Garden, illustrating how flower shape, leaf texture, and color—as well as editing self-sowing plants—are carefully considered for optimal display. Also in July, Dr. Paul Goldstein, USDA and Smithsonian entomologist, will give a talk on his work with moths and bees on Martha’s Vineyard. Stay for an after-dark moth viewing following the talk.

Jennifer Ceska, native plant advocate and conservation coordinator for the State Botanical Garden of Georgia in Athens, Georgia, is the featured speaker for our annual David H. Smith Memorial Lecture in August. Also in August, we welcome back wildlife biologists Luanne Johnson and Liz Baldwin from Vineyard nonprofit BiodiversityWorks to give a talk titled “The Secret Life of Snakes,” an update on their research on black racers, and an overview of Island snakes. In September, we look forward to a presentation on oak evolution given by Andrew Hipp, senior scientist in plant systematics and herbarium curator at the Morton Arboretum in Lisle, Illinois. As always, we are grateful for our community sponsors who help make possible our

summer lecture series. This year, we would like to thank the Dukes Soil Conservation District, Middletown Nursery/Oakleaf Landscape, Donaroma’s Nursery and Landscape Services, Heather Gardens, and Bartlett Tree Experts.



**Jennifer Ceska of the State Botanical Garden of Georgia, will lecture at PHA in August. She will discuss how homeowners can support wildlife biodiversity by layering native plants into home gardens, potted displays, and pocket prairies.**

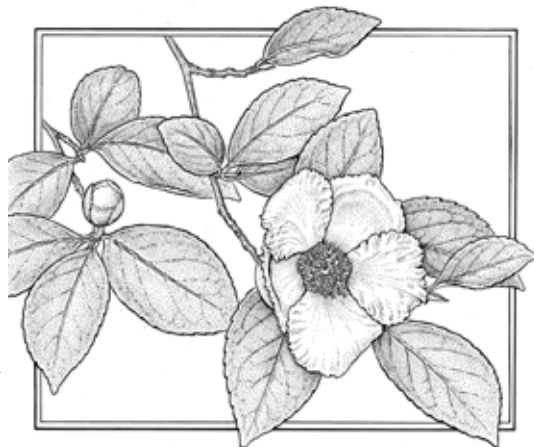
In addition to our lecture series, we are excited to offer a wide array of classes and workshops taught by PHA staff and visiting guest experts. In June, PHA Propagator Bridget Reed will offer a propagation class focusing on the technique of layering. Grounds Manager Ian Jochems will lead a workshop in mid-June covering the basics of horticulture for the home gardener in addition to his popular tree and shrub pruning class in September. Dan Benarcik of Chanticleer in Wayne, Pennsylvania, will be returning to PHA after several years to offer his garden chair workshop. Participants will have the opportunity to build and take home one of the beautiful and unique Ritveld chairs just like those on the grounds here at PHA. Vineyard artist Lizzy Schule will teach “Drawing from Nature,” and Lynn Hoeft “Landscape Watercolor,” in a series of classes beginning in June. This fall, PHA Horticulturist Oliver Osness will teach a class on tool maintenance, an essential skill

for any serious gardener. In early September, professional Boston-based photographer Lara Woolfson will visit Polly Hill Arboretum to offer a series of nature photography classes, including a class in iPhone photography, for those of us who would like to improve our skills snapping nature photos on the go. And in October, Curator Todd Rounsaville will teach a workshop on seeds with a focus on native wildflowers and trees.

Back by popular demand, PHA will host “Art in the Arboretum,” an exhibit of visitor artwork displayed throughout the grounds featuring the plants and landscapes at PHA. Save the date: on Tuesday, June 25, 5:30 to 7:30pm, join us for an opening reception and enjoy a tour of the Arboretum through the eyes of the artists. The show will remain open through Columbus Day.

We’ll cap the summer season with our annual Fall Plant Sale in early September with a free lecture by Andy Brand, curator of living collections at Coastal Maine Botanical Garden, titled “Homeland Diversity: Inviting Mother Nature Back into Our Yards.” But don’t forget that our plant sale area is open for business all season long (9:30am to 4pm daily between Memorial Day weekend and Columbus Day) and contains a wide variety of choice plants, including Polly Hill introductions and Island natives.

We look forward to seeing you in the Visitor Center, at the Plant Sale, and attending programs at the Arboretum! Additional events and classes may be added throughout the season. To receive email updates, subscribe on the homepage of our website.



**Stewartia illustration by Bobbi Angell, who will lecture and teach on the art and science of botanical illustration in late June at PHA**



Two thousand *Narcissus* 'Ceylon' bulbs were planted in the wooded area surrounding the Arboretum entrance.

## More Daffodils at PHA by Oliver Osness

Among the most heartening signs of spring on the Vineyard are the flowers of *Narcissus* in brilliant shades of yellow, white, and orange, timing their bloom as if to triumphantly announce the end of winter. *Narcissus*, commonly called daffodils, are perennial bulbs that flourish wherever they have been planted, returning year after year. Daffodils have long been a fixture of the New England landscape, growing along roads, stone walls and fence lines, and anywhere gardeners once thought of tucking a bulb into the earth. A lost patch or rogue bunch blooming in the undergrowth can signal a forgotten garden or indicate a relic of once-tended land.

*Narcissus* have taken well to cultivation, flourishing in the cool and wet climates of the British Isles and throughout most regions of the U.S., with the exception of frost-free areas. Before cultivation, *Narcissus* species evolved to grow in the meadows and woods of Europe and in regions surrounding the Mediterranean Sea. The name *Narcissus* refers to the Greek myth that told of a boy named Narcissus, who disdained those who loved him and was cursed to fall in love with himself after becoming entranced by his own reflection. Some legends say he pined away and others that he drowned, but according to the myth, the gods transformed him into the striking flower with the nodding bloom that bears his name.

Like most spring-flowering bulbs, daffodil bulbs should be planted in autumn before the ground freezes. Despite the flower's ability to proliferate and fill out

space over a few years, they don't require any containment. Has anyone ever complained about having too many daffodils? In addition to their propensity to multiply, perhaps what makes *Narcissus* a common sight on the Vineyard is that the deer have no appetite for them. This cannot be said about most other plants! Daffodils look perfect in front of the Arboretum's lichen-covered stone walls dancing in April's cool breezes.

This past fall, with the support of donations from our spring appeal and the energy of many volunteers who lent their hands, backs, and knees, we planted over 20,000 bulbs throughout the Arboretum, including 8,750 *Narcissus* bulbs of 14 different varieties. This spring has been a delight as our daffodils have bloomed in masses along State Road, in delicate drifts in Holly Park, and in a circuitous path through the West Field.

For daffodil enthusiasts, it's also worth noting the wide variety of species and cultivars available. Brent and Becky's Bulbs in Gloucester, Virginia, currently offers around 200 different species and varieties of daffodils for sale, but it's reported that over 30,000 varieties are in existence! Most display the familiar six-petaled star-shaped flower with a protruding trumpet-like corona, but there is such variety in size, shape, and color, that some cultivars may not be immediately recognizable as daffodils at all.

If you would like to support Polly Hill Arboretum by purchasing bulbs for your own garden, please visit Brent and Becky's Bulbs at [www.bloomingbucks.com](http://www.bloomingbucks.com) and select Polly Hill Arboretum.

## Meet Carol Swiech, Visitor Center Ambassador

Weekends throughout the season you'll find Carol Swiech in the Visitor Center, chatting with Arboretum guests from near and far. Carol, now a part-time staff member, vividly remembers her first visit to the Arboretum 15 years ago, when she met our founder, Polly Hill, on a summer trip to the Island with her daughter Lucy. They ran into Polly walking the grounds and she took the time to show Carol and Lucy her favorite places and most special plants. An avid gardener, Carol was thrilled and she returned to the Arboretum often after this first memorable experience.

Carol has been coming to Martha's Vineyard for over 20 years and made the Island her year-round home in 2016, after retiring from an administrative position at the University of New Hampshire. Shortly after moving—and only 6 months after retirement—she grew restless. She was delighted to discover that we were looking to hire a part-time Visitor Center staff person to greet visitors on busy weekends. She eagerly applied for the job and has filled this role for the past two summers.

What Carol loves most about her job is the peaceful atmosphere, but she also enjoys meeting people who come to visit from all over the world. When asked her favorite spot at PHA, she says, "Right this minute, it's by the *Liriodendron* next to the Cowbarn with all of the daffodils in bloom! But," she admits, "it's hard to pick a favorite." (For those who don't speak botanical Latin, the common name for *Liriodendron* is tulip poplar.) She does, however, have a favorite plant: the Chinese pearl bloom (*Poliothyrsis sinensis*), which grows behind the PHA Visitor Center, and now, in her yard too!

When not working at PHA, Carol might be found volunteering at the Edgartown Library, where she is actively involved with their Friends group. She delights in spending time with her grandchildren, particularly in August when they come to the Island for their annual visit. You'll most often find Carol in her garden. She loves to move her plants around to find



Carol Swiech at the PHA Visitor Center desk

just the right spot. Vegetable gardening used to be her primary focus, but since beginning work at PHA, she has added many new ornamental plants to her landscape. In fact, Carol exclaims, “I’m running out of space!”—a sentiment often echoed by PHA volunteers and staff alike. Look for Carol at the Visitor Center on weekends; she’ll be happy to help you make the most out of your visit.

## Cooke House Colonial Garden Consultation

Executive Director Tim Boland and former Education, Membership and Outreach Coordinator Karin Stanley are assisting the Martha’s Vineyard Museum (MVM) in the renovation of the landscape around the Thomas Cooke House. The Colonial house (c. 1740) is under renovation to preserve its historic character, and with it a renewed look at both the landscape and garden interpretive opportunities that will follow the house renovation. The planting plan brings together the indigenous plants of Martha’s Vineyard and plants introduced and used by colonists. The garden will provide a beautiful contemplative space for rest and reflection. It will also serve as a launching off point or portal to the town Edgartown, the Island, and more!

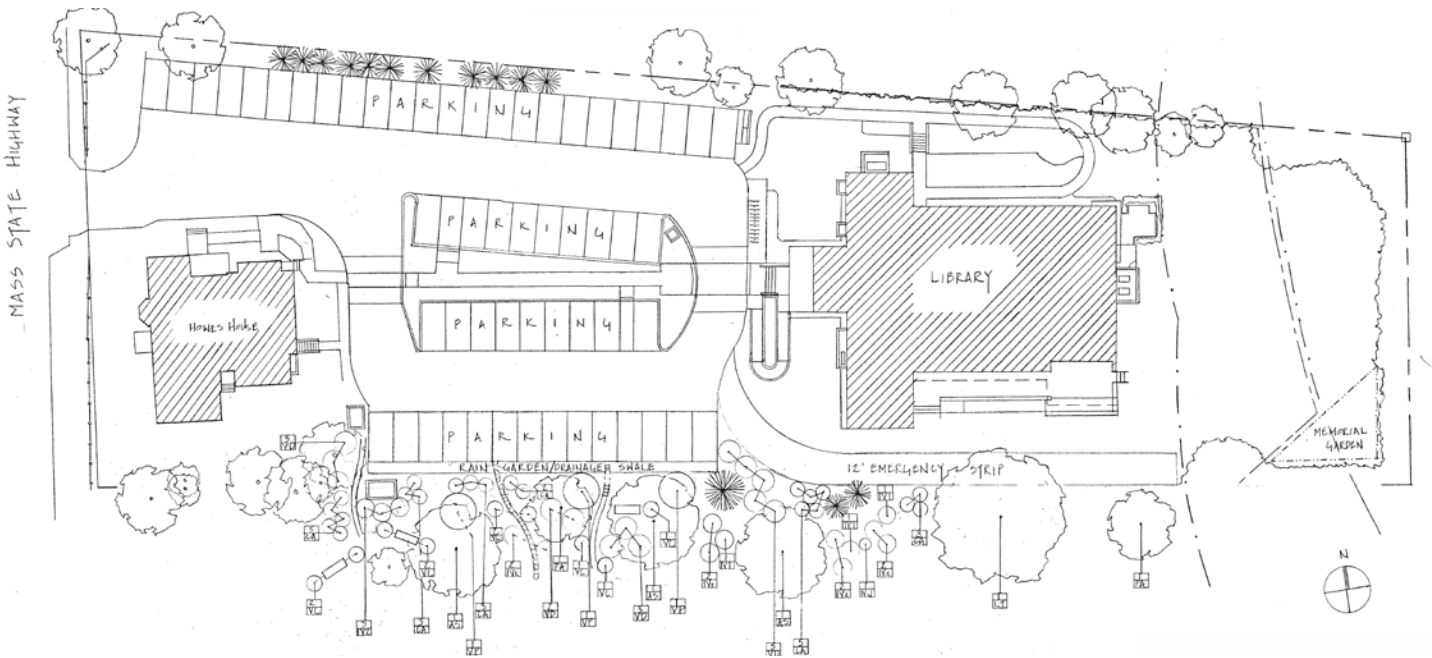
The project is assisted by the thoughtful and talented garden design team led by



landscape architect (and PHA volunteer) Cheryl Doble, local designer Lil Provence, MVM board member Nancy Veitor, and Roxanne Kapitan, from Oak Leaf Landscaping in West Tisbury.



Garden design team plans new Cooke House gardens.



New tree and shrub planting plan at the West Tisbury Library  
Drawing by Lil Provence

## Community Preservation Funds Landscape Plan

Last year, the West Tisbury Library, in partnership with PHA, was awarded an Edey Foundation grant to fund the removal of invasive Norway maple trees on the southern border of the library parking lot. Arboretum staff consulted with the town regarding the

deleterious effects of the maples’ aggressive root systems, which were proving harmful to the plantings in the nearby bioswale and damaging the pervious paving blocks of the parking lot. The replanting plan was devised by local landscape designer Lil Provence in

consultation with PHA Executive Director Tim Boland. At a recent West Tisbury Town Meeting, voters approved funding for the project through the Community Preservation Fund. We are eager to see the new plantings, which will be installed this fall.

## THE POLLY HILL ARBORETUM

### MAILING ADDRESS

PO Box 561  
West Tisbury, MA 02575

508-693-9426 Tel  
508-693-5772 Fax

### FIND US ONLINE

www.pollyhillarboretum.org  
Facebook & Instagram:  
@pollyhillarboretum  
Twitter: @pollyhillarb

### 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

### ADMISSION

\$5  
Free to members & children under 12

### FREE PARKING

### DRIVING DIRECTIONS

See www.pollyhillarboretum.org

**mer.i.stem:** *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 AND NOW



Hilly's Garden, 2000



Hilly's Garden, 2018

## Hilly's Garden

The stonework and pathway system at PHA's Visitor Center was installed in 1999 to create an attractive entrance for the Arboretum. The project and its associated garden was named Hilly's Garden, in memory of Hilly Luther as a gift from her husband, Jim. In the fall of 2000, then Executive Director Stephen A. Spongberg wrote in our newsletter, "The site does not yet have the appearance or interest of an established garden, but the hardscape and infrastructure are well established.

Years from now, we trust this area will rival Polly's Play Pen in its beauty, horticultural and botanical interest, and year-round appeal." Today this vision has come to pass—a stroll through Hilly's Garden and nearby Holly Park reveals a tapestry of rare and beautiful plants, many grown from PHA seed collecting expeditions. Visitors love to sit and take in the beauty. We are grateful for Steve's early vision for Hilly's Garden and Holly Park, which in its twentieth year is a paradise for plant lovers!



View from Visitor Center patio overlooking Hilly's Garden and Holly Park, 2018