



**WAGNER FARM  
ARBORETUM**  
**Winter 2011**  
Volume 17, Number 17



# WAGNER FARM ARBORETUM news

## **Brite Nites Halloween Event** **Brite Ending for Brite Nites –** **Success Beyond our Wildest Dreams**

**By Suzi Schatz**

Wagner Farm Arboretum hosted its first hugely successful Brite Nites Halloween Event. The event consisted of a lighted pumpkin path through the Arboretum with over 600 artistically designed pumpkins. Themes ranged from under the sea to a graveyard to Disney characters to famous figures in history. In addition a Haunted House Showcase was presented with frightening scenes including a madman’s laboratory, a witch’s bedroom and live zombie in a graveyard.

“The event was successful beyond our wildest dreams,” said Suzanne Smith, President of the Arboretum. “We were hoping to break even and maybe make a little profit for the farm. Instead, we raised over \$30,000 and had 3,300 people attend. The money raised will be used for a gazebo and special projects in the Children’s garden and to make next year’s event even



*Photo © John M. DeCristofaro*

more spectacular.”

“The success of the Brite Nites could not have been possible without our incredible volunteers. They donated their time so generously by carving pumpkins as well as helping out at the event. In addition, our charitable sponsors donated everything from electrical work to food and trinkets that we were available for sale. We would like to say from the bottom of our

hearts, thank you to all our incredible volunteers and sponsors!”

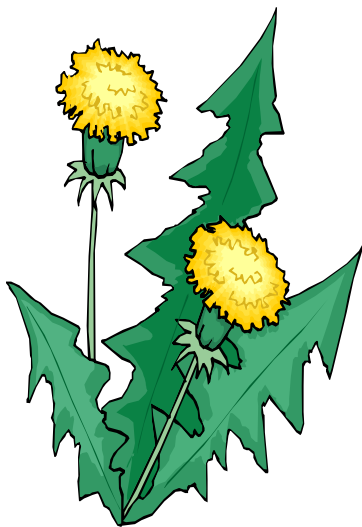
We are always looking for individuals, corporations and people with special skills to help out at our events. If anyone would like to join our incredible group of volunteers, please contact Meritta at [volunteer@wfafnj.org](mailto:volunteer@wfafnj.org) or Carol Senff at [csefff@wfafnj.org](mailto:csefff@wfafnj.org).



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## How Weeds Win



By Keith Cooper

When our gardening areas at the Wagner Farm Arboretum were first plowed, I walked over them to collect soil samples. The deer tracks I noticed wouldn't appear after our fences were raised, but a dandelion seed floating by on its silky parachute did forecast future togetherness.

Profligate and tenacious, the dandelion is the iconic weed. A breeze can lift over one hundred seeds from a mature flower head. I once found a plant with nineteen flowers and have seen dandelions in bloom eleven months of the year.

Once established, dandelions are husky perennials with extra assets. The various subspecies are ready to adapt to a variety of conditions while capable of growing "wherever the hand of man has set foot". A single plant can hold onto its terri-

tory after it has been pulled up if even a fragment of root has been left behind. It's likely that the seed I saw floating by has provided gardeners at Wagner Farm with numerous opportunities to practice their weeding skills.

For those, like me, who have developed a taste for them, dandelions offer a bonus in the spring. Cleaned, derooted, boiled twice, then served as a green vegetable, the young plants are a little more bitter than escarole. They are highly nutritious and were used as a spring tonic by early settlers.

Claiming territory for themselves is a strategy used by many plants. A good example of this is the lowly plantain. Using what we could call the sombrero effect its broad leaves shade the ground laying just under them. When the seeds fall off their tall seed stalk, they land nearby and spread the gloom farther, while hogging sunlight for themselves and excluding competitors. For weeders, fortunately, the plantain's root clusters are easily dislodged with a hand tool. If you turn the plant over, you can mulch with it.

Another strategy some weeds favor is growing deep roots. In our gardens, the dock is a fine example. Even a young plant is difficult to extract by hand, and a

spade or fork is required for one that's gotten a good start. The two to three foot depth reached by their roots gives them a considerable advantage in dry weather. The plant also goes to seed early, giving its progeny a head start. The seeds themselves are lightweight little discs that float away during thunderstorms and spread the species downhill.

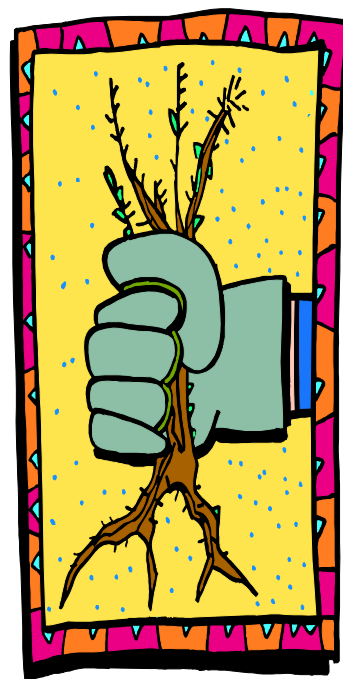
Weed seeds get spread by a variety of means. They show up when the parent plants are not around the garden. How oxalis, amaranth and purslane came to my plot is anybody's guess. Besides the myriad pathways used, many seeds also remain viable for surprisingly long time. Newly turned over soil will bring them into the light and a decade's long accumulation of bindweed, smartweed and who knows what else will leap into profusion.

Probably the champion weed in the gardens at Wagner Farm is the yellow nut sedge. It doesn't look like a sedge until it is full grown. Fresh looking and grass-like initially, it springs from a nut smaller than a pea. In time it will get to be almost a foot tall and will spread its roots out and down. If pulled up young, without the nut coming with it, the nut itself will send up a replacement. The energy supply in a yellow nut sedge is suffi-

cient to do this several times. A patch of the stuff, superficially weeded, will look like a new lawn in a matter of days. The maturing plant will grow nuts on several of its roots, so one plant this season is half a dozen next season and progress is exponential.

Towering over the sedge we harbor is the Canadian thistle. It has the seed dispersal capability of the dandelion and its regenerative capability also, from roots not quite rivaling the dock's. A look at the fields surrounding our gardens shows that it responds to mowing by becoming profuse. Together with the yellow nut sedge it will be a constant companion to those whose motto and task must be:

**"weed early and weed often".**



# Pruning Your Trees—When & How? An Expert Tells All

By Jeff Calvert

Many people seem to be reluctant to pruning their trees after the leaves have fallen off of them. Being in the tree industry for over 16 years, I still find this puzzling.

When I looked into it and ask questions to customers I learn they are receptive to Dormant season pruning after a little education. For starters did you know that from December until March is actually the only recommended time to prune an American Elm? Reason for this is to minimize the attack of the Elm Bark Bee-

tle which has robbed us of most of our Elm trees.

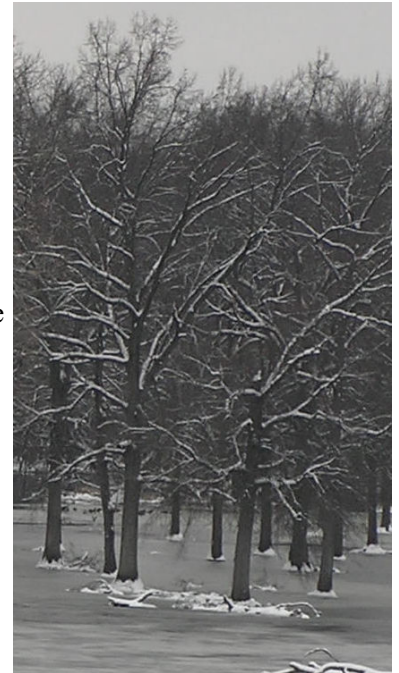
Now the word "prune" to me can be a very gray word.

There are many ways to prune a tree. If you are doing what is best for your tree and safest for your property, pruning out dead or decayed limbs exist 12 months a year, so why put it off? Most companies are hungry to stay busy all year. Like you, an Arborist has a mortgage payment to make even in the winter. Trees without leaves on them make for less clean up and will lower your overall cost too.

You may have or seen trees of many sizes and species need support cables to add structural stability to a weakened V-crotch.

Wouldn't it make more sense to install a cable when the tree is in its most relaxed position without leaves, as opposed to when all the extra weight of a in bloom canopy stretches limbs and leads out even the slightest bit?

Remember trees don't "sleep" most things you want to do in May and June can be done in January too. In fact you may even save a dollar or two.



## Thank You, Keith Cooper!

After several years as a trustee and the director of the Community Garden Keith Cooper has retired to spend more time gardening and relaxing. Keith was very instrumental in getting the Community Garden started and continued to oversee all facets through the end of 2010.

In his roll as a trustee he was instrumental in supporting and developing new ideas for the Community Garden as well as contributed wonderful ideas to the overall benefit of the arboretum. Keith did not limit his con-

tributions to the community garden. You could find him working at the plant sale, giving advice to our shoppers and he was no stranger at the boutiques. He enjoyed helping the children when they came to the garden to plant as part of the "Growing to Give" program.

We are not saying good-bye since he will continue to be active in the Community Garden we are saying

**Thank You.**



## Wagner Farm Arboretum Volunteer Opportunities

If you'd like to get involved we have many volunteer opportunities available. Meet new people and have a direct impact in creating a beautiful natural environment for all generations to enjoy. Whether you'd like to pick up a shovel and dig or use your expertise in another area there is a position for you!

**Buildings and Grounds, Community Garden, Giving Gardeners' Project, Education and Community Programs, Fundraising, Grants, Membership and Volunteers, Public Relations**

**Please visit us at our Website:  
[www.wfafnj.org](http://www.wfafnj.org)**

### Officers and Trustees:

Suzanne M. Smith, *President*

Carol Senff, *Vice President*

Karen Manner, *Secretary*

William Apgar, *Treasurer*

Julie Gnoy, *Trustee*

Holly Hall, *Trustee*

Jonathan Jeans, *Trustee*

Meera Rao, *Trustee*

## About the Arboretum:

The mission of the Arboretum is to provide environmental and horticultural education of children and adults through the development of plant life in a beautiful, natural setting. All of the programs offered throughout the year as well as the maintenance of the gardens would not be possible without a volunteer staff that is dedicated to the continuing growth of the Arboretum. As we continue to grow, we create new and innovative fundraisers to support our goal for additional gardens and educational programs and facilities.

## Upcoming Events:

2011 Events will be announced in the Spring Newsletter

## Dear Members and Friends

I can't begin to tell you how successful the Brite Nites Halloween event was for the arboretum and our attendees. The line I heard most was "we surprised ourselves". I should not have been surprised as we had so many gifted volunteers that created the haunted house and pumpkin display. We also had other volunteers that did everything from organizing the snack/gift shop to being zombies. I can't thank everyone enough for participating. The Quirico family's talent in creating the haunted house would out shine any professional. Our pumpkin carvers and display creators have more talent than I ever will. I am in admiration of

them all.

We purchased many craft pumpkins on sale at the end of the season so we can make Brite Nites 2011 even better. We are already setting up committees and lining up pumpkin carvers so we can get a jump for this year. If you would like to carve a craft or real pumpkin or contribute in any other way to this fun filled event please contact Carol Senff at [csefff@wfafnj.org](mailto:csefff@wfafnj.org).

Our main goal for 2011 is to finish the Children's Garden. The footings stand ready for the gazebo to be installed on top of them. Our Brite Nites fundraiser provided the necessary

funds to purchase the gazebo and have it installed. The other projects in the garden will be the two smaller paths, installation of the baby cows, arbors, benches and the final small area that has to be designed and installed. We will need volunteers to maintain the flower gardens for 2011 so if you are interested please contact me at [suzannesmith@wfafnj.org](mailto:suzannesmith@wfafnj.org).

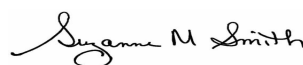
The status of the barn is still pending since the Warren Township continues to work through the issue related to its future.

All of our committees are up and running and there are many opportunities for any one that would like to get involved.

The areas of opportunity

are the community garden, giving garden, Growing to Give program, boutiques, plant sale, grant writing and the Halloween event. If you are interested please contact me at [suzannesmith@wfafnj.org](mailto:suzannesmith@wfafnj.org) and I will put you in touch with the right person

I'm sure with all of the snow and cold we are all suffering from "house-phobia", but hang in there spring will be here before you know it.



President,  
Wagner Farm Arboretum